



The Green Island

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To all Evas and all Vladimirs,

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to our friends Ermanno Ripamonti, former member of the European Scout Committee, psychologist and juvenile court judge, Mircea Stefan, Chairman of the Romanian Scout Association, Cercetasii Romaniei, and professor at the University of Bucharest, as well as to Périne Lecoy, family psychotherapist, and Susan Angel, translator, for their valuable help.

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Preface

Now and again you tire of methodology and handbooks. Instead you feel like telling a story.

This is exactly what happened to us, so we wrote *The Green Island*.

As we tell this story, we intend to present the various steps of the Renewed Approach to Programme (RAP). This approach was originally developed by our friend Gerardo Gonzalez and his team at the Interamerican Scout Office.

RAP does not propose a new programme for Scouting. It is more like a tool for *developers of the Scout programme*. RAP helps you identify the invariable elements – those that need to be preserved in order to remain faithful to Scouting’s fundamentals (purpose, principles and method) – and the elements that need to be adapted in order to meet the new needs of young people. RAP highlights certain aspects of Scouting that featured in Baden-Powell’s original concept but that have been ignored or forgotten for too long. This is the case for the *team system*, which should be taken for what it really is – a system for enabling young people to take part in decision-making – and not just a way of working in small groups. We could also cite the *progressive scheme*, which should be based not on predetermined standards but on personal objectives, chosen and formulated by each young person according to his or her own needs.

The readers of the Green Island may refer to *RAP ToolBox Programme Handouts*, published by the World Scout Bureau in 2005, in order to get more details on the various steps of RAP.

Adapting the Scout programme to young people’s aspirations is a task that needs to be carried out over and over again by each generation. It is no easy task. Each National Scout Organisation – like each one of us – tends to develop mental models, which often resist innovation and change. Certain conservative groups may also try to take Scouting over in order to use it for their own ends. Those who have worked to renew Scouting in various parts of the world have experienced this firsthand.

However, our ten years' work of supporting *developers* of Scouting in central and eastern Europe have helped us understand that all totalitarian regimes had good reasons for banning Scouting. It is a fantastic tool for helping each young person realise his or her full potential and become a free, active and responsible citizen.

We have chosen to portray some of the difficulties as well as the dynamism involved by means of a fictionalised narrative. Although certain episodes are based on real facts, the story as a whole belongs entirely to the realm of fiction. Any resemblance to real people or situations is purely coincidental. We hope that *The Green Island* will help *programme developers* cast a critical eye over their own practices and set off resolutely down the road to innovation. One of Scouting's most harmful flaws is its tendency to lapse into self-satisfaction, which blinds us to our mental models and prevents us from noticing our excesses. It is our role to ensure that Scouting always remains a road to freedom and responsibility!

Dominique Bénard and Jacqueline Collier Jespersen

Introduction

We are going to tell the story of Vladimir and Eva. But it could just as well be the story of Mircea and Dîna, Piotr and Eva, or even Boris and Anna, Măimu and Tonu, or Myriam and Ahmed... We have in fact put together several true situations in order to bring the characters of our story to life. These characters actually exist, and we have met them in their hundreds in all those parts of Europe where Scouting is re-emerging and developing. These men and women are in their 20s and 30s, or perhaps older, and they share a passion for educating those younger than themselves. They realise that education is the way to transmit to young people the values that they live by, as well as the way to renew and improve society. They have chosen Scouting as their tool. They do not speak empty words, but act patiently and with perseverance day in day out.

We want to recount their story and their discoveries, in the hope that you can learn something from them for your own activities. Please feel free to give our characters names that are more usual in your own culture, as there are bound to be similar characters in Africa, in the Arab world, in North and South America, as well as in Asia. They also exist in your country. They are close to you, and you know them well. Perhaps they are a part of yourself, just as they are within us.

Vladimir and Eva live in the capital of a small country in eastern Europe, where the totalitarian regime, which had governed since 1945, has just collapsed. Life is hard for the man in the street. The economy is in ruins. Vladimir has just completed his studies in civil engineering. He is twenty-five years old and is looking for a job. Eva is a nurse. She is twenty-four. They are both full of hope for the future, despite the very difficult situation. Like all young people, Vladimir and Eva were once members of the former state-run youth organisation. Based on their experience, they rejected the indoctrination and depersonalisation inherent in that system. Even before democratisation, Vladimir and Eva had discovered Scouting through old books circulating illicitly and by hearing about it at first hand from old Scouts. They then joined the re-emerging Scout Movement.

It was not easy to begin with. Documentation was scarce, as was goodwill. A few old handbooks from the 1930s belonging to old Scouts, some magazines from abroad and plenty of enthusiasm got them started. After a couple of months, they established relations with the several dozen local groups that had sprouted up somewhat

haphazardly. A Scout association was re-established after a break of almost half a century. Eva was elected chairman of the programme committee, and Vladimir became her assistant. Their mission: to establish a youth programme adapted to the current situation and needs of young people. Their goal: to propose a revised programme at the next general assembly in one year's time. The European Scout Office provided documentation and encouragement, and promised to assist them.

Our story begins on the day that Vladimir visits a friend of his father's, a retired professor of psychology.

I. An Educational Proposal

Wednesday, 9 September, 17.00 hours

The old tram screeched to a halt, and Vladimir jumped down from the step. The rain had stopped, and rays of pale sunshine were piercing the clouds. The puddles on the dirty cobblestones reflected fine shreds of blue sky. Despite the first dead leaves, the month of September had not yet bid farewell to summer.

Vladimir strode towards the large grey, drab buildings across the road, trying to avoid the puddles. Tall and skinny, he was wrapped up in an old leather coat that was too big for him. With his narrow, bony face perched on top of his long neck, his thick brown hair, bright eyes behind small, steel-framed glasses, and thin, wiry legs, he looked like some kind of wading bird.

He dived into the lobby of the building and looked for the professor's name on the letterboxes – Jan Kessel, fifth floor, left. Taking the stairs two at a time, he quickly reached a landing enclosed by washed-out walls. A door opened, revealing a rather small man with a round face topped with a mass of white hair, dressed simply in woollen trousers and a roll-neck sweater. Vladimir was once again struck by the sparkle in the eyes behind the thick glasses.

“Hello Vladimir. I saw you from the window. Well done, you're on time. Come in!”

Vladimir shook the professor's hand and went into the tiny apartment where Jan Kessel lived alone.

“Let me take your coat, Vladimir, and please sit down. Would you like a cup of tea?”

Vladimir accepted the offer and took a look around. Two windows lit the room, which served as both the bedroom and the living room. A door at the back led to a tiny kitchen. Every nook and cranny was full of books and magazines, piled up all over the place. Dozens of envelopes bearing the stamps of various countries were strewn over the table, on which an old Olympia typewriter took pride of place. A grey cat, curled up on the worn sofa, glanced at Vladimir and then returned to its siesta.

Jan Kessel had once been an eminent professor of psychology, whose opposition to the former regime had cost him ten years' forced labour. Upon his release, he had had no other choice but to work as a skilled worker in a factory to earn a living. The present government had given him a small pension and an apartment. Vladimir held him in great esteem and considered him his mentor.

The professor came back into the room, carrying a tray with two cups, a teapot, a milk jug and a saucer of biscuits on it.

"Please excuse the mess, but I get lots of letters from my university friends in western Europe who want to know what things are like here. Replying to them keeps me very busy. Do you take milk?"

"Yes please", Vladimir replied.

Vladimir took a sip of his tea and began to explain the reason for his visit. He had to prepare the programme committee's first working weekend and was wondering how best to go about it.

"You've got to devise a new youth programme, have you?" asked the old professor.

"Yes. Since we started, we've been operating based on a few recollections from the 1930s, but now it's time to modernise the Movement to really meet the needs of today's youth. We're full of ideas, but lack a working method. I'm sure you can help us."

Jan Kessel remained silent for a few moments. He drank some tea before speaking:

"I think you first have to answer a question, which is 'what is an association?'"

Vladimir was visibly surprised.

"Er... An association? That's pretty obvious. People get together and join forces to do something together."

"Yes, but why do they join forces? What makes them do that? Today, people in our country are free at last. Nothing and nobody can force them to join an organisation. Something therefore has to motivate them to do so."

"Yes, of course. A shared purpose."

“And what’s that, Vladimir?”

“Pardon?”

Jan Kessel set his cup down on the table.

“What’s the purpose that motivates the members of your association to... ‘join forces?’”

“Scouting, of course. We decided to create a Scout association.”

Vladimir couldn’t quite see what the professor was getting at. Jan Kessel continued:

“When people want to play football, they set up a football club. When people want to be Scouts, they set up a Scout association. It’s the same thing, isn’t it?”

“Well, yes!”

“I don’t think so”, the professor replied after a moment’s silence. “The rules of football, or any other sport, are simple and consistent, but your case is different. The proof is that you have to meet to develop a Scout programme, which would not be necessary for football or basketball.”

Vladimir started to grasp what the professor was getting at.

“Ah, I see what you mean. A sport has precise rules and a simple programme. All you have to do is form a team and practise in order to play in competitions. In the case of Scouting, on the other hand, things are more complicated; the general principles have to be adapted to a particular situation.”

“Precisely”, confirmed the professor. “The purpose, principles and the method of Scouting are established at international level, but you have to adapt them to the conditions of our country.”

“That is indeed our goal.”

“I may be wrong,” the professor added, “but I get the impression that the main aim of most of those people who were in your association to begin with was to re-create something that existed in the past... a sort of ‘restoration’.”

“That’s clear. Many of us, particularly the old Scouts, are first of all driven by the desire to re-create the Scout association as it existed before. That’s only normal.

There are however others, such as Eva and myself, who think that yesterday's Scouting has to be modernised in order to meet the educational needs of today's young people."

"So there are at least two quite different motivations among your members", the professor noted. "Some want to restore Scouting to what it was before, whereas others want to adapt it to meet present-day needs. But what are those needs? You've created an association that people join voluntarily, but with no clear definition, accepted by all, of the common purpose. Isn't that so? In that case, aren't the ties uniting your members somewhat weak and fragile? Aren't they at risk of being ruptured at the slightest tug?"

"You're saying that our first task should be to clearly state the purpose of the association and to ensure that everybody adheres to it?"

"Or at least the majority. Exactly Vladimir. You see, an association of volunteers is something that we're no longer familiar with in our country. In order to establish itself on solid foundations, such an association has to ensure that all of its members share the same purpose, ideas and culture. That's a long and difficult process."

"Rome wasn't built in a day."

"Right. But to construct a solid house, you have to make sure that the foundations are well-anchored."

"So it's not enough to declare that we want to be Scouts, and to keep in mind the purpose, principles and method of Scouting?"

"I don't think so. What you have to draw up is a type of general proposal, expressing what you want to achieve together, here in our country."

"I see", said Vladimir.

"And there's something else", Professor Kessel added.

"What's that?"

"A second important question, which is 'what's education?'"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Your purpose is to develop an educational association, isn't it?"

“Yes, of course it is.”

“Therefore, you have to answer the question ‘what does education mean today, in our country?’ And ‘how can education be carried out through Scouting?’ How would you define education, Vladimir?”

“Education means teaching something, doesn’t it?”

“That’s teaching. Education is something else. You see this small book? It’s ‘Footsteps of the Founder’, a book of quotations by Robert Baden-Powell collected by an Italian Scout leader, Mario Sica¹ One of my correspondents sent it to me when she found out that I was interested in Scouting. Listen to Baden-Powell’s definition of education: The secret of sound education is to get each pupil to learn for himself, instead of instructing him by driving knowledge into him on a stereotyped system.”²

“That’s a very modern concept!”

“Yes. What’s more, Baden-Powell was very critical of the school system in his day. In an article published in the Headquarters Gazette in 1913, he wrote:

The necessary points to develop in our youth in order to evolve good citizens are: 1) Character; 2) Erudition. These are stated in their order of importance. Number 2 is taught in the schools. Number 1 is left to the pupils to pick up for themselves out of school hours, according to their environment. Number 1 is precisely what the Scout Movement endeavours to supply. The two main methods of training are: 1) By Education: that is by ‘drawing out’ the individual boy and giving him the ambition and keenness to learn for himself. 2) By Instruction: that is by impressing and drumming knowledge into the boy. Number 2 of these is still too often the rule. In the Scout Movement we use Number 1.”³

“So, Baden-Powell made a radical contrast between the school system and Scouting?” Vladimir asked.

“It would appear so, wouldn’t it? This was certainly well-established at the time that he was writing. Things are different these days, and it’s no longer possible to support such a radical contrast. But that’s not the main point. Like Socrates, Baden-Powell maintained that true knowledge came from within, as a result of a personal process:

*The soul is educated — that is, self-expanded — from within; it cannot be developed artificially by the application of book instruction and rules from without.*³”

“He couldn’t have put it more clearly!” Vladimir exclaimed. “Some of our leaders should read that. I’ve got one question though. Baden-Powell maintains that character development should be the first aim of education. But what exactly does he mean by character?”

“That’s a very interesting question, which will doubtless have to be answered in more depth later. I think that, in Baden-Powell’s view, the term ‘character’ closely corresponded to the terms ‘reason’ or ‘wisdom’ expressed by the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. A man of character is responsible towards himself, trustworthy, capable of confronting difficulties and of taking decisions on his own.”

“Able to guide himself along his own path in everyday life. . . .”

“Correct. And that, I believe, is very important in our country today, don’t you think?”

Vladimir nodded:

“It’s true that many people are completely lost with their rediscovered freedom. Their points of reference have disappeared, so they pounce on any belief. Many strange sects from western Europe and America are turning up here and gaining a foothold.”

“It’s a challenge for the future, Vladimir. A democracy can’t develop without a certain quality of citizen. Therein lies the main task that Scouting should set itself – developing the new citizens that our country needs.”

“That’s rather ambitious!”

“But you need an ambitious proposal if you want to gather high-quality people around you!”

“I can see one problem in that though. Many of our leaders are afraid of the future and don’t set objectives that they might not be able to achieve.”

“You’re right. There’s no point in frightening people by proposing unrealistic goals. Your proposal has to be coherent with the method and means that you’re

able to implement. But it's needed nevertheless and it has to be appropriate to the situation prevailing in our country."

Vladimir took out a notebook and pen.

"But doesn't education also mean passing on a certain number of values to young people? Many of our members, particularly the older ones, set great store by this. What's more, our last general assembly was marked by extremely lively debates between two tendencies – on the one hand, those who want to simply adopt, as it is, the model presented to us by some western Scout associations, such as the Danes, Swedes or British, and on the other hand, those who reject such influences and want to preserve a national tradition."

"Yes, you're right", acknowledged the professor. "Every society needs to reproduce itself, and the new generations need the experience of their predecessors. They can't make a clean sweep of the past. Nor can they simply adopt models from abroad just as they are, even if they seem modern. Of course, we now live in an open society. It would be futile and dangerous to close in on ourselves and reject any outside influence. On the other hand, our situation is specific. It would be a mistake to blindly follow Danish, Swedish or British recipes here. We have to realise that all education is set in human history and that our history is specific. In another respect, if the aim of education is to pass on experience acquired, it nevertheless has to accept that human knowledge changes with the generations. The philosopher Hegel taught us that history resembles a river. At a given time, the movement of the water is determined by the flow of the river upstream, as well as by the rocks and meanders situated at this precise spot. Young people therefore have to be prepared to not only repeat a taught tradition, but also to adapt to the new conditions that they will inevitably encounter one day or another. That's why the method is just as important as the content in education. The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget expressed this point of view perfectly:

Neither does a child approaching adulthood tend to receive reason and the rule of good deeds ready prepared, but rather captures them through his own individual effort and experience. In return, society expects new generations which are better than an imitation — an enrichment."⁴

"I understand", said Vladimir. "Education should not only pass on knowledge gained in the past, but also develop young people's creativity so that they can deal

with new situations and, in turn, enrich society. We can't achieve this result by simply copying ready-made models, whether they stem from tradition or from abroad."

"That's right. You could say that education should help man to grow and not only to reproduce. And therein lies the whole interest of Scouting. Scouting doesn't seek to 'impress' something determined in advance on young people, but to help them 'express' what they carry within themselves. It's not only defined by what it gives young people, but also by the method it uses. It doesn't seek to give ready-made rules, but to provide each child with a compass allowing him or her to find his or her own way, irrespective of external circumstances."

"In other words, it's learning to learn!"

"Right!"

"It's true that all of this should be supported and understood by everyone who joins the Movement. So you think that the first stage of our work should be to draw up the association's educational proposal?"

"Yes. I believe this is essential for at least three reasons: firstly, in order to state the purpose around which your youth programme will be built; secondly, in order to call upon the adult leaders to commit themselves to a specific proposal; and thirdly, in order to present the Movement and what it offers young people to the community and to parents. I'm going to make some more tea. Would you like some?"

"Yes please. Meanwhile, I'll sort my notes."

When the professor returned with the teapot refilled, Vladimir suggested that they summarise their discussion:

"I've grasped the importance of drawing up an educational proposal and now understand that it should cover:

1. An analysis of the main needs of today's young people in our country.
2. How Scouting can meet those needs; in other words, the educational goals that we want to reach in our specific situation.
3. How we propose to do this in concrete terms, through which activities and

through which style of educational relationship between young people and adults.

“I do, however, have one question”, Vladimir added. “What process would you recommend for achieving this result?”

“That was a good summary”, the professor said approvingly. “And it actually provides the answer to your question. The first step is indeed to identify the principal needs of young people. You could bring together a group of leaders who already have extensive experience, and ask them to pool their observations. You could also gather advance documentation to get the discussion going. I’ve got a few press articles on current youth problems that I can give you. But that doesn’t stop you or your friends from looking for other documents yourselves — in the university library, for example.”

“Do you know any experts, like educationalists or researchers, who could help us?”

“Yes, I’ve still got some friends in the Faculty of Education. Analysing the needs of young people is still a very new process in our country, but I think I can come up with a name or two. In any case, it’s essential that you form a small research and analysis team. Don’t forget that it’s your proposal that you’re drawing up, not that of a university or some educational institution or other. It should be written in simple terms that everyone can understand, so that it can easily be conveyed to all interested parties – leaders, parents, friends, etc.”

Vladimir did not want to take up any more of the professor’s time. He emptied his cup, thanked his host warmly and took his leave. It was time to meet Eva, who had finished her shift at the hospital at least an hour before and would be waiting for him at the association’s headquarters. He took the same tramline back to the city centre. The Scout association had found temporary premises in an old bastion, which the city council had made available to them. It was on the other side of a small park. A light escaped from one of its narrow windows. Eva was already there. Vladimir quickened his pace and pushed the heavy door of the historic bastion, before climbing the steps of the cold stone staircase.

A vast vaulted room occupied most of the first floor. This was the association’s national office, also known as “HQ”. The centre of the room,

equipped with thirty or so assorted chairs and an old blackboard, was used for meetings. Around this were several working areas – comprising one or two trestle tables, a cupboard and a few chairs – which had been set up as the various “service desks” of the association. Panels decorated with posters from other Scout associations separated the working areas. The windows, set deep in narrow slits in the thick walls, hardly let in any light. The yellow electric light, sparsely diffused by scarce light bulbs, gave the room a special atmosphere, which Vladimir would have described as either romantic or depressing, depending on his mood.

He passed the desk of the secretariat, that of the administration and then the chairman’s table – adorned with the association’s flag – before joining Eva, who was sitting at the programme committee’s desk in front of a large electric typewriter. Upon hearing his steps, Eva turned towards him and looked at him sternly.

“Hi Vladimir. Late again as usual!”

“Hi Eva. Don’t bare your teeth! I’m sorry, but Professor Kessel kept me longer than anticipated.”

“OK. We’ve got no time to lose. We have to type the invitation for the committee meeting, and I’ll photocopy it at the hospital tomorrow.”

“Where did you unearth this monster?” Vladimir asked, pointing at the typewriter.

“Stefan managed to persuade the chief clerk at the town hall to donate it to us. Apparently, they’ve been given money to buy word processors. It works very well, except for the letter ‘o’, which is blocked up, but a drop of alcohol should clean it out okay.”

Seated close to Eva, Vladimir watched her nimble fingers running over the keys. She was a tiny, determined woman, with a fine, resolute face, framed by short brown hair. She was dressed simply in jeans and a roll-neck sweater. Vladimir greatly appreciated her intelligence and sense of organisation, a significant advantage for their teamwork, as he freely admitted that he himself was a dreamer and somewhat disorganised. He also admired the depth of her commitment. She didn’t hesitate to spend hours at “HQ” after an exhausting day or night shift at the hospital. Night was starting to fall, and the room began to feel damp and cold.

Vladimir took off his leather coat and put it round Eva's shoulders. She gave him a quick smile.

“So, what did you get out of this old professor? Tell me!”



Sunday, 13 September, 16.00 hours

The programme committee's meeting had just finished. Vladimir and Eva had stayed behind to tidy the room with the help of Stefan, one of the members of the programme committee who also lived in the capital. The other participants, from the provinces, had hurried off to the station, anxious not to miss their trains home.

“What did you think of the meeting, Stefan?” Vladimir asked, while piling up the chairs.

Stefan was an engineer at the city waterworks, which gave him access to the town hall. He was thirty-one and an unusually strong, red-haired, calm, gentle giant. He had set up one of the first Scout units in the capital and possessed an innate understanding of education.

“I really liked Eva's suggestion to organise a discussion between two groups, one representing the needs of young people, and the other Scouting's resources. I think it helped us to come up with quite a few interesting ideas. But not all the committee members are used to this kind of method yet...”

Eva was busy copying the conclusions of the meeting from the blackboard, leaving the two young men to put the room back in order:

“We've gone as far as we can for the time being. With the working schedule drawn up by Vladimir with his professor, and the documents that you found in the library, we were able to prepare the meeting well. We now have a basis for an educational proposal. We need to finalise the text, that's all.”

“Do you think that Piotr will agree to our proposal?” Stefan asked.

Piotr, a fifty-five-year-old grammar-school teacher, had been elected chairman of the association at the last general assembly. Eva considered the question for a moment before replying:

“We’ve been entrusted with preparing a revised youth programme to submit to the next general assembly. We’re not going to seek Piotr’s consent every time we lift a finger. We have to forge ahead. We’ll consult him later.”

“But what’s the next step in the process?”

Vladimir, who had been stacking the pile of chairs against the wall, picked up a broom and spoke:

“Now that we have a general educational proposal, why don’t we take up the elements of the old traditional programme and modernise them? I say, Stefan, are you going to let me do all the work?”

“OK, just a minute! I want to add something. You’re forgetting the age sections. For the moment, we just have Cubs and Scouts, plus an embryonic Rover section, but the British and the Swedes have Beavers from five to seven years of age...”

“Yes and, like the French, the Germans have subdivided the Scout section into two, with the younger ‘Jungpfadfinder’ and the older ‘Pfadfinder’. But you know very well that the older leaders will fight to hang on to the good old traditional system of three age sections! Anyway, it’s probably the only system that we’re capable of running at the moment.”

“That’s no reason not to examine our system of age sections”, Eva interrupted. “We have to work rationally. I don’t see why we should simply respect tradition without first asking ourselves some questions. We at least have to make sure that the way the sections are divided up corresponds to the stages of development of today’s young people!”

“And another thing”, added Stefan, going towards Vladimir, a shovel in one hand and a plastic bin in the other. “What exactly do you mean by modernising the old programme?”

“It’s simple”, Vladimir replied. “If you look at the old programme, you’ll see that there’s a sort of general structure common to all sections; for example, sport, life in the open air, handicrafts and skills, observation, etc. This would allow us to determine what young people should learn whilst, at the same time, providing us with activity ideas. Then we would only have to come up with more modern ideas, corresponding to the needs and interests of young people today.”

“We could certainly make quite quick progress that way”, Stefan admitted.

“It has the merit of simplicity!”

“Yes, but is it really in line with the educational proposal that we’ve just worked out?” Eva retorted. “Does it really cover everything that we want to develop? Why sport rather than self-expression through movement, and why observation rather than logical reasoning? It’s true that the old system has the advantage of being simple, but it’s actually no more than a catalogue of activities or skills to learn.”

“I wonder”, said Vladimir, “if we’re not complicating matters. Our predecessors were more pragmatic...”

“It’s not a question of complexity, Vladimir. It’s a question of concept. The idea of a general structure should be kept, but I think that it should correspond to the educational objectives and not to activities. When young people’s needs change, it’s not enough to just change the activities. Do you see?”

“Eva’s right”, Stefan admitted. “I’ve already thought about this aspect. In the old programme, young people were asked to learn semaphore or Morse code, for example. If, in order to modernise the programme, we suggest replacing these activities with some others that require using the telephone or amateur radio, then they no longer correspond to the same objectives.”

“Don’t they? Why not?” Vladimir asked.

“It’s simple”, said Eva. “Semaphore and radio are both used to communicate, aren’t they? But by learning semaphore, young people develop their visual memory, their observation skills and physical coordination at the same time. You can’t do that with a radio set.”

“It seems to me that it’s a trap that Scouting in western Europe has tended to fall into”, Stefan added. “In Germany last summer, I saw Scouts using computers at camp, but they couldn’t use a compass nor read a map!”

“Perhaps it’s more important for young people in Germany today to learn to use a computer rather than a compass!”

“Yes, but how can they cope at camp and go on hikes?”

“But why do you insist on going on hikes?” Vladimir started to lose his composure.

“That’s the whole point”, Eva interrupted, to calm things down. “You’re both right. It’s not a question of whether or not to modernise activities, but of knowing which educational objective such or such an activity is proposed for! The activity is just a way of achieving an educational objective.”

“That may well be so,” Vladimir interrupted, defending his point of view, “but surely some activities correspond to the fundamental elements of Scouting; those which take place out of doors, in contact with nature, for example.”

“Of course, but what counts is knowing which educational objective these activities correspond to. For example, why is nature so important in Scouting? Failing to answer this kind of question leads to activism – just repeating activities because they are traditional, without asking why. And when the time comes to adapt to new needs, you’re incapable of doing so, because you’ve never thought about what you’re doing!”

“Listen,” Vladimir added, “the weekend’s been long and tiring. I confess that I don’t quite know what to make of all this. What do you suggest, Eva?”

“Two important ideas emerge from what we’ve just said. The first is that we have to try and establish a general structure that’s valid for all the age sections, so that we can organise our educational objectives. This structure shouldn’t just be a catalogue of activities like in the old system. The second idea is that we have to examine whether the present age ranges actually correspond to the different stages of development of today’s young people.”

“That all seems extremely abstract and intellectual to me”, Vladimir grumbled.

“Why are you so disheartened?” Eva retorted. “I’ve got an idea. Let’s ask your old professor for help. The ideas he gave you were really helpful for this weekend. I suggest that we send him the report of our meeting and get his feedback for the next step. What do you think?”

“Why not?” Vladimir replied. “Provided that you see to it. I’ve found myself a little job in a factory for the next two weeks, so I’ll have a lot less time.”

“OK, boys! We’ve made good progress, so don’t despair. Let’s close up shop and go home. I’ll offer you a drink at the Pétofi café. We’ve earned it!”



Monday 14 September, 08.00 hours

That day, Eva wasn't due on duty at the hospital until 10 o'clock. She got up early to write to Professor Jan Kessel.

Dear Professor,

As chairman of the programme committee of the Scout association, I would like to thank you for your valuable assistance, through Vladimir Kosta, which helped make the first stage of our task of defining a new youth programme for our association a success. We have drafted a general educational proposal, which constitutes the "raison d'être" of our association. A copy of the text is enclosed.

Now our committee wants to know how to take it one step further. Should we take up the traditional programme, which dates from the 1930s, and try to modernise it on the basis of the ideas expressed in the educational proposal, or should we be more ambitious and try to define detailed educational objectives for each age range, then propose activities through which to achieve those objectives?

Personally, I would be tempted to adopt the second method, but I confess that I am not exactly sure how to go about it. I was most impressed by the advice that you gave Vladimir for our first step in the process and I was wondering if you would agree to help us once again. I know that your time is limited, but I nevertheless hope that you will be able to advise us.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Eva Barkieta

Our Educational Proposal**1. Who Are We?**

We are a movement of young people and adults involved voluntarily in promoting non-formal education, which complements the family and school.

We are open to all young people, boys and girls, irrespective of social, ethnic, religious or cultural origin.

We focus on holistic development, taking every dimension of the person into account — body and health, intelligence, emotions, character, spirituality and the social dimension.

Our purpose is to help each young person develop his or her full potential, to ensure personal well-being and to enable him or her to become the type of active and responsible citizen that our country needs.

2. The Difficulties Young People Face

We recognise the specific difficulties faced by young people in the transitional period that our country is undergoing:

- Initially, the market economy has created a race towards material success, dominated by money and individualism. We are experiencing a value crisis. The “West” seems to be exporting its worst products to us first — pornography, wheeling and dealing, corruption, Mafia, etc.
- Price rises, unemployment and the degradation of social systems have caused feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Many people are obliged to take several jobs in order to survive, and they no longer have any time to devote to social and community activities.
- Relationships between young people and adults are becoming strained, especially since the family unit is supposed to tackle all the problems even whilst its integrity is threatened by demoralisation and the economic crisis.
- Budgetary difficulties are causing the quality of the school and university systems to decline. As a result of economic difficulties and unemployment, young people remain dependent on their parents and cannot acquire the independence that they aspire to.
- The quality of the natural environment in our country has been seriously affected by many years of negligence. This situation threatens the health of children and young people in particular. It is urgent to raise awareness of ecological issues.
- There is a lack of communication between young people and adults. Young people feel that they are running up against a wall of incomprehension. They feel that today’s society is too rigid and unable to accept individuality. They feel that their skills and aspirations are not recognised and that nothing can be done to resolve the problems of society.
- Young people are tending to become withdrawn. They fear the future and are afraid of taking on responsibilities in society. Many dream of a different society and would like to

emigrate. Others fall into violence and delinquency. We are experiencing a resurgence of irrational beliefs. Sects, some more closed than others, are attracting a large audience.

3. Opportunities for Development

We also recognise positive elements in our society, on which we wish to base our approach:

- In spite of all the difficulties, society is much more open. Individuals or groups with an enterprising spirit can create new, productive social and economic activities.
- There is now freedom of information, even if books and newspapers are expensive. Young people can move around and access information more easily.
- We are now discovering that history has been distorted. Our society wants to find the roots of its national culture again and to assert its identity.
- Our country is not lacking in skills, and there are real intellectual opportunities and plenty of dynamism. With some encouragement, many new initiatives could be launched. International contacts can play the role of a catalyst.
- Young people are looking for reasons to hope and believe in the future. Many seek to live together, to express themselves and to base their friendships on the principles of a moral lifestyle. They reject superficial conventions and relationships based on immediate interests. Their constant criticism also reflects their deep desire to find a way out of the present crisis.

4. What We Want to Do

Through Scouting, and through an educational relationship between young people and adults based on communication and trust, we want to help young people:

- Discover their abilities, feel recognised as individuals, develop their self-confidence and adopt a value system that they have freely discovered and accepted by themselves, in order to establish a solid basis upon which to build their personal lives.
- Develop a responsible attitude towards themselves and others.
- Respect the dignity of each individual and reject racism and xenophobia.
- Respect the natural environment and fight against any actions that threaten it.
- Know how to inform themselves and how to discover the realities of society, firstly at local, then at national and international level.
- Discover the interdependence that exists among different human communities and

acquire a sense of justice and co-operation.

- Prepare themselves to cope with change, by acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to use new technologies, and develop their capacities to adapt.
- Acquire the motivation and skills needed to integrate themselves into society, to play an active role in society and to contribute to its development.
- Be able to plan a project in a team and to carry it out in spite of any difficulties.
- Discover the meaning of life beyond its material aspects and recognise its spiritual dimension.
- Strengthen the cultural and spiritual roots of their community, whilst remaining open and tolerant towards other communities and other races.

II. Areas of Growth

Friday 18 September, 18.00 hours

Four days later, Eva received an envelope bearing no stamp, containing a small sheet of paper written in a beautiful sweeping, firm cursive hand:

17 September 1992

Dear Eva,

I was very touched by your kind letter. However, you give me too much credit. Vladimir already had the ideas that he brought to you in his head. I merely helped him to express them clearly. I am sure that your team possesses all the necessary creativity to accomplish the important task that your association has entrusted you with. I was most interested to read the educational proposal that you have started to formulate, and I think that you are on the right track. Now that you have answered the questions “what is an association?” and “what is education?”, you need to examine another, more difficult question:

“Education helps man to grow – but what man?”

I wish you luck on this journey of discovery. Rest assured, nevertheless that, in the event of any difficulties, I will be ready to help you within the limits of my means.

Your faithful servant,

Jan Kessel

Eva noted that the letter must have been delivered by a messenger or by the professor himself. She read it over several times.

“He’s a strange creature, this professor! I wonder what the others will think.”



At 20.30 hours, she met Vladimir and Stefan at “HQ”, and showed them the professor’s answer.

Stefan hissed between his teeth.

“Easier said than done, old man!”

“That’s typical of him”, Vladimir added. “He wants to make us find things out for ourselves.”

“Thank you for that piece of information. I had understood”, Eva retorted. “He wants us to analyse man. What does that mean exactly?”

“*Education helps man to grow. What is man?*” Vladimir read again. “When you think of the notion of man, what comes to mind?”

“Man is made up of a body and soul”, said Stefan.

“Man and woman”, Eva added.

“Man is also said to be a social being,” Vladimir remarked, shaking his head, “but I don’t see where that’s leading us.”

“Wait. I’ve got an idea”, Eva exclaimed.

She went up to the blackboard and picked up a stick of chalk.

“Body, soul, gender, society.” She wrote the words on the blackboard, saying them out loud at the same time. “That’s what we said, isn’t it?”

“Correct”, Stefan agreed.

“And what about if the professor was suggesting that we should analyse the different dimensions of human character – the soul or spiritual dimension, the body or the physical dimension, intelligence, the ability to live in society, gender identity, etc.?”

“*Education helps man to grow*”, Stefan recalled. “To make man grow, you have to develop all dimensions of the person... You’re right! That’s what it’s all about!”

“Oh my! What are we getting into!” Vladimir rolled his eyes up to the ceiling.

“But no, it’s obvious”, Eva continued, grabbing Vladimir by the sleeve.

“Remember what you told us last time about the traditional programme. You said that it was structured on the basis of different categories of activity – sport, observation and so on.”

“So?”

With a few rapid gestures, Eva drew three columns on the blackboard.

“Look. In the third column, I’ll write the categories of activity. Help me.”

As Vladimir dictated, she wrote *Sport, Contact with nature, Manual skills, Observation, Service...*

“Now, in the first column, I’ll write the dimensions of the personality – *Body, Intelligence, Sociability...* You see, there’s a connection – *Sport and Contact with nature* correspond to *Body, Observation and Manual skills* to *Intelligence...*”

“*Service* corresponds to *Sociability*”, Stefan added.

“You’ve left out the soul and gender”, Vladimir noted with a touch of irony.

“As far as soul is concerned,” Stefan pointed out, “the old programme had a whole part on God and religion, but as far as gender is concerned...”

“And what are you going to put in the centre column?”

“Use your brains, for goodness sake! That’s for the educational objectives, in other words, the type of development I want to obtain in each of the dimensions. The activities in the third column are only the means to achieving those objectives.”

She rapidly completed the table.

“That makes sense”, said Stefan.

“I see that you’ve left the soul and gender out”, Vladimir pointed out.

“Yes, clever clogs! We need to think about that”, Eva conceded. “It’s the principle that’s important. This type of table allows us to modify the educational objectives and the activities, to adapt them to the needs of young people by retaining the same reference framework.”

“I see”, added Stefan. “The traditional programme is restricted to the third column, and so it’s difficult to make it evolve. There’s a list of activities, but you don’t know which educational objective each activity corresponds to. You try to improve the programme by replacing old activities with more ‘modern’ activities, but that’s not the way to do it at all.”

“I’m sure that the first two columns must also have existed in the traditional programme to start with. But over time, people concentrated on ‘what’ – in other words the activities – and forgot about the ‘why’ – the educational objectives. However, in order to build a new programme, the ‘why’ is indispensable. It was clever of the old professor to remind us of that fact!”

The three friends leaned back against the table and considered the chart.

“It’s a funny kind of task to take on”, Stefan said.

“Yes. We’ve got a lot on our plate”, Vladimir sighed.

“You’re being very pessimistic”, Eva fired at him, giving him a stern look.

“It would be great to have the professor with us to continue with the task, wouldn’t it? What do you think Vladimir?” Stefan asked.

“I’m sure that he’d agree to come to some meetings with us...”

“We should go away somewhere quiet for a few days – take off to ‘somewhere green’ in order to be productive.”

“Slow down you two”, Eva interrupted. “We’ve got a limited budget for our work. We can’t afford a good time in the countryside!”

“Listen Eva”, Stefan continued. “I know just the place – St Sophie’s monastery near Novigrad. The monks went back to live there only a short while ago, and they accommodate small groups free of charge in exchange for two or three hours’ work on the site.”

“You want us to work on a site?” Vladimir moaned.

“Why not? We could spend two or three hours painting a wall, if it meant that we could get accommodation for free!”

“But Novigrad is a two-hour drive away at least!”

“I could borrow my brother-in-law’s car. It’s an old Lada, but it still goes. Listen, why not go there next weekend? It would do us good. You look as if you could do with some fresh air, Vladimir!”

“The idea of a pious weekend doesn’t exactly thrill me!”

“The monks are very tolerant. No one will make you attend the services every day. It’s a wonderful spot, right in the middle of a forest!”

“I think it’s a good idea”, Eva said. “But we have to persuade the professor to come with us.”

“I can try to”, Vladimir sighed. “I’m seeing him this evening.”

“Try to be a bit more enthusiastic if you really want to persuade him!” suggested Eva.



Friday, 25 September, 17.30 hours

The Lada struggled with the final bends leading to the monastery. Vladimir was sharing the back seat with the professor, Stefan was driving and Eva was in the passenger’s seat. A terrible noise was coming from the engine, making conversation impossible, and a strong smell of petrol permeated the inside of the vehicle. The professor hadn’t taken much persuading to join the team for a weekend at St Sophie’s monastery. It had transpired in the conversation that the abbot was an old friend of the professor’s. They had met in the concentration camp.

The car reached the top of the hill. The car made a sort of hiccup as Stefan put it into fourth gear, after which the engine slowed down and the people inside the car could hear themselves speak once more. Eva turned to the professor:

“Our friend Olga is joining us at the monastery. She’s a primary school teacher in Brelinka and is responsible for the Cub Scout section. She’s also a member of the programme committee. Her husband’s bringing her by car.”

The professor nodded. His eyes were shining. Wrapped up in an old fur-lined jacket, he looked like a gnome. Vladimir gave him a surreptitious glance. He was clearly enjoying the journey, he thought, but he'd said nothing since they'd set off, which was rather embarrassing. I wonder what the others make of him, he thought.

The monastery buildings of spotless white against a dark background of large pines came into view. The dome of the bell-tower sparkled in the sunlight. The car turned off the main road onto an earthen track, which led to the monastery gate and into the courtyard. Stefan parked the Lada against the wall of the main building. A door opened and a tall, thin man wearing a long black robe came towards the car, opened the door for its passengers and warmly took the professor by the hands.

"This is my friend Cyril, the abbot of this monastery", said the professor, turning towards Eva, Stefan and Vladimir, who in turn shook the monk's hand. "And these are my Scout friends who are 'looking for man'."

"Welcome to St Sophie's!"

Night was falling on the surrounding hills. The sun — blood red in colour — was casting its last rays.

"Come. I'd like to show you the landscape before welcoming you within our walls. It's a sight not to be missed."

At a brisk pace, the abbot led the group to the end of the esplanade that encircled the monastery. Beyond a low stone wall, the valley stretched majestically before their eyes. Almost at their feet, framed by the dark slopes of the hills, the twists and turns of the river forked to form a sort of island, before flowing into a large lake bronzed by the light of the setting sun.

"We call it the Green Island, or Birch Island", the abbot said, as if answering an unspoken question. "Look how beautiful it is. It's actually green in spring, when the harsh green of the birch contrasts startlingly with the dark shade of the pines. In autumn, it's rather more reddish-brown, and in winter, it's white with frost and snow. But we always call it the Green Island."

The foliage of the birch was starting to take on the shades of autumn, and the tree trunks pierced the expanse like silver arrows. The island stood

out like a jewel in the dark bower of the conifer-covered hills. The group remained silent, struck by the beauty of their surroundings.

“Our forefathers knew how to choose a site. With such a view, it’s easy to thank God for His creation. All this territory used to belong to the monastery. The monks set up a forge and a water mill on the island. The ruins are still there. Today, we’re poor again and it’s a blessing. Come. It’s almost dinner time. Let me show you to your rooms. Your friend Olga is waiting for you.”

They were staying in the guest quarters of the monastery, where a meeting room had been assigned to them. The “bedrooms” were simple monastic cells with whitewashed walls, furnished only with an iron bedstead, a table and chair. The frugal but lively meal, during which the professor and his friend recounted numerous anecdotes, was polished off fairly quickly. Eva had scheduled their first meeting for 20.00 hours.



III. Physical Development

Friday, 25 September, 20.00 hours

Vladimir was the last to go into the meeting room, an immense vaulted room, furnished with only a large table surrounded by benches and a blackboard.

Eva opened the meeting by welcoming everybody present and expressing particular thanks to the professor for having agreed to join the group. She then presented the goal for the weekend, namely, to construct a frame of reference for the educational objectives of the association's programme. After quoting the professor's words — 'To educate is to help man to grow, but what is man?' — she asked him if he would like to add any further comments.

The professor thanked Eva and took the floor:

"I'm happy to be with you here and to take part in your research. It's no coincidence that we are in St Sophie's monastery, which, on many occasions in the history of our people, has been a lighthouse and refuge for all those who believed in man. The great philosopher Erasmus wrote that *one is not born man, but becomes man*. Do you appreciate the importance of this sentence?"

"It means that a human baby doesn't automatically become a man in all senses of the word!" replied Olga, the teacher.

Vladimir liked Olga a lot. She was also a very popular member of the association. She was thirty-five years old, somewhat chubby, funny and dynamic, giving the impression of perfect balance. She wore glasses with fine gilt frames and wore her hair pulled back in a kind of bun. What struck one first of all were her laughing eyes and gourmand's mouth. Olga was an excellent cook.

"That's right", said the professor. "The most primitive species of animal do not have a childhood, but are fully formed at birth and become independent in a very short space of time. However, the further you go up the scale of

the species, the longer ‘childhood’ lasts. Childhood — that is, the period of time that an individual takes to acquire all the skills necessary to become an independent adult — this period lasts a few months for mammals such as dogs, two to five years for superior monkeys, and at least fifteen years for man.”

“It’s the time needed to educate us”, Olga added.

“Quite. We talk about education particularly in relation to man, because development up to adulthood not only takes longer but also requires a certain quality of relationship with individuals of the same species. In other words, ‘the man’s cub’ carries a certain potential at birth, but this potential may not be realised if there’s not a sufficiently rich relationship between the child and the human group in which he or she lives, or if there is a lack of sufficient stimulating and rewarding experiences.”

“But there are stories of children being raised by animals such as wolves or bears”, Stefan interrupted.

“Yes. Such situations have been reported in various countries, particularly in India. It’s the story of Mowgli, the wolf-child! But we know now that ‘wild’ children who are raised, so to speak, by animals are only children abandoned or mistreated by their parents. They suffer multiple physical and mental deficiencies, and never achieve full development. A kitten, however, becomes an apparently normal adult cat even if it’s raised by the female of a different species — a dog for example. But a human baby can only survive and develop fully if it’s raised by humans.”

“In that case, the story of Mowgli is just a fairy tale”, exclaimed Vladimir, casting an ironic look in the direction of Olga, who was responsible for the Cub Scout section.

“No, Vladimir”, the professor replied. “It’s a marvellous parable on education. We’ll talk about it some more later.”

“If I understand what you’re saying,” Eva interrupted, “a child is born with a number of potentialities, which can only be fulfilled if the education that the child receives enables him or her to develop them.”

“Correct. The potential of human babies is far richer and much more varied than that of other animals, but it’s also much more fragile. It takes quite a

few years before babies are able to feed themselves and to survive alone. Their development requires great care for a very long period. There would seem to be a kind of law whereby the greater the potential for development, the longer the period of dependence and learning.”

“How can this development potential be analysed? Are there several identifiable categories?”

“I see what you’re getting at”, the professor smiled. “Indeed, by observing a child’s development, you can identify several areas. Since the start of the century, child development psychology has been recognised as a separate specialist domain, to which many studies, theories and schools have been devoted. I can try to summarise some of the key elements. Olga can certainly help me, given that she has trained as a teacher. Development psychologists generally identify four areas of growth: physical development, intellectual development, affective development and social development. It all starts with a fertilized egg, which merges two sexual cells, one from the father and the other from the mother. The egg carries the genes responsible for heredity. These contain all the potential of the individual, the fulfilment of which will depend, to some extent, on his or her environment and education. After that, the cells multiply and specialise into three groups — those that form the digestive and pulmonary system, those that form the muscles and skeleton, and those that form the epidermis, the nervous system and the sense organs — in other words, everything that will enable the individual to feed him- or herself and to breathe, move, perceive the world, communicate with others and think. As you can see, the development of the body can’t be separated from the other areas of growth.”

“That’s what our physical education teacher kept on telling us”, said Stefan.

“And he was right! What’s important to note is that all the sensory systems function before birth — touch, balance, smell, taste, hearing and sight. Shortly before birth, foetuses can be seen on an ultrasound scan sucking their thumbs! Foetuses also react to noises in the outside environment, and psychologists have revealed the possibility of pre-natal learning experiences.”

“For example, in a musical family, the child is sensitive to music even before birth”, Olga added.

“Quite. At birth, an infant weighs an average of three to four kilos and measures around fifty centimetres. He or she is unable to sit up or coordinate any movements. It takes a lot of time and training before an infant is able to stand upright, walk and grasp objects. This is what the psychologists call sensorimotor development — in other words, the coordination of vision, hearing and movement — all of which are essential to development. Imagine an infant coming into the vast world. What does he or she have to do in order to grow? The first task will be to discover the world around him or her and to meet others to establish social relations. Tell me, Stefan, what essential functions will an infant need to do that?”

Stefan appeared to come out of a daydream:

“Eh... to be able to walk.”

“Yes. An infant would need to be able to move about, pull him- or herself along, crawl, then walk on two legs. What else?”

“To see”, said Olga.

“Right. But in order to see properly, a child first has to be able to hold his or her head upright, sit up, then stand up. It’s what psychologists call posture. So we now have walking and posture, and there’s a third essential function, which is?”

Nobody answered.

“You can’t work it out? Well, it’s prehension, which means reaching and grasping objects. Psychologists have proven that these three functions — posture, walking and prehension — are the basis of intellectual and social development.”

“Hence the problem of disabled children”, Olga interrupted. “Without early intervention, a sensory disability, deafness for example, or a motor disability, like paralysis, can affect intellectual and social development.”

“That’s right. In a child — who is a person under development — everything evolves simultaneously and in interaction. Olga, as a teacher, can you tell us at what age walking, posture and prehension are permanently acquired?”

“I think children are able to stand upright at around nine to ten months, they take their first steps shortly afterwards, and they’re able to walk at around one year of age. But walking continues to develop until at least five to seven years of age. I’ve noticed that children are still clumsy until then, particularly when it comes to running, jumping or turning round.”

“Yes, and it’s not until about five years of age”, the professor continued, “that children start to be able to balance perfectly when standing still. Furthermore, up to that age, they still lack precision and speed in terms of grasping objects. So you see how slow it all is.”

“But how does development take place?” Vladimir asked.

“That’s a very good question, Vladimir! Well, first of all, there’s the maturation of the body itself — the development of muscles, the skeleton and the nervous system, which will enable the child to gradually have better control over his or her body. For example, it’s not until children reach about two years of age that anal and urinal sphincter control becomes possible and they’re able to keep themselves clean. But exercise also plays an important role, particularly what psychologists call the ‘exercise game’. If you watch a baby, you’ll see that he or she spends most waking time playing ‘exercise games’ — catching an object, releasing it, kicking his or her legs and arms, crawling, etc. Later on, we’ll discover that play is essential to development.”

“But exercise games continue later”, Olga remarked.

“Of course, all children, and adults too, enjoy walking, running, jumping, keeping their balance, etc. It’s essential for the development and health of the body. Between the ages of seven and ten, a sort of physical equilibrium is achieved. Children are generally at ease in well-proportioned bodies over which they have increasing control. Physical growth continues up to eighteen to twenty years of age.”

“There’s an acceleration during adolescence”, Olga added.

“Yes”, the professor continued. “Adolescence starts with puberty. It’s the moment when the sexual organs reach maturity and underarm and pubic hair appears. Puberty arrives at around eleven or twelve years of age in boys, and around ten or eleven in girls. As Olga said, it’s a period of extremely

rapid physical development. Height increases very quickly by six to twelve centimetres per year! The lower limbs grow first, which is why young adolescents often look like wading birds.”

“Yes, I remember it well. I wasn’t terribly at ease at the time”, Stefan said.

“Too right! Whenever there’s rapid change, there’s inevitably a crisis! Young adolescents grow so quickly that they lose their bodily reference points — they’re awkward in their movements and ill-at-ease with their bodies.”

“There’s also a time difference between boys and girls”, Olga added.

“Yes. Puberty is earlier in girls. They start menstruating between ten and twelve years of age, in our culture at least. Their ovaries mature a few months later. Their shape changes when their breasts start to develop at around eleven years of age. A boy notices the first signs of sexual maturation at around twelve years of age, when he starts to develop pubic hair. At around thirteen to fourteen years of age, his testicles start to develop, sperm appears in the semen, his voice breaks and facial hair develops. All of these changes have affective consequences, which we’ll look at later. It should however be stressed that there are considerable differences between individuals. Between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, it is not surprising to find adolescents — boys or girls — who are just starting their sexual maturation and physical growth, while others will have already passed that stage. These variations are due to cultural and socio-economic factors, particularly dietary differences.”

“What should an educator’s main concern be in terms of physical development?” Olga asked.

“First of all, an educator shouldn’t under-estimate the importance of the body. It’s through our bodies that we relate to the world and others. Children have to be encouraged to develop a healthy relationship with their bodies. In this respect, three key points can be identified:

- 1 What I would call the ‘ecology of the body’ — helping young people discover the natural needs of their bodies — oxygen, a healthy diet, natural rhythms, etc.
- 2 ‘Body maintenance’ — in other words, the care and basic rules of hygiene necessary for maintaining the body in good condition and good shape.

3 ‘Efficiency’ — that’s to say the exercises and training required to develop physical resistance, hardiness, agility, suppleness, dexterity and bodily control — as well as the ability to express ourselves through movement. We shouldn’t forget that it’s through our bodies that we relate with others — through looks, words, attitudes, gestures, and so on.”

“But children don’t all have the same physical potential”, Olga added. “Some are better than others at running, jumping, dancing or expressing themselves through movement, whilst others suffer from disabilities or have health problems. Each individual should be encouraged to develop his or her full potential, but also to accept limits — to live with his or her body as it is.”

“Quite. And that’s where wisdom begins. If young people are made to compete in terms of physical ability, the purpose should be for each individual to do his or her best, and not to try at all costs to do better than everyone else. Contrary to certain philosophers, I don’t think that we can separate the body and the mind. The development of one’s relationship with one’s body is an essential step in developing one’s mind.”

“And vice-versa”, Olga said. “When someone is ill-at-ease psychologically, she or he tends to no longer respect his or her own body, nor that of others...”

“And that’s particularly important in adolescence, when psychological problems can result in a certain aggressiveness towards one’s own body or someone else’s body. It’s the problem of taking risks without due consideration, food-related disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, obesity, or smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse and violence. Scouting should teach young people to respect their bodies and those of others.”

“In connection with the limits of the body...”, Stefan interrupted.

“I quite agree”, the professor acknowledged. “Eva, I think it’s time to stop work for this evening and to take a well-earned rest.”



IV. Intellectual Development

Saturday, 26 September, 07.20 hours

Vladimir felt the cold go right through him. He curled himself up under the thick woollen blanket that covered the narrow bed. A pale light came through the narrow window and lit the whitewashed walls. Day was breaking. A moment later, Vladimir dared to take his wrist out from under the covers to look at his watch. He was going to be late for breakfast, which was set for 07.30 hours. Grumbling about the monastery's "unorthodox" hours, he got up and hurried into the corridor to look for the bathrooms.

The shower was icy cold and woke him up completely. While shaving, he went over in his mind the events of the previous day and the abbot's welcome. After breakfast, they were due to meet for a first discussion session. The afternoon would be devoted to manual work.

At 07.40 hours, he pulled on a thick sweater and hurried downstairs to join his friends in the dining room. They were all there already, and his late arrival was greeted with a few gibes. Breakfast, which was just as frugal as dinner had been, took only a few minutes to dispense with, and at 08.00 hours precisely, the whole team was ready to start work.

Eva started by wishing everyone a good morning. She then turned to the blackboard.

"I've tried to summarise what the professor told us yesterday", she said. "Does it look OK, professor?"

"I think it's a good summary..."

"Well, what shall we work on now?" asked Eva. "What about intellectual development?"

"Exactly. The seeds of intelligence exist in man from birth. In proportion to his body, man in fact possesses a much larger cerebral mass than any other animal. But it appears and develops gradually."

“Can I ask a question?” Stefan interrupted.

“Go ahead...”

“What exactly is intelligence?”

“That’s a good question, Stefan. You’re quite right. I should have started there. Well, I think intelligence can be defined as the ability to adapt to various situations.”

“Finding the best solution to resolve a problem?”

“If you like, yes. To start with, a child is equipped with simple reflexes — for example, the reflex of putting an object into his or her mouth and sucking on it. That’s how a child can grasp his or her mother’s breast or bottle and feed. Two movements have been coordinated — that of the hand and that of the mouth — and an interesting result achieved, namely appeasing hunger. The child will therefore apply this same pattern to other situations — for example, sucking his or her thumb to achieve a sensation of pleasure and calm. Little by little, the child will memorise the sequences of movements that produce interesting results as far as he or she is concerned — such as pulling on a cord attached to the cot to bring down and grasp a desired object. Finally, the child will be able to make experiments; in other words, vary a movement that has enabled him or her to achieve an interesting result to see how the result is altered — for example, by varying the position of an object to set it off balance.”

“But that’s the exercise game that we’ve already spoken about”, Olga remarked.

“Exactly. Physical development and intellectual development are connected. If small children were forbidden to play exercise games, that would probably hinder both their physical and intellectual development.”

“That’s why we shouldn’t underestimate the importance of play”, Olga said.

“Yes. But things evolve rapidly. At around the age of two, children are able to mentally visualise situations. They can therefore imagine situations without having to actually experience them. For example, a baby can manage to take a chain out of a half-closed matchbox, but when he or she is given the box almost totally closed, the baby can’t do so any more. So the baby stops,

opens and closes his or her mouth, then puts a finger in the opening of the box in order to make it larger and to take the chain out. The baby visualises the situation mentally before acting. He or she is therefore able to combine operations mentally.”

“So what you’re saying,” Vladimir observed, “is that first we’re able to act and then the ability to think appears at a second stage...”

“That’s right. Some psychologists even maintain that thoughts stem from action. However, for thought to really exist, some notions have to be acquired, particularly those of object, space, time and causality.”

“It’s starting to get complicated”, Stefan remarked.

“Don’t worry, Stefan. You’ll see that it’s quite simple really. At birth, babies are unaware of their bodies, as well as of the environment around them. For example, they can’t distinguish between their own bodies and that of their mothers. You have to admit that in that situation it’s difficult to have clear thoughts!”

“Yes, it’s rather like someone who’s had a bit too much vodka to drink.”

“You could say that! Children first have to build an essential notion that we call the notion of the permanence of the object. The real objects around us exist as they are, independently from us. An object that’s no longer in our sight nevertheless continues to exist. Without this notion, any form of logical reasoning is impossible and we get into the realms of magic! And that’s the situation that babies find themselves in. If you wave a rattle above a two-month-old baby, the baby’s interest is aroused. If you hide the rattle, the baby doesn’t look for it any more. As far as he or she is concerned, the rattle has ceased to exist! It’s not until babies are eight to ten months old that they’ll start looking for an object that has been removed from sight. At this stage, babies start to study the movements of objects, by grasping them, moving them, hiding them and finding them again, and they’re able to coordinate sight and touch to gradually construct a notion of an object.”

“So babies spend their time experimenting”, Stefan noted.

“Exactly. It’s once again what we call play, and this is the most important activity for a child. We’ll come back to this subject later. The second essential

notion for thinking is that of space and time. To begin with, babies live in several compartmentalised, unrelated spaces — there's the touching space, the visual space, the hearing space, etc. — but no space as a general notion. As soon as children are able to move (first by dragging themselves along, then by crawling), they start to explore reality and to discover that all of these different spaces form one space. This is where logical reasoning begins.”

“That's a bit beyond me”, Stefan moaned.

“Me too”, Eva admitted.

“OK. Let's imagine that a baby crawls from point A to point B, then from point B to point C, and finally from point C to point D.”

“So far so good”, Stefan stated.

“Good. In the light of this experience, it won't take the baby long to discover that he or she can do the same thing by going directly from A to C, then from C to D. Point D can be reached by different paths. Are you still following? This is the notion of the 'detour', which chimpanzees possess but not chickens. Try it — put a plate of corn down in front of a chicken and separate the plate and the chicken by two or three metres of wire netting. The chicken will see the plate and try to get to it by forcing its way through the netting — in vain of course. It's not intelligent enough to make a detour around the netting to reach the food.”

“I'm happy to hear that our baby is more intelligent than a chicken”, Stefan sighed.

“And the notion of time?” Vladimir asked.

“It's linked to the organisation of positions and movements in space. The movement from A to B takes place before the movement from B to C, thereby forming temporal sequences. Let's look at causality now. To start with, anything can produce anything, as far as a child is concerned, in accordance with past connections that he or she has made. For example, you might see a baby blinking in front of a switch to turn on an electric lamp. Gradually, by learning to situate permanent objects within a spatio-temporal environment, a child discovers that the relationship between cause and effect presupposes a spatial contact. If a rattle is placed next to a cushion, the baby won't pull on the

cushion to get the rattle, because he or she realises that the necessary condition has not been met.”

“This baby must be Einstein!” Stefan exclaimed.

“Yes, it’s quite marvellous when you think about it. To think that all of that happens between birth and the age of two. But it doesn’t end there! Soon, as I’ve already said, a child will start to be able to mentally combine action schemes, for which the starting point is imitation. In the presence of adults, babies imitate adult behaviour. Then, in their absence, they start to be able to reproduce a model, which presupposes the existence of what we call a mental image. Babies are able to mentally visualise a space and to implement operations experienced in other situations in that mental space. Remember the story of the baby who opens and closes his or her mouth before opening a matchbox. The mouth mentally represents the matchbox. It’s what psychologists would call representation or the symbolic function. It also operates in games of ‘make believe’ or symbolic games. For example, a child pretends to make a phone call by using a paper cone as a telephone. This function is also expressed through the ability to draw, and in the acquisition of language. From that point on, the possibilities for reflection and communication are increased ten-fold.”

“At what age is a baby able to do that?” Eva asked.

“The representation function appears at around eighteen months of age.”

“Does that mean that a two-year old has acquired intelligence?” Stefan asked.

“No, psychologists distinguish several stages before the appearance of full intellectual possibilities. Language itself is the object of a long learning process. At two years old, children use around twenty words. By the age of six, they have a vocabulary of around 2,500 words. Children only fully master syntax and sentence construction at around nine or ten years of age.”

“But with even a rudimentary vocabulary, children are able to communicate and consequently learn faster”, Olga added.

“Yes, it’s a radical change. It also means that intellectual development can’t be separated from social development and even, as we’ll see, affective

development. A child deprived of affection, care and a favourable environment will have great difficulty acquiring language.”

“We see it every day at school”, Olga said. “Children from underprivileged backgrounds have a much more limited vocabulary. This doesn’t mean that they’re any less intelligent, but their abilities of expression and communication are more limited and, at the same time, they learn more slowly.”

“Can Scouting do something about this?” Stefan asked.

“Of course. A Scout unit represents a secondary environment that can offer a child stimulating experiences, as well as rich and fulfilling interactions in a group where he or she is accepted. It’s quite complementary to the family and school.”

“What happens next?” Vladimir asked.

“It’s essentially the ability to reason in a logical manner that will start to develop little by little. Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, studied this aspect of development in particular. He observed that, from the age of eight, a child manages to classify objects into categories, to sort them in increasing or decreasing order, and finally to acquire the notion of numbers. He calls this stage of intellectual development the stage of concrete operations.”

“But are all these notions acquired naturally with age, or do they have to be learned?” Vladimir asked.

“That’s a question that has troubled and still troubles the world of psychology. Which is more important: heredity — what’s written in the genes — or what is acquired through the influence of the environment? It’s very difficult to put things into perspective, but there’s no doubt that social interaction has a great influence. It’s been proven that experimentation and the learning process accelerate the acquisition of logical reasoning. And even more than that — and this is what’s interesting for you — on the basis of experiments which have allowed children’s performance in different situations to be compared, psychologists have highlighted the positive role played by interaction in peer groups.”

“A peer group?” Stefan questioned.

“A group of similar people, a group of young people of the same age. Group work enables each of the partners to advance more than he or she would have done by working alone. The learning process accelerates acquisition, but this first requires a certain degree of biological maturation. In other words, despite all the possible learning processes, a two-year old can never be taught to resolve quadratic equations.”

Vladimir was furiously noting down what the professor was saying. He then spoke:

“That’s why there are successive stages of development.”

“Precisely. Successive functions gradually fall into place under the dual influence of biological development and interaction with the environment. That’s why several successive stages can be observed in all individuals, but with differences in time due to individual differences or social differences.”

“At what age is intellectual development complete?” Stefan asked.

“It’s not possible to set a limit to a human being’s development. Everyone constantly evolves throughout his or her life. Today we actually talk of ‘lifelong’ development. The individual is in continuous transformation. An adult doesn’t stop changing either. However, psychologists generally agree that the last phase of the construction of logical reasoning takes place from the age of eleven or twelve until the age of fourteen or fifteen.”

“And what characterises that phase?” Stefan asked.

“The appearance of what is called hypothetico–deductive reasoning.”

“My goodness!”

“Don’t panic, Stefan! At the previous stage, from eight to eleven years of age, children can only reason logically on objects. That’s why we talk about the stage of concrete operations. From the age of eleven or twelve, they start to be able to make deductions on the basis of verbal hypotheses. They are no longer obliged to base their reasoning on concrete situations.”

“I’m not sure that I’ve reached that stage myself”, Stefan said.

“You’re wrong, Stefan. Confronted with a problem, children under the age of twelve will immediately act, proceed by trial and error, venture an

hypothesis that they check by classifying certain factors, but not exhaustively, as their reasoning is still linked to the concrete situation. They can't generalise. In contrast, adolescents make several attempts, then compile a list of possible hypotheses, which they systematically check by varying a single factor at a time. I'm sure it's something you do every day in your professional life."

"Or at least I try", Stefan replied.

"What are the most important points to bear in mind when supporting intellectual development?" Eva asked.

"Piaget would have replied that it's important to help children acquire the ability to stand back from their own points of view, and coordinate those points of view with other people's in order to examine the phenomena objectively. I think that this involves three stages:

- 1 Acquiring information. Children are naturally curious about everything. This natural curiosity shouldn't be suppressed but, on the contrary, encouraged. They should be taught to seek information by reading, enquiring and observing.
- 2 Processing information. Once the information has been gathered, children have to be taught to check it, analyse it and classify it in order to memorise it.
- 3 Thirdly, learning problem-solving techniques. When confronted with a problem, children have to learn to work out various hypotheses, and to then test these systematically by isolating the various factors. This technique helps develop creativity, by first applying it to concrete problems, then more abstract questions."

"I suggest that we make a written summary on the blackboard, like we did for physical growth", Eva proposed. "Do you agree?"

The whole group nodded, and devoted the next half an hour to noting the key points highlighted by the professor on the blackboard. When they had finished, Eva congratulated the group and suggested a break:

"It's sunny outside. Let's go and get some fresh air."



V. Affective Development

Outside, a light breeze was moving the leaves on the trees, but the sunshine was radiant. The group walked in silence up to the wall overlooking the valley. The Green Island was sparkling in the light.

“At the beginning of the Middle Ages, monasteries were truly the outposts of civilization”, the professor said. “Not only did their libraries contain knowledge of antiquity, but they were also places of experimentation and development, which was also applied in their daily lives. The rhythm of life in the monastery was based on a perfect balance between manual and intellectual work, community life and spiritual exercises.”

“You mean that the Middle Ages took a global view of man?” Stefan asked.

“Exactly. It was based on the concepts of Aristotle, adopted by St Thomas of Aquinas — man has both a ‘plant soul’ (the vegetative soul), an ‘animal soul’ (the sensitive soul) and a ‘soul of reason’ (the intellective soul), and can only live a full life by developing all the potential faculties that he possesses. According to Aristotle, man — placed as he is at the top of the ladder of creation — is the only creature that can think in a rational manner, which means that he possesses a grain of divine reason.”

“Let’s talk about affective development”, Stefan proposed.

“Hang on! We can’t work here. I’ve left all my notes inside!” Eva exclaimed.

“That’s OK. I’ll take over”, Vladimir offered, taking a notebook and pencil from his pocket.

“Psychology in the outdoors can’t be bad”, Stefan enthused.

“You’re right”, Olga agreed, blinking against the autumn sun.

The professor smiled, picked a blade of grass and took over:

“We have to start by defining the terms that we use. Affective refers to pleasure, pain, fear, love — in other words, feelings and emotions. It’s what truly makes us alive, don’t you think Stefan? What would life be without emotions?”

“Rather boring, I’d say...”

“You’re right. But at the same time, emotions are disturbing. They come and perturb us. If I feel love for someone, I am no longer at ease. I’m afraid that this love will not be reciprocated. I’m jealous or, if the object of my love is absent, I await her return impatiently or anxiously. The philosopher Kant defines emotions as illnesses of the soul. Plato accuses them of perturbing our thoughts. Some eastern philosophers recommend suppressing the emotions to achieve serenity. In our culture, education traditionally encouraged a child to dominate and control his or her emotions.”

“When I was little, my parents used to tell me that a brave boy shouldn’t cry”, Stefan remarked.

“Yes. Crying was for girls!” Olga said ironically.

“But emotions are not only perturbations”, Vladimir protested. “For example, here, in this magnificent place, I am experiencing a feeling of calm and happiness. I feel good.”

“And you don’t want to leave. Emotions represent an energy, which directs our lives”, the professor added. “We seek pleasure and well-being. We try to avoid suffering and displeasure, which appear related to pressure or a need. For example, I’m hungry. I’m in a state of excitement and I feel compelled to find food. The pressure I experience will disappear once I’ve eaten, leaving a sensation of pleasure. This is what Sigmund Freud called the pleasure principle.”

“Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis?” Vladimir asked.

“Yes.”

“Doesn’t psychoanalysis say that you should express emotions without blocking them and being guided by them?”

“No. Freud pointed out that man is not a purely rational being. He is perturbed by urges — often unconscious urges — which are the expression of instincts or profound desires. Freud referred to all these urges as ‘id’. A new-born baby automatically displays urges without the least embarrassment. A baby cries to make it known that he or she needs food or care. The ‘id’,

or pleasure principle, dominates totally. This principle doesn't disappear. It remains with us throughout our lives, but little by little we learn to moderate our desires and urges, to conform to the norms of the society that we live in. We learn to adjust the pleasure principle, by taking a new principle into account — the reality principle. In order to satisfy a need that I feel, I can't just sit down and shout until I get satisfaction, because I've learned from experience that that doesn't get me anywhere. This adjustment function between the pleasure principle and the reality principle is exercised by what Freud calls the 'ego'."

"So educating a child means helping him or her to advance from the pleasure principle to the reality principle?" Vladimir asked.

"No. The pleasure principle is essential to life. We can't do without it. But if we don't take account of the reality principle, we can't fulfil our desires in a responsible way. Our goal should be to help children consider both and make up their own minds. This helps them build their 'ego'."

"That's educating for responsibility", Olga added.

"Exactly. Besides the 'id' and the 'ego', Freud points out a third part, which he calls the 'superego'. From childhood, we're faced with the moral demands, rules and prohibitions of our environment, as expressed by our parents and other adults. We internalise them and they constitute what Freud calls the 'superego'. An excessively authoritarian style of education, which increases the prohibitions without calling on the free choice and responsibility of the child, will develop the 'superego' at the expense of the 'ego'. In fact, Freud demonstrated that the 'superego' formed part of the realm of the unconscious. Any desire that doesn't correspond to the parents' rules is expelled from the conscious. The child strives to chase it out of his or her mind and forget it, but it remains there, hidden, because the decision not to satisfy it was not taken in a conscious way by the subject him- or herself, by the 'ego'.

"That's all rather theoretical and abstract", Stefan complained.

"OK. I'll try to illustrate what I've just said by using an image proposed by Freud himself. Imagine a political meeting. The speaker is bothered by a heckler, who keeps interrupting by making stupid remarks, noise, etc. After

a while, the ‘muscle-men’ get up and take the heckler out into the corridor, so that the meeting can continue. In this instance, the speaker is the ‘ego’, the meeting room is the conscious part of the psyche, the heckler is the ‘id’ — the desire or urge, the muscle-men are the ‘superego’, and the corridor is the unconscious.”

“Yes, I see,” said Stefan. “But won’t the heckler in the corridor try to get back into the meeting room?”

“Well spotted, Stefan. In fact, he hasn’t had his last word. He’ll try to enter the room again — perhaps even by disguising himself. Freud shows that we live under the constant pressure of repressed desires, which attempt to reach the conscience. This is how unconscious thoughts or reactions manage to guide our feelings or action, and surface in bizarre ways.”

“What do you mean?”

“For example, in the form of slips or errors in one’s choice of words. We sometimes make a ‘slip of the tongue’, which we laugh about, thinking that it’s insignificant. Freud however shows that such errors sometimes represent disguised unconscious thoughts erupting into broad daylight.”

“And I suppose that the more agitated people there are in the corridor, the tenser the situation becomes.”

“Precisely. If there are too many hecklers in the corridor, the ego may lose control of the situation. Freud shows that the repression of urges by the superego is necessary, but is not a long-term solution. We mustn’t block the door between the corridor and the meeting room, between the conscious and the subconscious. In any case, problems which are chased into the subconscious remain unresolved and have to return to the conscience to be dealt with by the ego and consciously resolved.”

“What do you mean?”

“To use the same image, you could say that the ‘speaker’ has to negotiate with the ‘hecklers’ to come to an arrangement. It’s the ‘speaker’, the ‘ego’, that has to resolve the problem, and not the ‘muscle-men’ — they are only a last resort, who intervene when the ‘ego’ is too weak. True education should target the development of the ‘ego’ — that is, help a young person become a

responsible ‘subject’ on his or her own instead of making him or her a slave, subject to urges of the ‘id’ or prohibitions of the ‘superego’. This was exactly what Baden-Powell thought. I’ve noted down two pertinent quotations to illustrate this:

*The Scoutmasters educate the boy by encouraging his self-expression instead of disciplining him by police methods of repression.*⁵

*Direct moral instruction — like drill — produces a pleasing veneer, but unless there is properly seasoned character below, this will not stand wear.*⁶

Freud has often been presented — above all in the former communist countries — as an advocate of the unrestrained fulfilment of desires and urges. In fact, he demonstrated the importance of the conscience and the need for man to be responsible for himself. Based on his analysis of mental illnesses, he developed a theory of affective development, from childhood to adulthood, which highlights the conditions and different stages in developing the personality or character.”

“Can you give us the main points?” Eva asked.

“I’ll try. To start with, for a baby who is not yet aware of him- or herself, the relationship with the environment is built up around the feeding function. Hunger is the most important need, and pleasure is associated with the activity of sucking (to get milk) and the mouth — whence the term the oral stage.”

“We touched on this already, when we talked about intellectual development”, Olga said. “You told us that, to start with, a child possesses simple reflexes, like putting an object in his or her mouth and sucking it.”

“Well remembered, Olga!”

“So that’s another link between the areas of growth”, Eva remarked.

“Yes, this time between intellectual development and affective development”, the professor said. “Moreover, we’ll see later on that this link is very strong. After Freud, psychoanalysts noted the importance of the relationship with one’s mother in infancy. In his or her environment, a baby gradually recognises an approaching human face that is associated with the provision of food, care and caresses. At around three months of age, a baby

starts to respond to the approach of a human face by smiling. At between six and eight months, a baby is able to recognise mother and shows joy at her approach. The baby will try to cling to her or follow her. In contrast however, he or she will react with apprehension the first time that an unknown person approaches. On discovering a new face and in the absence of mother, a baby displays a fear of being abandoned by her. The baby is now able to recognise mother, and identifies with her and imitates her. The first behaviour that the baby will imitate is to mimic the sign of prohibition — shaking the head to say no — and one of the first words uttered will be ‘no’.

“Why ‘no?’” Eva asked.

“No doubt because when mother forbids something, saying ‘no’ is a very striking experience for a baby. He or she experiences a keen feeling of displeasure, becomes frustrated and feels a surge of aggressiveness. So, frustrated by mother’s attitude and wanting to oppose her, a baby will in turn imitate this sign of negation and say the word ‘no’. Psychologists interpret the appearance of the ‘no’ stage as a sign that a child is able to fully distinguish him- or herself from the mother, and is in the process of constructing his or her own identity. It also represents the start of social communication.”

“You mean that communication starts by saying ‘no?’” Vladimir asked.

“At first sight, this must, I admit, seem paradoxical”, replied the professor. “But think about it. It takes two people to communicate. You have to be able to distinguish yourself from the other person, to separate yourself from the other person. Saying ‘no’ means ‘I exist as a different person from you’. Refusing to be as one with another person is the necessary prerequisite for all real communication. It’s also the necessary prerequisite for love — and education.

“So there’s a link between affective development and social development”, Eva stated.

“Well spotted”, the professor said. “But explain this link to us.”

“Well, it’s thanks to the affective relationship with mother that a child is able to perceive him- or herself as a separate person from mother, then from others, and can start to communicate — and that’s where social relationships start, isn’t it?”

“Well done, Eva. You’ve understood perfectly. Furthermore, certain mental illnesses — those characterised by an inability to come out of oneself and communicate with others — appear to be due, at least partially, to a defective or inadequate maternal relationship.”

“I confess that I’m somewhat stunned by all these discoveries”, Stefan said.

“Wait. It’s only the beginning. We’ve only got as far as the second year”, Olga replied.

“A lot happens during this second year, including walking, learning cleanliness, constructing one’s identity and acquiring language. It’s amazing!”

“So let’s continue to be amazed”, the professor continued. “At around three years of age, a new stage begins. Children start to display great sexual curiosity. They show an interest in the genitals and discover that touching them is a source of pleasure. They’re interested in the difference between the sexes and in the relationship between their parents. They start asking questions about life, where we come from, death, etc. It’s the age of questions, which all parents have experienced. In psychologists’ jargon, this is the stage of the urge to discover and learn.”

“Do their questions have to be answered?” Eva asked.

“Yes. If children don’t get clear answers, they’ll seek the information elsewhere, mixing up what’s true and what’s false and, gripped by a feeling of guilt, there’s a risk — according to Freud — that they’ll give sexual life ‘the stamp of something terrible and disgusting’. But information in itself is not enough. To avoid guilt and anxiety, what’s more important is the adult’s listening and receptive attitude. The sexual curiosity that children show at this age is in fact quite normal and represents a very important step in their development.”

“What step is that?” Stefan asked.

“Freud calls it the Oedipus complex. I’m sure you remember the King Oedipus tragedy, written by the great Greek writer Sophocles?”

“Oedipus marries his mother and kills his father”, said Vladimir.

“That’s a striking summary. But that’s indeed what it’s all about! Freud uses

the term Oedipus complex, to describe a child's amorous attachment to the parent of the opposite sex, and hostility towards the parent of the same sex, who is perceived as a rival. Little boys are often heard saying '*I'm going to marry mummy when I grow up*' or little girls saying '*I'll marry daddy when I'm older*'.

"But that's just kid's talk!" Stefan exclaimed.

"Children's words shouldn't be taken lightly! What in fact happens is that the child first experiences a very close relationship with his or her mother, after which the father appears as a third element. Freud then explains that the child faces two options: either the masculine mode of taking the father's place to experience a relationship of love with the mother, in which case the father is perceived as an obstacle or a rival; or the feminine mode of replacing the mother and being loved by the father, in which case the mother becomes superfluous."

"That seems quite logical", said Stefan.

"You could say so. Take the case of a small boy. He discovers the differences between the sexes. He has a penis like his father, towards whom he develops an ambivalent attitude — identifying with him and, at the same time, developing hostility towards him because he perceives him as a rival vis-à-vis his mother. But at the same time, the aggressiveness that he develops towards his father makes him feel guilty, and he imagines that he could be punished with castration, thus being deprived of his penis. Gradually, he'll take stock of reality and abandon his plans to 'marry his mother'. He can do so in two ways, according to Freud: either by identifying with his mother, or by strengthening his identity with his father, which allows him to maintain a loving relationship with his mother. In the latter case — which is considered to be the most usual — his masculine identity will be strengthened."

"And a girl?" Eva asked.

"In a similar way, a girl develops an ambivalent attitude towards her mother. She identifies with her, whilst at the same time perceiving her as a rival for her father's love. Finally, she will usually identify with her mother and thereby develop her feminine identity."

“Does that mean that it’s on the basis of the Oedipus complex that a boy develops his masculine identity and a girl her feminine identity?” Eva asked.

“That’s right. The Oedipus complex has very important consequences for a child’s development. It will result in the subconscious repression of sexual desires and create what Freud calls the ‘superego’ — in other words the internalisation by the child of the rules, prohibitions and moral judgements of his or her parents. It also plays a very important role in structuring the personality and in socialisation, by establishing the difference between genders and by enabling a fundamental law to be internalised, namely the prohibition of incest, which, according to Freud, is at the basis of all human societies.”

“Is it possible for the Oedipus complex not to be resolved positively?” Vladimir asked.

“Yes of course, if the relationship with one or the other parent can’t be established positively — for example if the child is the victim of rejection or bad treatment, or if his or her image of the parents is so bad that it’s impossible to identify with them.”

“What happens in that case?”

“It may prevent the child from establishing his or her gender identity, or else affective development may remain blocked at an infantile stage, and mental illness or neurosis may set in.”

“And what’s the next step in affective development?” Stefan asked.

“At around the age of five or six, after all this turmoil, a calmer period begins, which psychologists call the ‘latency period’. This lasts until puberty. According to Freud, this period is characterised by three phenomena. The first is repression, which I’ve already mentioned. Children will subconsciously repress all their amorous and aggressive desires towards their parents and instead develop loving feelings towards them. They will literally forget the passionate feelings that stirred them, which, according to Freud, is why it’s rare to have childhood memories prior to the Oedipus complex — that is, at four or five years of age. The second phenomenon is what Freud calls sublimation. Energy is diverted from sexuality and turned towards other

purposes, such as the thirst for knowledge, cultural interests, etc. And the third phenomenon is that of identification with their parents, which takes the place of the amorous and aggressive desires. Children thereby appropriate certain attitudes or ideals from their parents — as I've already mentioned — and, moreover, this is where moral awareness begins.”

“That reminds me that you haven't included moral or spiritual development among the four areas of growth that you're putting forward”, said Eva. “Don't you think it's important?”

“That's a very good point, Eva. I guess you'd like me to explain myself, wouldn't you? Well, in my view, there are first of all four basic areas of growth — physical, intellectual, affective and social — which contribute to the development of a free and responsible person, in other words a 'subject'. And this subject then has to gear his or her development towards the highest moral and spiritual values. This takes place at another level, which we'll look at later.”

“We won't let you forget!”

“OK.”

“You haven't mentioned affective development during adolescence. Yet at this age it's more of a crisis, isn't it?” Vladimir asked.

“Quite right, Vladimir. We now have to look at adolescence. When we discussed physical development, we saw that, in this respect, adolescence is characterised by accelerated growth and the maturation of the sexual organs. Well, this leads to renewed interest in sexuality and a kind of re-awakening of the Oedipus complex. Freud explains that the adolescent's major task is to detach him- or herself from the parents, in order to be liberated and become an independent person. The authority and rules imposed by adults — previously considered normal — are contested. Young people seek their identity. The changes that they see in themselves cause them anguish, and they react with what psychologists call defence mechanisms. For example, some adolescents try to control their urges by taking refuge in asceticism. They force themselves to follow excessive diets or restrict their sleeping time. They adopt strict and uncompromising principles as far as morals or aestheticism are concerned. They uncritically adhere to radical value systems

or embark on idealistic and unattainable projects. When they're unable to express their questions or anxiety verbally — often through the lack of a confiding relationship with an adult — they 'act out'; that's to say they express what they can't express any other way through acts which are like challenges or pleas for help."

"What sort of acts?"

"You can all think of some examples. It could be anything from simply a slightly mad physical exploit to pathological behaviour such as bulimia, aggressiveness, delinquency, alcoholism, drug abuse or even attempted suicide."

"And how can Scouting help resolve the crisis of adolescence?"

"It seems to me that the confiding relationship with adults — teachers, Scout leaders and so on, who are in a position to complement parents and not rival them — can help control the crisis and prevent outbursts of too serious a nature. However, we should realise that this crisis of adolescence is in itself necessary and healthy. At that age, young people have to reorganise their whole personality in order to attain greater independence and reach adulthood. This can't be done without calling things into question."

"You said that adolescents are sometimes excessively idealistic, but I often have the impression that they're depressed, with no aims. You know the famous punk slogan — 'no future'."

"Excessive idealism and 'depressive' sadness are two sides of the same coin. Adolescents tend to identify with heroic models and to idealise their own personalities. They therefore set themselves unrealistic goals. When they realise the gap that exists between reality and this inaccessible ideal, there is naturally a risk of them becoming 'depressed'. The role of the adult educator is not to put down this tendency towards idealisation, but to guide it towards realistic objectives and models and to support progress, so that the young person feels rewarded and supported in his or her development efforts."

"But adolescent 'depression'", Vladimir added, "also results from the gap that they perceive between the ideals that adults proclaim in words and the behaviours that they adopt in reality, doesn't it?"

"Of course. That's why it's important for adults to be 'genuine' in their

relationship with adolescents. They shouldn't pretend to be all-powerful heroes, but admit their trials and errors, without however renouncing their ideals. Adults have to set rules and limits, but they also have to 'accompany' adolescents, in other words agree to cooperate with them in resolving problems by sharing experiences and skills."

"Adolescence is also the age of friendship and love", Eva remarked.

"And of romanticism! You're quite right, Eva! We can distinguish several steps in this respect. To start with, between eleven and thirteen years of age, young people form themselves into groups above all to share common activities. Spontaneously, these groups are rarely mixed. Indeed, the opposite sex is sometimes rejected. Later on, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, we come to the age of friendship based on mutual trust. A friend is considered to be one's double. At the end of adolescence, after seventeen years of age, relationships are less passionate and individual differences are accepted and acknowledged as a source of enrichment. We're no longer looking for someone identical, but someone complementary. Adolescence is also the age when gender identity is established. An adolescent will recognise him- or herself as male or female and, in most cases, direct his or her sexual urges towards the opposite sex. Amorous attachment is often experienced as an exclusive, idealised and all-absorbing relationship. It takes time to realise that true love exists between two free and independent subjects who accept their differences and mutually respect their own identities."

"Isn't there a risk of premature sexual relationships in mixed groups of adolescents?" Olga asked.

"The risk actually exists by the very nature of adolescence, given the gap between physical and sexual maturity and affective and social maturity, as well as by the fact that the first generally occurs several years before the second. Adults usually adopt two opposing methods to 'deal with' this risk. In my view, they're both harmful, because they treat adolescents like children and retard their attainment of the stage of responsible subjects. The first method is that of allowing sexual permissiveness, accompanied by the provision of contraception. The second is that of maintaining reinforced sexual segregation by means of prohibitions."

“Is there a third method?” Eva asked.

“I believe so. It’s that of educational ‘accompaniment’. Scouting can do a lot at this level by offering adolescents the chance to join groups in which boys and girls learn to carry out projects together. With the assistance of adults — equally responsible men and women — this enables them to develop genuine and equal partnership. It’s within such groups that young people can find what they’re looking for — true love. True love represents an attachment between two partners who recognise each other as individuals, and this has to be founded on more than just a sexual relationship. No educator can eliminate all the risks however. Risks are part of life. But once again, it’s a question of choice. Do we want to help young people become responsible subjects, or do we just want to establish techniques of control and prohibitions for eternal minors?”

“But how can we help young people complete their affective development successfully?” Olga asked.

“I think that there are three main educational paths in this area. The first is identifying and recognising emotions and urges. The educator has to help children identify the emotions that drive them, recognise that what they feel is a desire or hatred, that they feel aggressiveness, anguish, affection, etc. Traditional education claims to help a young person control urges and emotions by rejecting them and denying them. Yet, as we’ve just seen, this isn’t the right attitude, since we risk becoming slaves to urges when they are rejected into the subconscious.”

“The problem of the ‘muscle-men’.”

“That’s right. The second path is that of expressing feelings and emotions. The educator has to help young people express what they feel and communicate it to others. That’s where techniques of expression, such as dramatic art, dance, music and painting, are interesting. It’s generally said that ‘what is clearly understood can be clearly expressed’ — but the opposite may be even more true — ‘what is expressed can be apprehended and understood more easily’.”

“You mean, for example, that if I’m unable to express the aggressiveness that I feel in one way or another, I can’t recognise it or understand the reason for it?”

“Exactly. And the third path is the logical continuation, which is self-control. But we need to be careful here. There are in fact two types of ‘control’ — the wrong kind, based on passively obeying prohibitions — and the right kind, which stems from a considered and conscious choice, after the prohibitions have been internalised. As educators, our aim is to help young people develop as independent, responsible ‘subjects’ who refuse to be either hostages to their urges or slaves to prohibitions which are beyond them.”

“Does that mean that any prohibition is bad?” Eva asked.

“That’s not what I meant. Prohibitions can’t be rejected. They’re necessary for helping children achieve independence. Human society is built on two fundamental prohibitions — incest and murder. However, prohibitions shouldn’t just be imposed. They also have to be understood and accepted by the child as a value, which enables him or her to achieve a higher level of independence and responsibility. For example, the prohibition of violence has to be understood as the acceptance and respect of the integrity and dignity of others. We’ll deal with this when we discuss social development and moral education.”

Eva thanked the professor and suggested that the group again take a moment to summarise the conclusions of the meeting. While she efficiently managed the task, encouraging each participant to make a contribution, Vladimir noted the key points on the blackboard.



VI. Social Development

Saturday, 26 September, 13.00 hours

The monastery bell rang.

“It’s the call to lunch”, Eva explained. “We’ll carry on later.”

Lunch, which was served in the meeting room assigned to them, was consumed quite quickly. It consisted of a bowl of soup, a sausage with cabbage salad, and an apple. Vladimir was starving and grabbed a few extra slices of bread before leaving the table.

A young monk handed out dungarees and took them to the building site, where work was underway to reconstruct a building, which would be used to accommodate groups. The work in hand consisted of building a stone wall, under the supervision of an old mason. A few explanations were necessary, but the team quickly distributed the various tasks among themselves: preparing the mortar, washing the stones and passing them up to the top of the scaffolding by hand, arranging them on a layer of mortar, making sure they were plumb and doing the pointing. The old professor had insisted on joining in, but his friend the abbot had taken him off to give some advice on organising the library. The team gradually established a working rhythm and the wall grew rapidly. At around five o’clock in the afternoon, the old mason signalled them to stop. There was no mortar left, so it was time to stop work for the day.

“It’s nice to build!” Olga exclaimed, taking off her cement-covered gloves.

“It’s nice to build in a team”, Eva added.

The abbot and the professor had joined them.

“Good work! Go and take a shower, then meet us in the dining hall for a snack!” the abbot told them.

Some minutes later, they were all gathered around cups of steaming tea set out on the dining hall’s huge solid wooden table.

“I suggest a bit of relaxation,” the professor said. “Let’s go and explore this

island below the monastery. It will do us good to walk in the outdoors.”

“What about our work?” Eva asked.

“We can talk as we go along, or sit down under the trees — like the Greek philosophers used to.”

“Don’t worry, Eva. We’re making good progress”, Stefan reassured her.

“Dinner will be served at 19.00 hours. Don’t be late!” the abbot added.

The professor was the first to set out on the old mule track, which led down the side of the hill on which the monastery was built to the river. He walked incredibly fast for someone of his age, deftly avoiding the rolling stones. The others struggled to keep up with him, feeling their legs after their hard work on the building site. The path disappeared into the darkness of the pine forest. The murmur of the river was already audible below them. A strong smell of mint soon mixed with the heady scent of the conifers. They crossed the edge of the forest and suddenly plunged into the light of the setting sun. The river sparkled. A flock of jays took flight, emitting shrill cries as they did so. The path now followed the rush-lined riverbank. The island came into view. They stopped — struck by the beauty of the landscape once again. A haze hung over the river, and the silver trunks of the birch and the rust mass of their foliage were reflected in the water. An old moss-covered stone bridge crossed the river, giving access to the island. They stepped onto the bridge and soon reached the ruins of the old mill.

“Look”, said the professor, pointing at the embankment overhanging the edifice. “The water was tapped upstream, at the head of the island, and channelled down here by this kind of aqueduct. Then it fell vertically, to provide optimum energy. Come and see!”

They headed towards the mill — a large, one-storey building. The roof had partly collapsed, but the ground floor appeared to still be intact. They entered the building by a fairly low opening, overrun by brambles. The ground was hard-packed and it was dark. Stefan took a torch out of his pocket. The beam of light showed up what remained of two enormous horizontally-placed paddle wheels, the hubs of which — two blackened tree trunks — met the arched roof. The professor led the group to the back of the room, where he pointed

out two stone pipes coming out of the wall facing each of the wheels.

“Those are the pressure pipes which directed jets of water onto the paddles to drive the wheels. The water could be directed to provide more or less energy or even to stop the wheels turning at all. The shafts drove various machines installed on the upper floor, no doubt using a system of gears.”

“What kind of machines?” Stefan asked.

“Bellows, enormous mechanical hammers and presses for forging and shaping metal.”

“But I thought that mills were used primarily to mill grain”, Olga exclaimed.

“Not only”, the professor replied. “From olden times and until the invention of the steam engine, hydraulic energy was used in factories. We’re standing in a factory or a metallurgic workshop, if you prefer. In the Middle Ages, monasteries were centres of technological invention and economic development.”

“This building should be restored and turned into a museum”, Vladimir said.

“You’re right. Most people have no idea of the level of development already acquired in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. Some technologies perfected during that period were used for four or five hundred years without interruption. That was certainly true in the case of this mill. It’s a striking example of renewable energy!”

They left the mill and climbed a slope to reach the first floor of the edifice.

“You see,” the professor explained, “beasts of burden or even carts could get up here using this slope, to load or unload raw material and finished products.”

A wide door led into the workshop. Everything was in ruins. The floor, where bushes had taken root, was covered in debris from the roof and the upper parts of the walls. Beams, slabs and stones were piled up more than a metre high, making access almost impossible.

“We’d have to clear all of this to find the fireboxes and bases of the machines”, the professor said. “And perhaps even tools or forged articles! One chimney is still intact.”

They moved away from the building to explore the island, which was about one and a half kilometres long and three hundred metres across. A sort of small rocky hill rose up in the middle, covered with birch trees, which went down as far as the banks, forming natural clearings here and there. The professor led the group to one such clearing.

“This island is fantastic”, said Vladimir. “It would make a superb campsite!”

“You can feel an atmosphere here”, Eva murmured.

“This island used to be inhabited. It has a history”, the professor added.

Quite naturally, Jan Kessel had sat down on a stump and the others had seated themselves around him, on the grass.

“What about discussing social development now? What do you think?”

“That’s a good idea”, Stefan replied. “But don’t go too fast. My brain doesn’t feel as sharp as it did this morning!”

The sun was low now. They decided to make a fire among a few stones by gathering some dead branches. The flames soon rose, casting fleeting light on their faces.

The professor spoke:

“From birth, children are subjected to the influences of their social environment. They are totally dependent on their entourage, which gives them the care and food they need to survive and grow. Gradually, by interacting with this entourage, the first reflex attitudes turn into gestures expressing different emotions — pain, sadness, impatience and joy. A basic kind of communication develops. We’ve seen that during their first year, babies start to distinguish themselves from their mothers and their entourage.”

“The ‘no’ stage”, Olga added.

“Exactly. They start to distinguish themselves from ‘others’ and learn to imitate them. Imitation plays a major role in socialisation. To start with, children are able to imitate the behaviour of another person, at that moment and in that person’s presence. Then they become capable of deferred imitation. They repeat imitated behaviour in the absence of the model. They ‘visualise’ someone who isn’t there. This is the start of the representation function,

from which the thought process arises, and which is also expressed in the game of 'make believe' or symbolic game, in drawing and in language — in other words, social communication.”

“I don't really understand the connection between the symbolic game and language”, Stefan said.

“As the term implies, the symbolic game is based on symbols. For example, a child moves a matchbox around on a table and imitates the noise of a car. The matchbox represents, or symbolises, a car. When drawing a car, the child will represent it by a rectangle and four circles —the wheels. This is also a symbol. In language, the matchbox or rectangle is replaced by a series of sounds or phonemes — a word, which is associated with the concept of a car. So language requires a grasp of the representation function or symbolic function.”

“I see.”

“With language, a child really enters society”, Olga said.

“A child is in society from the beginning, since the way he or she is cared for from birth depends on the surrounding culture — the birth, feeding, the way he or she is carried, the interaction with the mother, etc. But language helps accelerate the cultural learning process. Children are very receptive to the songs and stories told by their mothers, which help initiate them into the culture and traditions of the society that they live in. However, it takes a certain amount of time for real social communication to be established.”

“School plays a key role!”

“Correct, Olga. Children's social environment — which is restricted to the immediate family to begin with — expands more and more, first of all when they go to school, play in a group with other children, and take part extracurricular activities like Scouting, and so on. But to return to the subject of language, tests have shown that almost half of the words spoken by groups of children aged five to six have no social function. They're not really used to communicate with others, but instead they accompany or replace an action.”

“You mean that children speak just for themselves?” Vladimir asked.

“Exactly. Or to associate someone else with what they are doing. It's 'egocentric' language, as children are speaking only about themselves and

aren't trying to see things from other people's points of view. Psychologists even talk of 'collective monologue'..."

"What?" Stefan exclaimed.

"I knew you'd react, Stefan! 'Monologue', because the child is expressing him- or herself without taking anyone else into account. 'Collective', because it takes place in a group context."

"I've got a feeling that I've already seen that kind of thing in political debates on the television", Vladimir commented.

The professor screwed up his eyes roguishly and added:

"In an individual monologue, an individual speaks for him- or herself as if thinking aloud. In a collective monologue, an individual expresses what he or she thinks, or comments on what he or she is doing, by associating others with it, but without really trying to interact with them."

"The others are only a kind of audience for one's own performance. That's exactly what you see on TV," Vladimir added.

The professor laughed heartily.

"You're right, Vladimir. That's perhaps a good definition of certain politicians' behaviour. But to return to the subject of collective monologue, the psychologist Piaget suggested that, when speaking, children make no effort to express themselves clearly, since they're convinced that the person that they're speaking to understands immediately and even knows in advance what they're going to say."

"It's magic thinking", Olga noted.

"Quite. And the other child — the one doing the listening — is satisfied and doesn't ask any questions, because he or she still thinks that everything's been understood. That's the first stage of children's conversations. The second stage comes at around six years of age, by which time children are able to have proper conversations, though restricted to present objects and current actions. It's not until the third stage, which starts at around seven years of age, that language really becomes a tool for social communication and makes it possible to have conversations on subjects that are unrelated to immediate action.

Children are then able to adapt what they say both to the person that they're speaking to and to the appropriate context. They're able to put themselves in the other person's shoes and adapt their language to the other person's reactions."

"My grandmother always said that seven was the age of reason!" Stefan remarked.

"That's right. Remember what we said about intellectual reasoning. It's around the age of seven that a child is able to think logically about concrete operations. As we've already seen, there's a very strong interaction between intellectual development, affective development and social development. Now I want to tackle a concept that is decisive as far as social development is concerned, as well as very important for your educational proposal — and that's role taking. In order to communicate effectively with another person, I have to know that person well, don't I?"

"Yes", Olga replied. "Because if I know someone, I can anticipate his or her reactions, spot any moments when the communication isn't working and adapt my way of expressing myself."

"Precisely, Olga. And the best way of getting to know someone is to 'put myself in his or her place'. In order to perceive and anticipate someone else's behaviour, I take on that person's role. To start with, a child may have a certain idea about other people, but can't really distinguish his or her own perceptions and thoughts from those of others. In a second stage, the child is able to distinguish between his or her point of view and someone else's, but doesn't think that there can be anything in common with the other person. In a third stage, the child is able to put him- or herself in the other person's place by attributing his or her own thoughts to the other person. Finally, the child becomes aware of the difference between the other person's perspective and his or her own. Children don't reach this fourth level until around the age of six."

"Is that what makes it possible to move from collective monologue to proper communication?"

"Yes, Olga. But there's another important point that we should note for the rest of our work. We've seen that it's by interacting with others that children develop their own identities as people. We need social contact in

order to become independent people. In assuming roles, children have to free themselves from the illusion that leads them to believe that other people see, think and act like them. This is what Piaget calls the ‘decentering process’. During this process, I’m able to distinguish between myself and somebody else, and I’m able to see things from the other person’s point of view instead of projecting my own thoughts and perceptions onto that person.”

“And how does a child learn to take on a role?” Stefan asked.

“Essentially by playing. We’ll come back to that in a minute.”

“But there are also pre-established roles”, said Olga.

“Explain what you mean, Olga.”

“Well, society and the social environment put pressure on children to make them take on particular social roles...”

“Yes”, Eva added. “Like gender-related roles — traditional masculine and feminine roles!”

“Or roles in the family”, Olga continued. “The role of the elder, the younger, etc. Not forgetting roles at school!”

“You’re quite right. Society leads young people to assume various roles through imitation or identification. From a very early age, young people feel compelled to conform to the expectations expressed in a more or less direct manner by those around them. These roles may be beneficial, in terms of socialisation and integration into society. They can however also produce negative results. I’m thinking in particular of traditional masculine and feminine roles, which can restrain a young person’s development.”

“How exactly?” Stefan asked.

“Stefan. Do you agree that each individual should be encouraged and assisted to develop his or her full potential?” the professor asked.

“Of course. That’s my philosophy!”

“Well, today there are still professions — professional roles — which are generally considered reserved either for men or for women. Let’s suppose that a girl shows an interest in and an aptitude for a profession considered to be

a masculine profession, or that a boy is interested in a profession generally reserved for women. They will have to overcome many prejudices regarding the role of men and women in society in order to fulfil their personal ambition. This is an important question for educators. In other words, should we foster the development of individuals by helping them assume the roles of their choice, or should we facilitate their integration by respecting the norms of society?"

"The answer is clear as far as I'm concerned", Eva stated. "I'd take the side of the individual, especially if it meant helping girls to assume equal responsibility in society! And it's not only a question of profession, but also of everyday life. The woman always has a secondary role. She has to passively follow her husband, but in the reality of daily life, she has to take charge of the housework and the children's education in addition to her professional work."

"You're right Eva. Masculine and feminine roles in society shouldn't be seen as linked to masculine and feminine identity. We have to know how to question them in order to create true equality between men and women."

"Doesn't this traditional distinction between masculine and feminine roles start very early?" Olga asked. "For example, in children's games?"

"That's quite true. A girl is given a doll to play with, whereas a boy gets a cowboy outfit. From a very early age, girls are trained, often unconsciously, to adopt attitudes of gentleness and passivity, and to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Boys, on the other hand, have to learn to be aggressive and to assert competitive behaviour. But if a girl wants to be assertive and to take on responsibilities, she is readily accused of being a 'tomboy'. There's a tendency to identify gender roles with gender identities.

"I don't quite understand the distinction that you're making between the two", Stefan said.

"Identity is an individual process. Each of us has to develop his or her own identity and awareness of being a woman or man. The role, on the other hand, is a social factor. Social traditions determine the respective roles of men and women in society. We have to be able to question these roles when they bring about injustice and inequality; in other words, when there's a risk of girls and boys building their identities by accepting and internalising a situation of

inequality between genders, as imposed by the traditional separation of roles. Especially when there's a tendency to make a distinction between the skills destined for girls and those destined for boys..."

"I see", Stefan said. "For example, my grandparents thought it quite normal for boys to be let off domestic chores."

"Was the situation any different with your parents?" Olga asked him.

"I think that, today, the time has come to let girls and boys acquire the same skills and to educate them to live as equal partners", stated Eva. "It's just as important for boys and girls to learn to iron a shirt, sew on a button or lead a meeting. We'll have to come back to this point, as it affects a good part of our educational proposal."

"I quite agree", Vladimir said.

"There are not only the social roles, but also rules and moral norms", the professor continued. "Do you know where and how children learn to respect rules?"

"With their parents?" Stefan suggested.

"Yes. We've seen that once they've resolved the Oedipus complex, children internalise the moral norms conveyed by their parents. But I'm talking about something else here, namely rules. Can you see what I'm getting at?"

"In games?" Vladimir suggested.

"Exactly, Vladimir, particularly in social games or games with rules. All children play these kinds of games at playtime in school, and that's where they discover the notion of rules — the basis of all social life."

"You mean that it's in the playground rather than in the classroom that children learn to live in society?" Vladimir asked, looking mockingly towards Olga.

"Precisely, my dear Vladimir! I hope that doesn't shock you Olga?"

"Not at all, professor. The playground is also part of the school!"

"Well said, Olga! So if you watch children playing a game with rules — marbles, for example — you discover some interesting things. The psychologist

Piaget, who we've already quoted, studied this phenomenon.”

“And what did he discover?” Stefan asked.

“Well, to start with, at around the age of two to three, children have no sense of rules. They play with marbles as the fancy takes them. They drop them from a height, bury them, throw them, etc. Then, from the age of five or six to nine or ten, rules become sacred. Children think that rules come from adults and that they themselves can't invent them. It's not until they reach ten or eleven years of age that children view rules as laws based on mutual consent. Children then believe that rules don't come from adults but are invented by themselves and can be changed if they agree to do so.”

“That's democracy”, Stefan remarked.

“Exactly! Moreover, without over-exaggerating, we can even say that a citizen's learning process begins with marbles! What we have to understand is that rules are a compromise between two contradictory desires: the desire to win in order to be the strongest and to assert oneself with others; and the desire to continue playing with others. By always wanting to win, I'll end up annoying the others, who'll then refuse to play with me. In order for the game to continue, I have to accept that the others also have to have a chance of winning. I have to be able to 'put myself in their shoes'. So I have to accept the rules that objectively define the rights and obligations of each player and determine how to win. Small children are still too wrapped up in their own desire to assert themselves and still unable to put themselves in the place of others to be able to really accept rules. They imitate the rules of bigger children but don't know how to respect them. There's always one player who cheats, because the desire to win is too strong, which means that everyone quarrels, the game stops, the players agree again, and the game resumes — only to stop again a few minutes later amid new arguments.”

“That's true”, Olga said laughing. “We see it every day at school!”

“Yes. It's a difficult learning process that takes quite a few years”, the professor continued. “But without accepting and respecting rules, individuals can't cooperate fully. Before the age of seven or eight, children aren't really able to cooperate properly in a group. Nor are they able to share responsibilities in order to reach a common goal.”

“Rules also include morals”, Eva put forward.

“Yes. From the rules of the game, we’ll move on to moral rules. Piaget also studied this development. Up to the age of seven or eight, rules that come from adults are considered inviolable. For example, little children think that the more implausible a lie is, the more serious it is. The seriousness of a silly act depends on the material damage caused. The intention doesn’t matter. The punishment is seen as atonement. The offender has to be punished severely enough to ensure that he or she understands the seriousness of the mistake. At this stage, a child doesn’t actually judge acts by him- or herself but is content to label them according to cultural norms — ‘good or bad’, ‘right or wrong’, etc. A child decides whether to avoid punishment or submit to authority only in terms of the immediate personal advantages that he or she can derive from it.”

“Many adults are still at that stage”, Eva remarked.

“Alas, you’re right! Even an adult can remain blocked at the primary stage of moral reasoning. The next stage is that of conventional morals. Children conform to roles that correspond to perceived expectations from their parents or social group — the ‘good little boy’, the ‘good little girl’. ‘Law and order’ and respect for authority are considered absolutes. From the age of seven or eight, as well as being capable of logical reasoning, a child gradually reaches the stage of moral independence.”

“What does that mean exactly?” Stefan asked.

“It means that children no longer have blind trust in adult authority. They start to judge their acts and those of others for themselves. Moral principles are accepted as a way of sharing rights and obligations within the group to which one belongs. At around twelve years of age, children accept rules as being a kind of contract between individuals. Rules are no longer inviolable and can be changed by mutual consent. Finally, during adolescence, young people reach the stage of the concept of universal values — justice, reciprocity, equality and dignity. Moral principles are related to a ‘social ideal’ rather than to social reality. What is ‘right’ is defined on the basis of personal and conscious adherence to these moral principles.”

“You’ve talked about language and communication, identifying social roles,

as well as rules and moral norms, but it seems to me that you've forgotten one important point", Eva said.

"That's quite possible Eva. Tell me!"

"Well, I think that social development also involves entry into adult life and integration in society."

"You're right. A child has to go through lots of learning experiences in order to prepare him- or herself to take a place in adult social life. School is the main place for these learning processes, but it's not the only one. The family and youth organisations like Scouting also play an important role. You may find it interesting to note that three learning situations are generally identified. The first is called guardianship. In a guardianship situation, there's an expert who possesses the knowledge — usually an adult — and a novice who's trying to learn. The expert provides the novice with useful information and shows him or her how to use the necessary tools. The expert conveys knowledge in such a way that the novice can assimilate it, adjusting it to the child's capabilities. As the child progresses, the expert withdraws to give the novice more room for initiative and control, but intervenes to assist whenever a difficulty emerges."

"That's the teacher-pupil relationship", Olga remarked.

"Yes. It's the most frequent type of learning relationship. A Russian psychologist, Lev S. Vygotski, tried to define the notion of '*proximal development zone*', which is the level of development that a child can achieve at a given moment. According to him, this is what a child is able to do, at that moment, with an adult in a guardianship relationship. This concept is very important for defining an educational objective."

"But children also learn by themselves, within a group", Vladimir interrupted.

"Yes. That corresponds to the second learning mechanism, known as co-construction. Contrary to the guardianship situation, co-construction presupposes a relative equality in relations and abilities between two or more individuals. It's a situation in which partners pool their ideas and knowledge to achieve a common aim."

“That’s the most common situation in Scouting”, Vladimir added. “Not only among the young people themselves, but also between the young people and the adults.”

“Can you explain that a bit more, Vladimir?”

“What I mean is that a Scout leader doesn’t have to be an expert in all areas. There are often instances when it’s more educational for the leader to put him- or herself on the same level as the young people and to suggest that they pool all their ideas and skills to resolve a problem together.”

“That’s quite true. In this way, we can build a richer educational relationship and help young people achieve a greater degree of independence.”

“And what’s the third situation?” Eva asked.

“It’s the imitation mechanism that we’ve already looked at. Imitation involves referring to a model — either an external model or an internalised one — in order to check and evaluate one’s efforts.”

“Young people often take us as their model without us being aware of it”, Olga interrupted.

“Isn’t that dangerous?” Eva asked.

“I think what’s dangerous for an educator is to be restricted to only one of the three learning mechanisms — to absolutely want to be an expert, or a model, or a partner, and to settle into that role without taking different situations into account. It’s important to be able to apply all three styles and to change from one to another whenever necessary.”

“I’d like to come back to group life for a moment. I think it plays a very important role in social development, doesn’t it?” Vladimir asked.

“All the studies of psychologists and educators show the formative role of groups in the lives of young people, particularly as far as adolescents are concerned. In their quest for independence, young people want to free themselves from their parents’ guardianship, and the peer group — a group of young people of the same age — creates a favourable environment for their development.”

“Why are adolescents so keen on being part of a group?” Eva asked.

“At any age, we feel the need to be recognised and to play a role within a group or community. But it’s true that group life occupies a very important place in adolescence. To understand the reasons for this, we need to go back in time a bit and see how things develop from childhood onwards. We’ve seen that, before the age of seven or eight, a child is not yet mature enough to be able to cooperate properly within a group. Then, between the ages of nine and eleven, a kind of golden age of social adaptation is reached. In most cases, children are at ease in their families, as well as at school. At around eleven or twelve years of age, the wonderful equilibrium of childhood is brought into question, with the arrival of puberty and access to new intellectual possibilities. When children are asked what they think of someone, they tend to merely describe a few external characteristics. Young adolescents, however, are able to judge characters. They start to discover the depth and uniqueness of individuals. Able to evaluate their own actions based on others’ opinions, they become aware of the changes underway in themselves. They start to question themselves, which may provoke some anxiety. That’s why they unconsciously seek to join up with others who resemble themselves. At the beginning of adolescence, from eleven to thirteen years of age, spontaneous groups are often separated according to gender — boys on one side, and the girls on the other.”

“You even see that in mixed schools”, Olga remarked.

“Yes. At that age, girl-boy encounters are often encounters between one group with another, during which mockery, sarcasm and the use of masculine and feminine stereotypes are all ways of overcoming the anxiety created by the presence of the opposite gender. But groups are formed above all on the basis of a common activity. If you’re not interested in the activity proposed, you don’t want to belong to the group.”

“But the situation changes at around fifteen or sixteen years of age, if my experience is anything to go by”, Vladimir said.

“Indeed. From the age of fourteen to sixteen, the age of friendship is reached. A quite exclusive and passionate relationship is established with someone of the same age and gender who is perceived as one’s double. Young people seem to feel the need to find in the other members of the group the characteristics

that they perceive in themselves or that they'd like to possess. There's a need for reciprocal identification and even conformism that goes as far as the way they dress and express themselves. Young people seek intimacy, and the groups spontaneously become smaller. After the age of seventeen, at the end of adolescence, relationships become less passionate and young people accept and recognise interpersonal differences as a source of enrichment. They group together according to complementarity and seek difference instead of just similarity."

"You mean that a young person who is searching for an individual identity needs to belong to a group of peers who are similar to him or her, but that once there's a clearer awareness of that identity, a young person prefers to look for complementarity with different people?"

"That's it, Eva."

"But at around the age of seventeen or eighteen, the major question, from a social point of view, is how to integrate into society, isn't it?"

"Yes, and in relation to this we need to talk about adolescence a bit more. What is adolescence? It's the moment in life when young people have acquired the intelligence, physical stature and sexual maturity of an adult, but aren't yet allowed to occupy an adult place in society. I'm sure you know that this is a recent phenomenon. In the past — as is still the case today in traditional societies — adolescence didn't exist or only lasted a very short time. The passage from childhood to adulthood was marked only by rites and ceremonies."

"Religious ceremonies?" Vladimir asked.

"Yes, of course. But these rites also had a very strong social function. They generally took place at puberty and began with a period of retreat, which separated adolescents from those around them — the link with the mother was symbolically broken. Young people were then initiated into secret knowledge, before taking part in ceremonies during which they symbolically received the status of adulthood, with all its rights and duties. In our country, military service used to play this role to some extent in the recent past. But modern society no longer marks the passage to adulthood, and adolescence seems to extend for longer and longer. This is due to schooling lasting longer, as well as

to unemployment, which delays the passage to economic independence and adulthood.”

“I think young people are suffering because of it.”

“I think so too, Vladimir. They want to be recognised and to take on adult roles, but they’re denied responsibility for a very long time. I think that the major challenge for young people in the eighteen to twenty-five age range is that of social and professional integration. Many young people who are dragging on their studies without a future or are stuck in the throes of unemployment despair of ever making it. So they seek the identity and social integration that society seems to refuse them by joining groups or gangs.”

“What can a movement like Scouting do in this case?” Eva asked.

“It seems to me that Scouting’s vocation is to help young people integrate themselves into society — not in a passive or conformist manner, but in an active and creative manner. Related to this, I can see three key directions for our work:

1. Relationships and communication. Many people today suffer from loneliness and feel isolated. They are, in fact, closed in on themselves and unable to develop open, trusting relationships with others. Relating to others is something that has to be learned. That requires open-mindedness, accepting differences and being able to listen. We live in a society where modern communication techniques are increasingly high-tech. But do they improve our access to information, to relationships and the sharing of cultures, or do they manipulate the masses? We have to teach young people to master these techniques in such a way as to avoid being manipulated and to be able to communicate with others.
2. Cooperation and leadership. No society can develop if its members aren’t able to cooperate in order to analyse problems and develop solutions through coherent projects. Scouting has to educate young people to be active and responsible members of the communities that they belong to. That means accepting rules and laws that are good, but also being willing to question and change laws that are bad or inadequate. It also means developing the ability to cooperate with others and exercise responsibility within a group.

3. Solidarity and service. Our aim is to educate citizens who are determined to create a fairer, more tolerant society, in which initiative and responsibility are encouraged, without the weak or poor being marginalised and excluded. Young people therefore have to be helped to discover and internalise values of civilization, such as rejecting violence to settle disputes, upholding justice and respect for the dignity of men and women, rejecting racist prejudices and, instead, developing international cooperation. Through Scouting, young people should discover that these values, far from being abstract and distant, can be practised in a concrete manner in their daily lives.”

A few embers were still glowing among the stones. Stefan suddenly became aware of the darkness around them. He lit his torch to look at his watch.

“It’s nearly seven o’clock”, he said.

“I hadn’t noticed the time”, Olga remarked. “Thank you, professor. It’s been most interesting.”

“We have to make a move, if we don’t want to be too late for dinner.”

Vladimir and Stefan covered the stones to smother the embers. The group then set off down the path back towards the monastery.



VII. Spiritual Development

Sunday, 27 September, 06.45 hours

Eva woke up with a start in the middle of a dream — or rather a nightmare. She tried to remember the scene that had frightened her to the point of waking her. The general assembly of the association had met in the outdoors, on the Green Island. Eva was sitting in the middle of a huge crowd of leaders. An enormous wooden platform had been constructed, on which the highest authorities of the association were seated. The chairman banged on the table with his mallet and called out Eva's name in a stentorian voice. She realised that she had been called upon to present the association's new youth programme. She got up and tried to make her way through the crowd, but at that moment, everyone stood up to break into song. Eva came up against a compact mass of bodies that prevented her from moving forward. She asked to be let through, trying to explain that she had to get to the platform, but nobody was listening to her. Then the crowd started dancing. Jostled and shoved against, Eva felt angry and powerless to react. That's when she'd woken up in a cold sweat. Still in a state of anxiety, she decided to get up. With bare feet on the cold flagging, she took her towel, opened the door of her cell and headed for the showers. The jet of cold water struck her and helped her to return to her senses. With her hair still damp, she went back to her room and dressed quickly. She had decided to go to the meeting room to read over her notes.

When she entered the room, she saw Vladimir busy writing at a table.

“Hello Vladimir. Up and about already?”

“I was sorting out the notes that I made yesterday on social development.”

Eva sat down next to him with a sigh.

“I've just had a horrible dream... We were at the general assembly of the association to present our programme, and no one was listening to us. I'm rather alarmed by the scope of the task that we have to accomplish...”

“That's true Eva. I'm also a bit worried about it, but at the same time I'm

enthralled by everything the professor is telling us! We'll get there. Don't worry. Look — I've made a summary on social development.”

Eva took the sheets that Vladimir was holding out to her and read them through.

“What do you think?” Vladimir asked.

“It's very precise and very clear. Well done!”

“You see. We'll be able to propose educational objectives for each area of growth.”

“What time did you get up Vladimir?”

“At six o'clock. Why?”

“I had the impression that you are usually something of a late riser!”

“Yes, I am. But I'm very motivated by this work. I want to get on with it. And if we don't summarise our conclusions as we go along, we'll get nowhere!”

“Your motivation bucks me up again. But even so, don't overdo it...”

Vladimir had gone towards the window.

“Look! The sun's rising. Do you want to come outside for some fresh air?”

“Hmm... It must be rather chilly out there!”

Vladimir headed for the door. Eva followed him at a quick pace. Outside, they were seized by the cold. Vladimir put his arm around Eva's shoulder. They walked slowly and their steps made the frost crack. A light haze hung over the trees. The bright red sun slowly rose above the dark forest. Suddenly, it appeared to detach itself from the horizon, illuminating the frozen branches in a flash.

“It's splendid”, Eva said.

They remained silent for a long moment, observing the day breaking. The monastery bell interrupted their thoughts.

“It's time for the service”, Eva said. “We'd better go. The others will be waiting for us.”

After the service, which Vladimir had inwardly found long and boring, everybody met in the refectory for a hearty breakfast. Vladimir was half-following the discussion that had started up between Eva and the professor. His mind was buzzing with thoughts and images — the professor's words, the notes that he'd taken, Eva's smile... Someone shook his shoulder. It was Stefan:

“This is no time to dream my friend. We've got work to do!”

The group was already making its way towards the meeting room. Vladimir rose with a sigh. It was true that they needed to get a move on if they were to be finished by noon. While his friends sat down at the tables, he pinned up the notes summarising what they had discussed so far.

Eva tapped the table to get everyone's attention, and gave the floor to the professor.

“We've looked at the four basic dimensions of the individual, he said — physical development, intellectual development, affective development and social development. This morning, we're going to tackle yet another dimension, that of meaning — the spiritual dimension.”

“I personally have trouble really understanding the meaning of the word 'spiritual'”, said Vladimir. “It brings to mind the refusal of reality and an escape into the imaginary.”

“That's a good start”, the professor replied. “Now let's explore the subject further and try to clarify things for you. Don't you ever wonder about your life, your future, Vladimir?”

“Frequently, but my thoughts are not always clear.”

“Wondering is what matters. From the very beginning, men have wondered. Who are we? Where are we going? Why are we here? They embarked on tentative research, which they have continued to rectify and improve. They have passed on their discoveries down the ages, comparing them with the new burning questions-of-the-day that history has thrown up. This is how the mythologies, philosophies and various religions came about, each an attempt to uncover the mystery of man and creation. The greatness of man is that he questions his destiny and the meaning of life. Therein

lies the spiritual dimension — the ability to grasp the meaning of things beyond their immediate aspect, the ability to find meaning in life, love, birth, suffering, evil and death.”

“Many people don’t succeed”, Eva observed.

“Sadly, no. I say sadly because I don’t think that you can lead a truly human life without reflecting on life. It’s true that some people refuse to reflect in this way, or remain impervious to this quest. They remain wrapped up in everyday life and just live from day to day.”

“But there’s religion”, said Olga.

“Yes, and religions are an expression of this spiritual dimension. The word ‘God’ describes the mysterious reality that men have been feeling around for since the very beginning.”

Vladimir spoke.

“In the past, we used to be taught that only science could enable us to understand the mysteries of creation and man.”

“Science throws light on many things, but spiritual reasoning is on another level. For example, the Bible does not claim to be a book of natural science, nor even an historical book.”

“In that case, what is its value?” Vladimir asked.

“We have to refer to our personal experience in order to understand it. At certain moments in our life, we feel the need to reflect on and go back over the past in order to understand ‘how we got where we are’. We can question witnesses to try to reconstruct important events in our lives. We can also look for certain traces of the past — such as photos, souvenirs, letters, and so on — which do not necessarily provide us with facts but allow us to re-discover feelings that we have experienced. By gathering all these very diverse elements, we realise that we’ll never be able to reconstruct the past in an objective way. But, ultimately, that’s not really what we’re interested in. What we’re looking for is ‘what happened in our head’. Our aim is not to reconstruct history for history’s sake, but to gain a clearer insight into our present situation by reminding ourselves of the stages of our former development. When we remember past events, we are concerned

with finding the key to understanding them. We therefore seek to interpret them in order to determine their meaning, and when we try to express this meaning, we often realise that everyday language is not adequate. We will therefore perhaps be led to choose a song or poem to express in depth what we feel. This is exactly the approach followed by the Bible.”

“So you can’t understand the Bible if you just take it literally?”

“Quite. For example, the story in the Bible of how the world was created has no scientific pretensions. It doesn’t seek to explain how the universe was actually created. Its aim is to convey a spiritual message. The material world and humanity are bound by the same destiny, which may be compromised if man tries to be all-powerful and totally autonomous. This spiritual truth, discovered by people thousands of years before our era, is firmly catching up with us today and throwing light on our present situation, at the very time when science makes us capable of destroying the planet.”

“Isn’t this spiritual dimension already engraved in each of us?”

“Yes. Man is made in such a way that he is naturally led to wonder about the meaning of his life. But this faculty may be dulled or disabled, particularly in our industrial society, where immediate effectiveness takes precedence above all. What’s more, children spontaneously consider reality in a practical, instrumental and utilitarian way, and they have to be helped to gradually open up to the spiritual dimension. The role of the educator is also to enable a child to go beyond mere experimental and practical truth to reach another understanding of life, another relationship with the world.”

“Professor”, said Vladimir. “I have a question. The constitution of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement defines ‘Duty to God’ as one of the three fundamental principles of Scouting — the other two being ‘Duty to Self’ and ‘Duty to Others’. In our country, after fifty years of atheist propaganda, it’s already difficult to talk to young people about God, but ‘Duty to God’ seems even more abstract and daunting. What do you think?”

“How is this term defined in the World Constitution?”

“I haven’t got it in front of me...”

“I have”, said Eva.

She opened a red-covered booklet and looked for the passage referred to by Vladimir.

“Here you go. It’s in the first chapter. I’ll read it to you:

Duty to God.

*Adherence to spiritual principles, loyalty to the religion that expresses them and acceptance of the duties resulting therefrom.”*⁷

“Good”, said the professor. “Let’s take a closer look at this text. What elements does it contain?”

“There are three”, Vladimir replied. “Firstly, ‘adherence to spiritual principles’.”

“I interpret this phrase as the need to introduce the child to spiritual reasoning, as I just explained.”

“‘Loyalty to the religion that expresses them’.”

“Each of us grows up in a human community with a certain spiritual heritage, expressed, more often than not, in a religion. For example, our country has a Christian culture. There are the Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants, but they are all Christians. In our country, it would be absurd to claim to introduce a child to the spiritual dimension without this Christian reality. It’s therefore important to respect the spiritual heritage of the community in which the child is growing up, and to help him or her discover that heritage and explore it, so that the child can truly find his or her place within it. That’s what loyalty to a religion is really about — not receiving it passively, but embarking on a process of discovery and reflection so as to be able to make a personal choice.”

“There are also Jews and Muslims in our country.”

“The process should still be the same. Every child has the right to discover and improve his or her knowledge of the community’s spiritual heritage, as well as to be receptive to other communities and to respect different beliefs. All the young people in our country should discover, for example, how much the Jewish religion has enriched our national culture.”

Vladimir spoke again:

“And the third element of the passage is ‘acceptance of the duties resulting therefrom’...”

“Correct me if I’m wrong, Vladimir, but am I right in thinking that the term that is bothering you the most is the word ‘duty?’”

“Yes, you’re right. In my mind, it conjures up a picture of an authoritarian and all-powerful God who wants us to fear Him and obey Him without argument. And I don’t feel inspired enough to promote that image among young people.”

“The word ‘duty’ isn’t really in fashion any more these days. It has an ‘aftertaste’ of coercion and obligation, doesn’t it? However, upon reflection and taking what Baden-Powell wrote into consideration, I would say that ‘doing one’s duty to God’ simply means doing what God expects or wants of us.”

“And how do we know what God expects of us?”

“Isn’t it clear already, from what we’ve already looked at in connection with man’s development? Each of us has been given life and been begotten, but in something of an incomplete way. Remember what we said about the ‘man’s cub’. Man doesn’t come into the world ready-finished. He has to create himself. We’re called upon to undertake a long and difficult process to develop our full potential and to help others do the same. Developing fully, living life to the full, being aware of how marvellous the world that we live in is, and agreeing to take care of it, agreeing to put the finishing touches to creation by developing a fairer, more humane society... that’s what duty to God means.”

“Is it possible to be a Scout and an atheist?” Olga asked.

“According to the World Constitution of your Movement, being a Scout or Scout leader requires a belief in God, there’s no doubt about that. But what is believing in God, and what is atheism? A Hindu mystic, Swami Vivekananda, said:

In the same way that certain religions in the world call a man who does not believe in a God existing outside his person an atheist, we, for our part, say that an atheist is a man who does not believe in himself.

Not believing in the splendour of one's own soul — that's what we call atheism."

"And God can mean different things to different people", Vladimir added.

"Yes, and who can be sure that he or she has a full comprehension of God? Many of us have inherited a whole set of images of God that are false, and when people say that they are 'atheists' or that they don't believe in God, it often means that they can't accept images of God which are, in fact, idols with no real spiritual meaning. One of my friends, Father Roger Barralet, the Chaplain of The Scout Association in the United Kingdom, wrote that:

*Sometimes, when people say that they don't believe in God, what they are really saying is that they don't believe in their wooden dolls, their pictures of God. Those pictures may come from early childhood. They may be pictures of God as a super-policeman waiting to catch us out for our misdeeds. There are so many possible pictures of God picked up for one reason or another in childhood that, as we move towards adulthood, we rightly reject as non-acceptable. But that does not mean that we necessarily reject God."*⁸

"But why do we register these bad images of God?" Stefan asked.

"Remember what we saw when we discussed affective development. At around three or four years of age, the child internalises the prohibitions expressed by his or her parents in the form of the 'superego'. As a result, this all-powerful and threatening authority and the idea of God may be identified with each other. The child imagines 'God' to be an all-powerful being who watches over and sees everything, and who punishes you 'if you're not good'. This notion is often reinforced by parents and some educators, who use 'God' to make the child feel guilty. When the child reaches adolescence, a distortion occurs between this childhood image of God, connected with the prohibitions of childhood, and the new aspirations of the young person. As the adolescent builds his or her future, and achieves greater maturity and independence, the distance from God, or rather the distance from the false image that the adolescent has had of Him, increases."

"So, how do we rectify that?"

“If the child has a guilt-inducing, false image of God, it’s because the foundations of real spiritual development haven’t been put in place. So this is the task that has to be tackled.”

“We’ve got a serious problem there”, Eva interrupted. “Most of our leaders consider themselves completely ignorant in the spiritual area. They don’t have the slightest idea of how to broach this question.”

“They themselves have problems in this matter”, Vladimir added. “They’re not sure that they ‘believe in God’.”

“The first step is to clarify this notion of God. There are numerous conceptions of God, but I believe that, fundamentally, the word ‘God’ is the human symbol for the power that was the beginning of everything, is the existence of everything, and will be the end of everything. Take creation — plants, animals, stars and humanity. It’s unlikely that all of that, in its infinite complexity, was born by accident or chance. Therefore, a power must exist from which all that originates, a force which continues to act to renew creation. The concept of ‘God’ represents that power.”

“I follow”, said Vladimir. “But I find this definition of God very abstract and distant. What does it mean in young people’s daily lives?”

“If you like, I’ll use an image or a parable to answer this question. What does the word ‘Scout’ mean? It means ‘pathfinder’ — *Pfadfinder* in German. In the first sense of the word, a Scout is someone who is able to find the best path, the best way in every situation, when outdoors, in the forest or on the moors. And what does a Scout need to keep him or her on the right course on a hike, Stefan?”

“Er... A map, of course... and a compass.”

“Exactly. And it’s just the same in daily life. To find my way through life’s problems, I need a compass. Our task as educators is to help young people find this symbolic compass, which is much more important and useful than a real compass, and to learn to use it.”

“Does this compass really exist?”

“Yes, Stefan. It exists. Each of us can experience it in our own lives. Baden-Powell called it happiness.”

“Happiness?”

“Yes. We all have an internal compass called happiness or joy. Whenever we choose the right path among many, whenever we share what we have with someone else, whenever we make a gesture of love or forgiveness, whenever we help someone else free him- or herself or when we free ourselves of the conditioning that shackles us, we experience a feeling of joy and peace, of happiness. This feeling isn’t something material, yet we know it’s there within us. It’s real. Our task as educators is to help young people recognise and accept this internal compass as the expression of the power or Spiritual Reality which is the beginning, the middle and the end of everything. In this way, we give them all the confidence to be able to choose the correct path in their life — the path towards happiness. That’s spiritual development.”

“It seems so simple!”

“It’s not as complicated as all that. It’s what Baden-Powell called the ‘natural form of religion’. Wait, I’ve noted down a text in which he describes this concept. Here it is:

*The natural form of religion is so simple that a child can understand it. It comes from within, from conscience, from observation, from love, for use in all that he does. It is not a formality or a dogmatic dressing donned from outside, put on for Sunday wear... It is, therefore, a true part of his character, a development of soul, and not a veneer that may peel off.*⁹

“Many religions wouldn’t recognise themselves in that definition”, Eva remarked.

“Yes.” Olga added. “It seems rather cursory.”

“That’s because it’s a foundation and not a superstructure. It’s a simple but solid basis because it’s integrated into the general development of the individual and of his or her life experience. On this foundation, it’s possible to build specific religious education, but the question is whether it’s Scouting’s role to be responsible for that.”

“You mean that religious education isn’t part of the Scout programme?”

“What I mean is that I don’t believe that it’s the Scout leader’s role to be a catechist or to lecture on religion.”

“So what should a leader do?”

“He or she should ensure that Scout activities allow young people to discover a Spiritual Reality — the internal compass — and to seek its full meaning in their lives. A leader should also help young people connect this experience with the spiritual heritage of their community.”

“Can you be a bit more explicit?” Eva asked.

“I’ll try to sketch the broad outline, but it’s an aspect that you’ll need to look at in more detail later. To start with, in our culture imbued with Christianity, the word ‘God’ describes on the one hand, the Creator, the Maker of everything, and on the other hand, absolute goodness, the principle of salvation, which has operated throughout the history of mankind. There are therefore two possible ways of discovering and learning more about Spiritual Reality —by exploring the wonders of creation or nature on the one hand, and by experiencing life within a human community on the other.”

“Let’s take nature first”, Stefan suggested.

“OK. I think there’s a principle of spiritual development that we can call ‘wonder’, in other words, discovering and admiring the wonders of nature and life. Baden-Powell believed that activities in nature could play a key role in the spiritual development of young people. In the ‘Girl Guiding’ book, he wrote that:

*The aim in Nature study is to develop a realisation of God the Creator, and to infuse a sense of the beauty of Nature.*¹⁰

In ‘Aids to Scoutmastership’, there’s another significant quotation:

*The wonder to me of all wonders is how some teachers have neglected Nature study, this easy and unfailing means of education, and have struggled to impose Biblical instruction as the first step towards getting a restless, full-spirited boy to think of higher things.*¹¹

“Listening to you makes me realise something,” said Olga — “and that’s the number of words and images related to nature found in the Bible or the Gospel — mountain, running water, fire, tree, and so on.”

“That’s right, Olga. And what do you think that signifies?”

“I don’t know. Maybe we need the realities of nature in order to express a spiritual meaning.”

“Your observation is very important, Olga. By observing nature, man finds symbols which enable him to express and communicate his spiritual discoveries. You can’t express a spiritual experience with rationalist or technical language, in which one word has one quite specific meaning. You need images and symbols.”

“And it’s in contact with nature that you can learn symbolic language?”

“To a great extent, yes.”

“Can you give us an example?” Stefan asked.

“One comes to mind. In the Gospel, there is a short story that intrigued me for a long time. It tells us that Jesus was hungry and went up to a fig tree to try to find some fruit. And the text said: ‘But he found only leaves, as it wasn’t the season for figs.’ So Jesus said to the tree, ‘May no-one eat your fruit’, and the next day, the disciples found the tree withered to the roots. Don’t you find this story odd?”

“Yes”, said Stefan. “It was normal not to find any figs, because it wasn’t the right time of year.”

“There you go! Taken literally, the story is absurd. Why does Christ get angry with a tree which can’t produce fruit out of season? But the fig tree is used as a symbol. This is clear, because Jesus addresses it as a person. In this perspective, the words ‘as it wasn’t the season for figs’ take on their true meaning. For us too, it’s all too often ‘not the season for figs’ — it’s too soon to make peace and too late to open up to others or to demonstrate fairness. Whenever we refuse our responsibility as human beings, we become withered beings instead, like the poor fig tree.”

“But,” said Vladimir, “couldn’t that be expressed directly, without using a symbol?”

“I don’t think so. It would reduce the message to a mere lesson in morals, with no depth to it. Our life experience and feelings, with all their clarity and confusion — in other words their depth — are expressed in symbols. People who have no access to symbolic language can only speak about their

lives on a practical level. It's the world of 'mind-numbing routine'. Because they can't communicate spiritually, they can't reflect upon their lives, and so they become the powerless victims of all sorts of pressure and conditioning, experienced day after day, endured day after day.'

"In other words," Eva said, "activities in nature allow a dual spiritual approach — on the one hand, discovering the wonders and greatness of creation and understanding the relationship between man and nature, whilst on the other hand, learning the language of symbols."

"That's right. And moreover, many activities practised by Scouts in nature correspond to fundamental experiences of humanity, which are themselves laden with a very strong spiritual meaning — exploring an area, developing a territory, building a shelter or a home, gathering around the campfire, following running water back to its source, etc."

"And what are the other paths to spiritual development", Eva asked.

"Well, what have you seen here, in this monastery? I believe that all human communities which embark on a spiritual adventure discover the same fundamental principles. After 'wonder' comes what I'd describe as 'welcome'; in other words, any activity that favours an attitude of listening and opening up to others, particularly to those who are poorer and more vulnerable. Such activities enable young people to discover a sense of compassion and sharing."

"Within the group itself and by encountering other communities?"

"Yes. I'm sure that you've already organised activities which allow such experiences. The next principle could be called 'work', and this includes any activity which leads a young person to play an active role within a team, to share responsibilities, to cooperate with others, and to discover that you can improve and change society through service activities and community involvement projects. Then comes 'wisdom', in other words, activities which help young people develop responsibility towards themselves and to be self-disciplined. And last but not least, there's 'worship', or activities which lead young people to think about the events that they've been through and to understand the full meaning and value of those experiences. It's through this kind of activity, such as times of silence, meditation and expression, that

young people can realise the need for prayer and worship.”

Eva spoke:

“From what you’ve been saying, I get the impression that spiritual development is profoundly linked to the other areas of growth.”

“Yes, you’re right”, Eva. “Spiritual development is the discovery of meaning through all the aspects of man’s development and activity.”

“So,” Vladimir took over, “you have to make sure that the activities proposed are of sufficient interest to have a spiritual meaning — activities of discovery and in nature, opening up to others, service and sharing activities, and so on. And then a time of evaluation, during which the young people, with the help of an adult leader, consider and express the meaning of what they’ve experienced.”

“And this meaning”, Eva added, “should be linked to what you called the ‘spiritual heritage’ of the community to which the young people belong, to allow them to deepen that meaning.”

“That’s a very good summary”, the professor commented.



VIII. Character Development

Sunday, 27 September, 11.00 hours

After a short pause, Eva started the discussion again:

“We’ve talked about physical development, intellectual development, affective development, social development and spiritual development. So what does that leave us with?”

“Frankly, I think we’ve covered everything in detail”, Stefan said. “I don’t think I’ve ever done so much thinking in my life. Are you sure we haven’t finished?”

“Quite sure”, said Vladimir. “There’s one element that we haven’t dealt with, and that’s character. I’m absorbed in a book that the professor lent me — ‘Aids to Scoutmastership’ — written by Baden-Powell and first published in 1920. It deals with just about all the areas of growth that we’ve looked at — health and physical development, intelligence and creativity, sociability and service to others, etc. But we haven’t discussed character development, which Baden-Powell puts at the top of the list. For example, on page 47, he writes: *For a man to be successful in life, character is more essential than erudition.*¹²”

“Isn’t the notion of character rather outmoded in psychology and pedagogy?” Olga asked.

“It’s a concept that used to be talked about a lot in the past, but which seems to have disappeared somewhat today”, the professor agreed.

“What does Baden-Powell say about it?” Eva asked.

Everyone looked at Vladimir.

“Er... Just a second, I’ve marked a few passages.”

He opened the small book and frantically turned the pages.

“Um... I’ll translate as I go along...”

“Can you read English?” Eva asked.

Vladimir blushed slightly.

“Yes, why? Here you are... Er...

A nation owes its success, not so much to its strength in armaments, ... er... as to the amount of character in its citizens. For a man to be successful in life, character is more essential than erudition. So character is of first value whether for a nation or for the individual. But if character is to make a man's career for him, it ought to be developed in him before he starts out; while he is still a boy and receptive. Character cannot be drilled into a boy. The germ of it is already in him, and needs to be drawn out and expanded.¹²”

“That’s all very well”, Stefan remarked. “But where’s the definition of character?”

“What do you mean! It’s perfectly clear what it is!”

“And what’s that?”

Eva came to Vladimir’s rescue:

“Isn’t character what ‘characterises’ the personality of an individual; in other words, his or her character traits?”

“Agreed”, said Olga. “But in that case, it’s not an area of growth in itself, but the way in which the character is built, to varying degrees, of physical, intellectual, affective, social and spiritual qualities...”

“And yet,” said Vladimir, “we speak of ‘strength of character’ and ‘man of character!’”

“That’s willpower or determination”, said Stefan.

“The ‘macho’ side”, Olga added ironically.

The professor interrupted:

“It’s true, Vladimir, that Baden-Powell didn’t define character in itself, but quoted a number of moral and intellectual qualities which, in his view, build the character...”

Vladimir opened the small book again:

“That’s right... Wait... Here it is: ‘chivalry and fair play’, ‘discipline’, ‘sense of honour’, ‘self-reliance’, ‘enjoyment of life’... er... ‘development of outlook’... ‘reverence’, ‘self-respect’, and... ‘loyalty’...”

“Those are values”, Olga said. “I don’t see the difference from moral development.”

“That’s as may be,” the professor continued, “but this list gives us a few clues to understanding it. Take, for example, self-reliance, enjoyment of life and self-respect. They all have something in common.”

“Self-awareness?” Eva ventured.

“Yes, Eva. In my view, the first element of character is self-identity or self-awareness. Remember what we said when we talked about affective development — the advent of the ‘no’ stage in a small child as one of the first signs of acquiring self-awareness.

Eva picked up her notes:

“I’ve got it. You said that ‘the act of saying no means — I exist as a different person from you.’”

“What’s more,” Vladimir added, “when we say that someone has got character, we mean that the person is able to assert him- or herself with others.”

“‘Having character’”, Olga interrupted, “often implies ‘having a bad character’.”

“Yes”, said Stefan in turn. “In wanting to ‘build the character’ of a young person, don’t you ultimately make him or her selfish and unable to cooperate with others?”

“Let’s stop there for a minute”, the professor continued. “The first element is that of identity. What you have to bear in mind is that each of us is a unique being. Firstly, because of our family history. The combination of chromosomes that we received from our parents gives us characteristics that we share with no other individual. My face, my body, the tone of my voice, the way I walk, and so on, distinguish me from other people. I’m also unique

by way of my history. I've had specific experiences in my family, my school and my neighbourhood. It's totally impossible for anyone else to have had the same set of experiences as me. And lastly, I'm unique in the way that I interact with the people and things around me. Nobody else can have exactly the same set of perceptions and reactions as mine. Do you agree?"

"Yes", said Eva, expressing the agreement of the group.

"So, if I'm unique, and if I have the right to live, don't I also have the right to express what I am and to assert my originality?"

"I see what you're getting at", said Olga. "All too often, educational systems operate as moulds. We talk of intake and statistics, and forget the people."

Vladimir rapidly turned the pages of his book.

"Wait", he said. "I've read an interesting passage on this aspect. Here it is:

*'Why worry about individual training?' they ask. Because it is the only way by which you can educate. You can instruct any number of boys, a thousand at a time if you have a loud voice and attractive methods of disciplinary means. But that is not training — it is not education. Education is the thing that counts in building character and in making men.'*¹²

"OK," said Eva, "but you can be attentive to each individual, in order to make them fit more effectively into a unique mould. I find the word character ambiguous. Is it only about self-assertion? You could have a whole regiment of robots able to face difficulties and obstacles, but with no real character."

"You're quite right, Eva", the professor resumed. "The word character is traditional to Scouting, but it's essential to understand it correctly, to avoid going off on the wrong track. It's true that a person of character is someone who is able to assert him- or herself with others. But if we limit ourselves to cultivating the 'macho' side, as Olga put it, we're going the wrong way."

"So," said Olga, "it's a question of encouraging young people to affirm their originality!"

"Yes, and of first helping them become aware of themselves as unique and irreplaceable beings. We've identified the various areas of growth — the physical and bodily aspect, intelligence, affectivity, sociability and spirituality

— but all of this has to be channelled and managed by each individual, with an original approach.”

“There’s got to be a pilot in the plane!” Stefan added.

“Correct! This idea of a pilot is interesting, and I’ll come back to it later on with a story which illustrates it well. To educate someone, it’s not enough to add up abilities in each of the areas of growth, but the individual has to be helped to realise his or her originality and to assert him- or herself as free and independent.”

“If I understand correctly,” said Vladimir, “you can develop the body, intelligence, affectivity, sociability and spirituality well enough, but that’s pointless if you don’t manage to help a young person take development into his or her own hands.”

“You’ve got it. Ultimately, the purpose of education is to help each individual recognise him- or herself as an independent, responsible person, and say ‘I’. That’s why Baden–Powell believed that character couldn’t be introduced from the outside. *‘The germ of it is already in him, and needs to be drawn out and expanded’*. That’s why he also insisted on the notion of self-education — if I’m an original and unique person, nobody can resolve the problems I face in my place, and nobody, however good their intentions, can tell me what I have to do.”

“Character development”, Eva interrupted, “is the development of autonomy.”

“But”, said Olga, “won’t over-emphasising this aspect risk making people selfish and individualistic?”

“That risk does indeed exist. The notion of personal autonomy is often confused with individualism and egocentricity. Individualists are people who only think of themselves and do everything according to their own wishes, without the slightest concern for others, as if they were the only people in the world. Egocentric people relate everything to themselves and consider themselves the centre of the universe. Everything gets organised around them, and other people only exist in relation to them and for the services that they can render. Modern western society shows strong tendencies towards

individualism and egocentricity. We need to be aware of them, in order to combat them, but this shouldn't cause us to relinquish autonomy. Autonomy is a person's ability to make his or her own choices, to take decisions him- or herself, to manage the relationship with the environment on the basis of reality, to be free and responsible vis-à-vis that reality, to support but not depend upon others."

"But aren't I always dependent on others to some extent?"

"What I'm trying to say is that I shouldn't let others dictate my behaviour, decide for me, or even abandon concern for myself on the pretext of helping others. But it's obvious that I don't live alone. I interact all the time with my environment. I develop and get to know myself through my relationship with others. In order to clearly understand the idea of autonomy, I have to link it to the idea of reciprocity."

"There I need an explanation", said Stefan.

"All right. I've told you that each person is unique. Each person is also endowed with potentialities and abilities, which enable him or her to resolve whatever problems have to be faced and to find a balance. Each of us also has the instruments and tools we need to build our happiness. If I succumb to the temptation of imposing solutions on other people 'for their own good', I make them dependent and I don't let them take charge of their own lives, acquire autonomy or be their true selves. I therefore condemn them to underdevelopment. That's why education has to lead each person to learn and to progress by him- or herself."

"That covers autonomy, but what about reciprocity?"

"I'm coming to that. We mustn't forget that each person also has limits. I don't live, feel or experience everything that others live, feel and experience. In order to better understand others, I need to understand how they see themselves. I therefore have to respect them and listen to them instead of deciding in their place. But in turn, I also need others' views in order to better understand myself. Within me, I have what it takes to ensure my own development, but I almost certainly need other people's help to identify the weaknesses that have to be compensated for and the obstacles that have to be overcome."

“To acquire autonomy, I need help from other people, and to be truly helped by others, I have to help them develop their own autonomy.”

“You’ve got it, Stefan.”

“And the same also holds for the educator”, Olga added.

“Exactly. An educator who forgets him- or herself in order to help young people can’t really guide them to independence. By becoming dependent on them, the educator inevitably confines young people to a relationship of dependence, whereas if you really love someone, you allow him or her to emerge as a free and independent person.”

“I quite agree with you,” Vladimir interrupted, “but there’s still something bothering me.”

“What’s that, Vladimir?”

“I think that one of Scouting’s main aims is also to develop strong characters, capable of confronting difficulties, making choices and committing themselves. I can’t really find that in what’s been said so far.”

“If you’d allow me, professor, I’d like to reply”, said Eva. “There’s no contradiction, Vladimir. It’s by being certain of our own identity and capable of making choices independently that we can truly commit ourselves and confront difficulties. The problem is that we’re often afraid of letting people make choices. We want to dictate what’s good for them and for society in the very name of social values. But that doesn’t make any sense, because it encourages them to take refuge in individualism and to refuse social responsibilities. That’s exactly what happened under the communist regime. Set speeches never persuaded anyone.”

Vladimir was somewhat dumbfounded by the passion with which Eva had spoken.

“I appreciate your concern, Vladimir”, the professor said. “But I think Eva is right. If we put the development of free, responsible people at the forefront, it’s because we are relying on fundamental values which merit being clearly expressed.”

“What are they then?” Stefan asked.

“They are Human Rights, as expressed by the United Nations, which establish the dignity of man. I also like the way they are expressed in the ‘Charter of the rights and liberties of the individual’, a fundamental law of the province of Quebec in Canada.”

The professor had taken a small imitation leather notebook from his pocket. He opened it and read:

*“Considering that each human being possesses intrinsic rights and liberties intended to ensure his protection and development, considering that all human beings are equal in worth and dignity...”*¹³

The old professor stressed the last words and stopped for a moment, looking at the group. He went on:

*“...Each individual holds fundamental liberties such as the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, the freedom of opinion, the freedom of expression...”*¹³

“I won’t go on. Ever since I had certain experiences, I’ve always kept this text on me. It clearly states that each of us has the right to be respected as a ‘person’, just as he or she must respect others. Each of us is the first judge of our acts, thoughts and feelings, just as we are the first to be responsible for their consequences. Each of us has the right to develop, learn and evolve. Each of us has the right to seek happiness, whilst respecting others. It’s a profoundly spiritual concept of man, which should inspire all our actions, particularly in the field of education.”

There was a long moment of silence. Everyone knew that Jan Kessel had paid a high toll for this faith in man.

Finally, Stefan interrupted their thoughts.

“And the story of the pilot?”

The professor looked up and smiled at him.

“I like that story. I came across it in a book by a French psychoanalyst, Marie Balmay, a book with the surprising title of ‘The Divine Origin: God Did Not Make Man’.

“It is indeed rather paradoxical”, said Olga.

“Actually, she expresses a formidable faith in man in this book, based on her experience as a psychotherapist. From her reading of the Bible, she states that God just gave life to the ‘male and female’ human being. After that, it’s up to man — male and female — to create himself as an independent person, as a ‘subject’, and to illustrate that intention, she tells the ‘parable of the rocket’.

“A rocket?” Stefan queried in a surprised tone.

“Yes. This is how the story goes. The life of an individual can be compared to a rocket. At the moment of take-off, i.e. at the beginning of life, the rocket has only two levels — the third and the second. The passenger is on the lower level — the third one. Then the passenger goes up to the second level and lives on the two levels that have been built — the third and second ones. The rocket orbits in the universe according to the path and force of its initial launch, and one day it will fall back down to Earth and be destroyed. However, if its passenger manages to build a first level, that level won’t fall back down with the other two — as it wasn’t built on earth, it’s not ruled by the Earth’s laws. This first level is the work of the passenger and can only be built by him or her. If the passenger manages to build a first level and to move up into it, he or she then becomes the builder-pilot and escapes the destruction that awaits the rest of the rocket. Do you follow this story?”

“The idea of becoming a pilot is clear”, Stefan said. “Everyone has to learn to navigate him- or herself.”

“Yes, but why construct a third level?” Eva asked.

“And why do you call the third level the first?” Olga added.

“Let me explain. An individual starts life on the third level; that is to say, in the third person. Well before a child is able to speak, the parents and others around speak about ‘him or her’, in the third person. The child has no identity. Once able to speak and communicate with other people, the child becomes ‘you’ to others and, by identifying with those who speak to him or her, the child, in turn, gradually learns to say ‘I’. It’s difficult. To start with, when the child speaks about him- or herself, it’s always in the third person. It takes a long time to start saying ‘I’. But even after this has happened, the child still remains an ‘object’ at this stage. The child has still not truly built a

personal identity. And others decide more or less everything for him or her. The child is living on the second and third levels of the rocket.

“I see”, said Olga. “The third level corresponds to the third person, ‘he or she’, and the second level to the second person, ‘you’.”

“So the first level corresponds to ‘I’?” Vladimir inquired.

“Yes. Reaching the first level of the rocket is to emerge as a ‘subject’, to be capable of saying ‘I’, to become someone who leads his or her own life, instead of only being someone who lives the life that others have built for him or her. That’s character development.

“But why”, Stefan asked, “does your story say that if the passenger reaches the first level, he or she won’t fall back to earth and won’t die?”

“Is it the idea of the immortality of the soul?” Eva asked.

“Yes. We can call that the soul or the spirit. Each of us has a fundamental identity. It’s often in the midst of the worst possible ordeals that this is revealed and transforms the person from within. Those who have gone through the experience of concentration camps, for example, know this only too well. When we become aware of this identity, it proves to be stronger than all handicaps, all ordeals, all illnesses, and even, some claim, stronger than death. It’s what constitutes man’s dignity. And that’s why the process which allows the individual to become aware of him- or herself is a profoundly spiritual process in my view. Mary Balmory says:

In all breathing human bodies, an uncreated being remains which seeks to tell itself and receive the message of the presence of another. Within the most lost and most wicked of men, there is someone.”¹⁴

Olga spoke, summarising the thoughts of all of them in the form of a question, as well as a commitment.

“So the purpose of education is to allow children to discover this person within themselves and to make it emerge?”

Eva thanked the professor and brought the meeting to a close. The sun was shining brightly outside. The professor suggested that it was time to stretch their legs before lunch. They went out, except for Vladimir, who lingered to

read through the notes that he'd taken. The door opened again. It was Eva:

“What are you doing? Leave your papers there and come outside with us for a while!”

“But look, Eva. The conclusions only take up a few lines. Have I forgotten to note something down?”

Eva took the sheet of paper from him and read it. Then she looked up and looked at him with laughing eyes:

“Well, I can't see the problem!”

“But look! I didn't find anything to put in the stages of development!”

Eva smiled and ruffled his hair.

“That's normal, Vladimir. It's on the basis of the different areas of growth that the individual shapes his or her own identity. We've already noted the stages earlier. Come on! Come and get some air! You need it!”

She grabbed his hand and led him outside.

They were greeted by exclamations of delight and laughter. The monks had set up a table outside with some refreshments for an aperitif in the sun.



IX. Final Educational Objectives

Monday, 28 September

It had been a hard day for Olga. The day before, Ondrej, her husband, had driven to fetch her from Saint Sophie's monastery and they had arrived home very late. They lived in the second largest city in the country, an old historical city threatened by pollution from giant steel works that were in fact deemed obsolete and incapable of withstanding international competition. It was some 220 kilometres from the monastery to their small house at the top of a hill overlooking the city. Irma and Sarah, their twin daughters, had not wanted to go to sleep before their parents returned, and Birgit, the Cub Scout leader who had offered to baby-sit for the weekend, had had trouble putting them to bed.

The ringing of the alarm clock on Monday morning was a rude awakening for the whole family, and Olga had to rush to get to school on time. One of her colleagues was ill, and she had to take some of her colleague's pupils into her class in addition to her own. When the bell went to announce the end of the school day, Olga breathed a sigh of relief. While her pupils gathered up their belongings and rushed noisily into the playground, she collected the papers scattered on her desk, put them into her briefcase and hurried towards the door. She still had to fetch the twins from nursery school and do the shopping, before preparing the evening meal. Fortunately, Ondrej, who taught at the secondary school, used public transport and let her use their small Skoda.

As she parked the car in front of their house, Irma insisted on showing her, for the tenth time, the drawing she had done at school, while Sarah hung onto her skirt asking for a sweet. Ondrej opened the car door, and the two girls ran into his arms.

"Take these two monsters off my hands while I bring the shopping in", Olga pleaded.

"You've got a visitor", said Ondrej.

“What? Oh no! Who is it?”

“A Scout called Viktor.”

“Viktor Gomerek?”

That was all she needed to finish off her day! Her arms full of packages, Olga went indoors wondering why he had come to see her. She put the shopping on the kitchen table and looked at Ondrej in despair.

“I’ll take care of the twins”, he said. “I can cope for half an hour or even three-quarters of an hour before needing rescuing. You see to your visitor.”

“You are a love. I hope it won’t take too long.”

She cast a tender look at her husband, who was showing the girls how to put the food in the fridge, and went into the living room.

Viktor rose as she approached, and bowed to kiss her hand. Olga did not greet him all that warmly. She did not like Viktor’s extremely formal manners. She even went so far as to think that she did not like him at all. He was about 30 years old and dressed with an elegance that was rather too garish. He had started a Scout group in the most prestigious part of the city and he claimed to run it like a real business. Viktor liked to be taken for a businessman. He managed an import-export company founded by his uncle. Rumour had it that, on several occasions, he had only avoided bankruptcy thanks to political support.

“Sit down”, Viktor. “What can I do for you?”

“Thanks, Olga. I’m sorry for calling on you unannounced. I won’t take up too much of your time. I’m here on behalf of Boris Koncewitz.”

Olga frowned. At the last general assembly of the association, Boris Koncewitz had put himself forward as a candidate for the office of chairman, competing against Piotr Gormisko, who just beat him to the post. Boris Koncewitz, 75 years of age, represented the conservative wing of the association. He advocated purely and simply implementing the traditional Scout programme, as practised in the 1930s. As an old Scout, the respect he enjoyed gave him moral weight that he used cleverly to try to impose his own views. He had been on the National board since it was re-established.

“I wonder what brings an eminent member of the national board to see me”, Olga commented sarcastically.

Viktor sighed.

“Don't take it like that, Olga. You know Boris Koncewitz. He's a man with a clear vision of the future for Scouting in our country. He worked with your father in the past and has a high opinion of you. He simply asked me to tell you that he's counting on you for the future.”

“What do you mean, Viktor?”

“Listen, it's no secret that Boris Koncewitz has to take the association in hand, to give it the leadership it needs. But he needs to have quality people around him. You're an excellent educator, and he'd like you to take charge of the programme for the female section.”

“A female section?”

“Yes. Boris Koncewitz believes that Scouting should take the characteristics of each gender into account. When the Movement was founded in 1920, it had a male section and a female section. Such a system is far better adapted to our national culture than co-education. Moreover, boys need more manly activities...”

“If I understand our dear Boris well, he wants to go back to the good old ways of yesteryear!”

“Don't you think that men and women have specific roles to play in society, and that Scouting should prepare them accordingly?”

“In my view, what really matters is for each individual to be able to reach his or her full potential, without being restricted by supposedly female or male roles. Boys and girls have to learn to co-operate by first of all taking account of their individual qualities, and not their gender.”

“That may be all very well for western European countries, but it's not right for our culture! We need a solid Scout programme that concentrates on transmitting our national values! That's what Boris Koncewitz wants to promote, and, believe me, most of the leaders will be behind him. If you want to have a future in the association, you'd do well to pick your side carefully.”

Olga struggled to keep her calm.

“Let’s make it clear, Viktor. I don’t at all share Boris’ point of view on what direction our association should take. Our society is in the process of changing drastically, and we need to help young people prepare for a totally different world from the one that our parents and we ourselves grew up in. Of course the values of the past are important, but young people have to be helped to place them in a new context. We have to develop an educational system based on our cultural and moral values, but it mustn’t be a system geared towards reliving the past. Nowadays, we have to promote freedom and help young people express their aspirations and learn to manage the changes. That’s what really counts, not the desire to have an important post within the association.”

“My dear Olga, don’t be so aggressive. In an association like ours, it’s normal for various points of view to clash. What matters is reaching a consensus. That’s Boris’ main concern. He asked me to tell you that he’s very worried about the results of the programme committee’s work. He’d like to discuss the matter with you. If the committee’s final proposal doesn’t take sufficient account of our national traditions, there are bound to be major problems.”

Olga was finding it increasingly difficult to control the anger that was boiling up inside her. She couldn’t tolerate the slimy, pompous tone adopted by Viktor.

“What exactly are you trying to say?”

“I’ll be frank, Olga. A lot of leaders in the association don’t understand why such an important responsibility has been given to inexperienced people like Eva and Vladimir. They have no faith in the programme committee’s work, and, to be honest, it would be better for you to distance yourself.”

Olga got up abruptly.

“Viktor, a piece of good advice — don’t come here to speak ill of my friends! The programme committee’s working hard and making good progress! Eva and Vladimir have more experience of Scouting than you have. They aren’t driven by personal interest, but by the desire to be useful to

young people and the Movement. And the same can't be said of everyone!"

Viktor got up too.

"I didn't want to make you angry, Olga, but it's a fact that many of us think your work is useless and undoubtedly dangerous. We have a programme that corresponds to the tradition of our Movement, and all we have to do is help the unit leaders put it into practice. Many of them lack training. They're unfamiliar with the fundamental principles of Scouting, so introducing new ideas will only confuse them further. You can expect strong resistance from the national board when you present your ideas. That's why it's in your interest to talk to Boris Koncewitz. He's a man of experience who can give you some useful advice to ensure that you influence your friends in the right way."

Without saying a word, Olga opened the door of the room and moved aside to free the way. Viktor gave her a broad grin, and picked up his briefcase.

"Thanks for seeing me, Olga. Believe me, we want dialogue, not confrontation. In any case, Boris Koncewitz would like to see you."

"Tell him I'll talk to the other members of the committee. We're open to any fair and frank discussion."

Olga stressed these last words while looking Viktor right in the eye. With a little smile on his lips, he bowed his head and headed towards the door. Ondrej and the twins watched him leave.

"Is he a wicked man, Mummy?" Sarah asked.

"Only the future will tell", Olga replied, hugging her. "Come on. Let's go and get supper ready, and I'll call Eva later. Ondrej and the girls, you've got a job to do — please lay the table."

While preparing the meal, Olga thought back over her conversation with Viktor. She couldn't shake off the feeling of anger that had boiled up inside her. Boris Koncewitz was a decent man, but somewhat out of his depth in the current situation, and he let himself be manipulated by people like Viktor Gomerek — a go-getter of the worst possible kind. She had to warn Eva at once. Viktor was going to try and unite the conservative elements of

the association to oppose their work. How should they react? They shouldn't panic, she told herself. Above all, they shouldn't allow themselves to be undermined, but continue to work and produce a proposal that was likely to be supported by the majority.

After supper, Ondrej agreed to put the girls to bed and tell them a story. Olga cleared the table and rushed to the phone to call Eva. The phone rang for a long time, but nobody answered. She tried Vladimir's number, also without success, and then she decided to call Stefan. She needed to talk to someone on the team. Stefan answered at the second ring, and did not interrupt Olga as she recounted Viktor's visit.

"So what do you think, Stefan?"

"He's a real nuisance! I'm scared he'll cause us trouble. We have to warn Eva!"

"I've tried, but she's not at home."

"Maybe she's at a meeting. Listen, I'll try and get hold of her. I suggest we get together on Saturday to review the situation. But my first thought is that we should work relentlessly to finalise our proposal as quickly as possible. Where have you got to on your side?"

"I'm planning to work on the educational objectives this evening. If we meet up on Saturday, I'll definitely have a first draft ready for you."

"Perfect! Don't worry too much about Viktor. I'll go and see Eva tomorrow, and I'll ask her to call you back. Don't despair!"

Olga hung up. Stefan was right. They shouldn't allow themselves to be perturbed by vague threats. After all, they couldn't expect the unanimous support of all the leaders. Gathering her documents together, she sat down at her desk. She'd promised the rest of the team that she'd explore the question of educational objectives based on the results of the weekend at St Sophie's. She was determined not to be distracted from this task.

"Let's start by evaluating the situation", she said aloud.

Vladimir had given her a copy of the notes he'd taken at St Sophie's: a summary of each of the areas of growth, supplemented by educational trails.

Olga intended to go over each of these trails, in order to come up with a series of educational objectives.

“OK, but the first step is to clearly define what is meant by ‘educational objective’...”

“Are you talking to yourself now?”

Olga jumped. She hadn’t heard Ondrej come back down from the children’s room.

“Are the twins asleep?”

“I hope so. I had to tell them the story of Cinderella three times. Have you got some work to do?”

“Yes. I’ve got to write a draft for Eva and the others on educational objectives. Do you want to help me?”

“Maybe the best way of helping would be for me to do the washing-up? After that, I want to take a bath and sit down in front of the television. It’s the cup final this evening. But if you need a critical ear, give me a shout.”

“You’re a darling!”

Taking a large sheet of paper from the desk drawer, Olga started to define an educational objective in writing:

An educational objective is the anticipated result of an educational process. It expresses the new skills that we want children or young people to develop in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

“Yep... not bad, though a bit complicated. Let’s try and simplify it.”

An educational objective expresses the new capacities — knowledge, skills and attitudes — that we want an individual to develop by means of an educational process.

“That’s better!”

Olga opened a file that she had prepared after a seminar organised by UNICEF that she had attended the previous year:

*Education and Change in Central and Eastern Europe*¹⁵

The seminar had been opened by the head of UNICEF's Development Education section, Nora Godwin. Olga re-read with interest the notes she had taken:

In today's world of rapidly shifting scenarios — economic recessions, outbreaks of violence, political upheavals, environmental changes, rapid technological developments — the only thing we can be sure of is change itself. Our children and young people will have to learn to take charge of change if they are to survive.

She recalled the catastrophic picture of today's world painted by the UNICEF officer: the unequal distribution of wealth, violence as the main way of dealing with conflicts, cultural differences perceived as threats rather than a blessing, persistent racism, sexism, ethnocentrism and conditioning leading to hatred and exclusion, human rights violations, malnutrition and epidemics. Could anyone hope to change all that? It was possible, Nora Godwin had declared. The events in central and eastern Europe had shown the rest of the world that situations could be transformed and innate tendencies overturned if a deep desire for change existed in public opinion. But to make it possible, not only did people throughout the world have to be aware of the real problems, but they also have to feel a sense of solidarity with people suffering from under-development or injustice, and be capable of doing something to change things within their communities, as well as at international level. It was with this in mind that UNICEF had designed the development education process.

Olga took the time to re-read the definition of the fundamental concepts of the process:

- *Interdependence*

Learning how everything in the world is part of an interconnected and delicately balanced system; being able to relate local action to a wider global context.

- *Images and perceptions*

Exploring other ways of life, both in one's own and other countries, and coming to see diversity as enriching rather than threatening; learning to recognise stereotypes and ethnocentric attitudes.

- *Social justice*

Learning about principles of human rights and the many ways in which these can be denied or promoted, through social and economic as well as political and cultural factors; applying them to one's own life and actions.

- *Conflict and conflict resolution*

Understanding the various sources, manifestations and causes of conflict; coming to understand that there are many ways of solving conflict, of which violence is only one; learning the skills of conflict resolution, and how one can work for peace at all levels.

- *Change and the future*

Understanding that, just as actions taken in the past have affected current situations, actions taken today will affect the future; learning how to envisage different future scenarios and planning to work to achieve them.

Nora Godwin had concluded by defining three stages in the learning process to implement development education:

- *Exploring*

Developing a sense of curiosity and observation; learning to acquire and analyse useful information about a given problem.

- *Responding*

Relating the information acquired to one's own experience; being able to apply what one has learned in one's life and environment.

- *Taking action*

Being able to decide on what concrete and realistic action to take, and becoming personally involved in helping to resolve the problem.

All of that is closely linked to our educational proposal, Olga thought.

“How's it going then?”

Ondrej, his sleeves rolled up and a glass of beer in his hand, leant over the paper-covered desk.

“Have you done the dishes?”

“Mission accomplished, my dear!” Ondrej declared proudly, sitting down in an armchair.

“Ondrej, I’ve got a question for you. I’ve been reading here in a UNICEF document that it’s essential for young people to be coached to consider themselves not the passive victims of change, but active participants capable of influencing the processes underway and, in the long run, of turning them to the common good. What do you think? Did the education you receive prepare you to manage change?”

“Isn’t my present behaviour an answer in itself?” Ondrej replied, winking. “I come from a patriarchal family in a male chauvinist society, but look at me now — I’ve adapted perfectly to living with a liberated woman. While she’s thinking, I’m doing the dishes! Isn’t that a way of making the world a better place?”

Olga swiftly grabbed the glass of beer, and pushed Ondrej back in the armchair.

“You idiot! Give me a serious answer!”

“You know the answer, Olga. We’ve lived in a system that suppressed individual responsibility. Education focused on the teacher and not on those on the receiving end. It was more important to know the right answer than to learn how to learn. The top people knew the truth, and those at the bottom had to accept it. Consequently, it wasn’t originality that was rewarded, but conformism and passivity. Educating consisted of creating dependency vis-à-vis authority, rather than allowing access to information and power sharing. Fortunately, our people were in many cases able to develop antibodies to react against this doctrine.”

“Do you think such an attitude is specific to communism?”

“Not at all. It’s a tendency that also exists in many capitalist countries. All established systems tend to prefer conformism to autonomy. They try to tell people what they should think, instead of letting them think for themselves.”

Olga gave Ondrej his glass of beer back.

“Yes, and what’s more, it’s undoubtedly what our friend Koncewitz and his henchman Viktor have in mind... But there’s another question that bothers me. If the aim of education is to allow young people not to repeat what exists but to help improve society, the success of education should be measured by young people’s capacity to play an active role in the process of change.”

“Yes, but that’s only possible for the older ones. You have to have acquired a certain level of knowledge, skills and attitudes before you can take concrete action in society.”

“That’s exactly what I wanted to hear you say. I can immediately draw an important conclusion, and that’s that the success of the senior age section is of crucial importance in assessing the success of Scouting’s educational vision.”

“Of course! It’s by the extent to which young people in the 20–22 age range from the senior section are able to play a creative role in society, both as individuals and citizens, that Scouting’s educational programme can be tangibly assessed.”

“I wonder what the Scout associations that don’t have a real senior section do... In any case, now I’ve got a clear orientation for my work. I first have to define the educational objectives of the senior section — which will be the final objectives of Scouting — then define the objectives of the other age sections one at a time, down to the youngest.”

“But what are you going to base this work on?”

“It’s easy. As a team, we’ve already explored the various areas of personal growth, and identified educational trails for each. For example, for intellectual development we have:

- Collecting information — curiosity, exploration, investigation, observation, etc;
- Processing information — analysing data, sorting and classifying, memorising, etc;
- Problem-solving — spirit of invention and creativity, experimenting, making hypotheses and deductions...

Now I’m going to look again at each of these trails and try to define one or

more final educational objective for each. In other words, I'm going to define objectives for the last stage of Scouting, the senior section — you could also say the attitudes, skills and knowledge that young people should have acquired by the end of their Scouting career along each of the educational trails that we have identified.”

“That’s a mammoth task! You don’t have to do it single-handed, do you?”

“Don’t worry. I only have to draft a broad outline with a few specific examples for our meeting on Saturday. Then we’ll divide the work up among the members of the team. This evening, I’m going to try to get on for an hour and a half or two. Go and watch your match. You deserve it!”

“Listen. I’ll try and borrow a computer from the office. It would be useful for the job. I’m proud of you. Don’t work too late!”

They kissed, and Olga got down to work, with a smile on her lips.

“Let’s start at the beginning”, she murmured.

She took a large sheet of graph paper and wrote down the title “Physical Development”. Then she drew a long vertical line to produce two columns. At the top of the left-hand column, she wrote “Educational Trails”, and at the top of the right-hand one, “Educational Objectives”. Rummaging through the notes that Vladimir had given her, she found the educational trails noted for physical development. She underlined in red all the points that she thought essential, then started to note down her ideas in her large and even handwriting.



Saturday, 3 October, 14.45 hours

Cold, heavy rain was falling on the town. Vladimir walked quickly and tried to avoid the puddles, which was not easy because his glasses were becoming harder and harder to see through. He ran across the road, just missing a big lorry which swept past the kerb and sent a shower of water over his legs. Wet through, Vladimir sheltered at a carriage entrance for a moment. He was late for the meeting, which annoyed him. He turned up the

collar of his leather jacket, and cursing, went back into the downpour.

When a few minutes later, out of breath, he pushed open the door of the association's national office, Eva, Olga and Stefan were already seated around a table covered with documents.

“Hi everyone. What lousy weather! Sorry I'm late...”

Expressions of horror greeted his arrival.

“Vladimir, don't come near this table. You look as if you've swum across the river. You'll get all my files wet”, Eva exclaimed.

A moment later, once he had hung his jacket up on the coat rack, removed his sodden shoes, wiped his glasses and accepted a cup of steaming coffee from Olga, his good humour returned.

Eva spoke:

“Olga's been working on the final educational objectives. She's going to tell us what she's done. Go ahead, Olga.”

Olga unfolded some large sheets of graph paper and fixed them with drawing pins onto the edge of the blackboard on the wall.

“Right. Let me start by reminding you what we have to do. When we worked with the professor, we defined a certain number of educational trails for each of the areas of growth, which we felt corresponded to the needs of young people in our country. Now, we have to define as precisely as possible the result that we want to obtain at the end of each of these educational trails.”

Stefan grunted. Olga continued:

“Before starting our work, we have to agree on the meaning of the word 'objective'. I delved back into my university papers to come up with a precise definition for you. I risk sounding a bit like the professor, but please excuse me, as I think it's necessary.”

She took a piece of chalk and headed purposefully towards the blackboard.

“The first thing is to clearly distinguish between an 'educational goal' and an 'educational objective'. The 'educational goal' is the intention expressed

by the educator. If you like, it corresponds to the educational trails that we've defined. For example, in the area of physical development, we want to help young people develop the strength, suppleness and agility of their bodies. In the area of intellectual development, we've expressed the intention of helping young people develop their curiosity, and we want to help them know how to gather and analyse information. All this corresponds to the educational choices we've made. It all comes from us, the educators. They're our intentions — they correspond to our concerns."

"So are the objectives something else?" Vladimir asked.

"Yes. To define an educational objective, we have to put the emphasis on the young people, put ourselves in their place and take account of their capacities, needs and the steps they can take, in order to define precisely the new state they should achieve."

"I don't quite see the difference", Stefan said.

"I'll try and be more specific. But please try and follow what I'm saying. It's very important. I've had the same experience myself, in my job. In school, for example, there are two ways of devising programmes. The first consists merely in defining educational goals. You take into account the state the child has reached and define an intention. Let's take the example of what happens each year at the start of the first year of primary school. The children who arrive don't know how to read, and the teacher's intention is to teach them to read. He or she will do whatever possible to help the children progress."

"Yes. That's simple."

"It sounds simple! But if you stop there, you don't allow yourself to take into account the situation of each child, or the end result you want to achieve with each. What does learning to read mean? Being able to recognise letters and decipher a text, or being able to grasp and explain the meaning of a sentence you've read?"

"In other words, up to what point do you want to lead the children?" Eva stated.

"More precisely, what exact new ability will they acquire? If we talk in terms of educational objectives, we have to define exactly the performance,

the concrete result that a child should be able to achieve at the end of a given period, for example by the end of the school year. It's not enough to say in a general way that 'we're going to teach him or her to read'."

"In fact, it's a question of being more specific and more exact in the definition of the goal to be achieved", Vladimir said.

"Not only. There are two attitudes involved, with quite different educational practices."

"Explain what you mean", Stefan said.

"OK. The first question is to know how you are going to assess the success rate of the pupil. If you stick with the educational intention of 'learning to read', you are going to try and help the children as much as you can, to ensure they progress in this respect, aren't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"But as you haven't defined the exact result to be achieved, how can you assess the success rate of the pupils?"

"That's simple", said Stefan. "I'd do a reading test, and I'd be able to distinguish between those who could read the best, those who could read the least well, and those who were average."

"Well done", Stefan. "That's what I wanted you to say! In other words, you would grade the pupils against each other, into the very good, the good, the average, the poor and the dunces! And those who are below average would be considered to have failed, wouldn't they?"

"Well, er, yep, I suppose so..."

"But a failure against what, since you haven't defined the result to be achieved? A pupil who is below average in one class could be above average in another... Your system lacks a great deal of objectivity, wouldn't you say?"

"That's true."

"What's more, it has two major flaws. The first, and most obvious, is that of putting certain pupils in a situation of failure, even exclusion, and therefore discouraging them. The second, which is perhaps less serious, is

that of refusing to take the particular situation and learning processes of each child into account.”

“I don’t quite see what you’re getting at”, Stefan said.

“Defining an educational objective means defining precisely the level of ability that a child should reach over a given time. That naturally leads on to defining the steps, the path that the child should take to achieve that result. The educator establishes an arrival point, taking the child’s starting point into account, and defining successive steps between the starting point and the arrival point. The educator will therefore be able to assess how the child is progressing along the path, and can adapt the educational approach accordingly.”

“In other words, when you define an educational objective, you can evaluate the individual progress of the child, and not just compare him or her against the rest.”

“Exactly. What matters is each pupil’s success rate, and not the grading. Indeed, what’s serious”, Olga added with contained passion, “is that the implicit hypothesis on which the first approach is based is the acceptance of failure: there are the good and the bad; there are those who succeed and those who fail. This is accepted as inevitable, and the function of teaching consists solely in selecting an elite. With the second approach, in contrast, we try to help ALL young people achieve a certain level of ability, defined in advance. This allows for the development of an educational process founded on success rather than failure.”

“I follow what you’re saying, Olga,” Stefan interrupted, “but one objection comes to mind. If you define a precise result that everyone should achieve, won’t you be rejecting differences and putting all children in the same basket?”

“That’s the most common objection, and there’s some truth in it. The risk would, in fact, be to define and impose educational objectives as absolute imperatives, without paying any attention to the particularities of each young person, their motivation and their personal progress. But defining educational objectives introduces three elements, which I think are essential. Firstly, by defining an objective result to be achieved, this allows it to be

discussed, appraised, and modified if it's no longer suitable. All too often in education, we operate using implicit, unspoken goals, which are therefore impossible to criticise and change. The second key element is that defining objectives allows the educator to 'focus' on each young person, on his or her progress and development, instead of sticking with intentions which are relatively vague or preconceived. Finally, by basing oneself on objectives defined for everyone, it's easier to help each young person become aware of his or her personal situation and define personal objectives accordingly."

"You mean that the objectives have to be adapted to each young person?" Stefan asked.

"Absolutely. As my grandfather used to say, you can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. It's the educator's job to motivate each young person to discover what and how he or she is going to progress, and to set specific personal objectives to be achieved."

"OK," Vladimir interrupted, "we can come back to the educational process, but can we try to look more closely at how we're going to write these confounded objectives?"

"Slowly, Stefan", Eva interjected. "Don't go so fast. Olga has precise proposals to put to us, but first I'd like her to tell us a bit more about setting the objectives. We can't work in the dark without a minimum of method."

"I hope I won't bore you too much, but I do think it's important to recall some elements before embarking on our task. First of all, what are the characteristics of a good objective?"

"SMART!" said Vladimir.

"What?" Stefan asked.

"Yes, Vladimir is right. S.M.A.R.T.! Do you want to explain it to us Vladimir?"

"Eh, OK... S for 'specific'..."

"That means that the objective has to be defined precisely and target a single result."

"M for... eh..."

“M for ‘measurable’. The definition of an objective has to indicate a result to be achieved, which can be observed as objectively as possible. What next, Vladimir?”

“Eh, A for... For what again?”

“For ‘achievable’, in other words, corresponding to the capabilities of the young person concerned.”

“OK, R for ‘relevant’...It has to correspond to the real needs.”

“And T?”

“T for ‘timed’. The objective has to have a time limit. In other words, you have to set the period of time within which the expected result should be achieved.”

“Right,” said Stefan, “we’re going to try and write ‘SMART’ objectives, but all of that remains very theoretical! What I want to know in simple terms is how to write them!”

“OK, Stefan, I’ll try to be more specific by giving you an example. In the area of physical development, we’ve identified an educational trail that we’ve called ‘identifying needs’, believing that it’s important to help young people know how to recognise the needs of their own bodies. I’ll propose a final educational objective that corresponds to this educational trail.”

Olga went to the board on the wall and wrote a sentence that she circled in red. She read out what she’d written:

Be able to describe the biological processes which regulate one’s body, accept one’s physical capabilities and actively protect one’s health.

Stefan did not appear to be convinced:

“Do you really think that children will be capable of that?”

“Careful”, Olga continued. “We’re talking here of final educational objectives, in other words, results which should be achieved by the end of the Scout experience, that is to say by the end of the senior section.”

“So the final objectives are the objectives of the senior section?”

“Yes, the final objectives have to be achieved by the end of the senior section, but one or two intermediate objectives leading to the final objective also have to be defined for the senior section, just like for the other sections.”

“What about putting it to the test?” Vladimir suggested. “For example, under affective development, let’s take the trail ‘self-discovery and awareness’, and come up with a final objective.”

“Eh, what about ‘learning to know oneself’, Stefan offered.

“Is that really an objective?” Eva asked. “It’s not worded like a result to be achieved. I’d suggest ‘being able to understand one’s emotions’.”

“Just a second”, Olga interrupted. “‘Understand’ is no good!”

“What?”

“How can you assess whether someone has understood or not?”

“...If they are able to explain it?”

“Well done, Vladimir! When drafting an educational objective, the first rule is to strictly avoid terms like ‘understand’, ‘know’, ‘experience’, ‘learn’, etc. Those are terms that convey intention, but they’re not the right language for objectives. It’s impossible to assess if someone has understood something or not — you’d have to be able to get inside the person’s head. However, you can assess whether people are capable of giving a clear description or explanation or not. It’s a matter of ‘objective’ behaviour that can be observed.”

“Does drafting an objective require special vocabulary?”

“Yes, you have to give preference to terms which describe a concrete, observable situation. For example, avoid ‘know’ and instead use ‘describe’ or ‘make a list’...”

“So,” said Eva, “to come back to our example, a final educational objective corresponding to the trail ‘self-discovery and awareness’ could be ‘being able to explain the emotions you feel?’”

“Yes, that’s it. You could also use the words ‘express’ or ‘describe’ one’s emotions.”

“If everything is clear, let’s get down to work and try to draft at least... hum... one final objective for each educational trail. Is that it, Olga?”

“As we’ve generally defined three educational trails for each area of growth, that makes at least 18 final educational objectives”, Stefan added.

“No doubt more. We certainly need several educational objectives to properly ‘cover’ some educational trails. But don’t worry. I’ve already made quite a bit of progress. We can start with my proposals.”

“Let’s get on with it then!”

“I’m going to make some more coffee”, said Stefan.

From a large folder, Olga took out stapled sheets of paper, which she distributed to her friends:

“I’ve photocopied my proposals. We can go through them together and improve on them.”



Saturday, 3 October, 18.30 hours

“Phew, finished!” Stefan sighed, stretching at the same time.

Olga copied out the final wording of the last objective into her notebook.

“Not quite. I had a visit from our ‘dear friend’ Viktor Gomerek that I need to talk to you about!”

“Not him again”, groaned Vladimir.

“Stefan already knows all about it”, Olga went on. “Viktor came to see me last Monday, and we need to prepare ourselves for serious problems with the national board.”

“We’re listening”, said Eva, a serious look on her face.

Olga recounted in detail her meeting with Viktor. When she’d finished, the group remained silent for a moment.

“It was to be expected”, said Stefan.

“Yeah, it would have been too much to hope for that they’d leave us to work in peace, and judge the results!” Vladimir remarked.

“The stakes are too high”, Eva continued. “It’s normal that there are objections. After all, our approach still doesn’t meet with unanimous approval.”

“OK, but the way this bloke intervenes is quite simply disgusting!” Stefan exclaimed, slamming his large fist on the table.

“Let’s stay calm”, Eva carried on. “What counts is that we get on with our work as quickly as possible.”

“We mustn’t find ourselves blocked by a decision of the national board!”

“You’re right, Olga. We have to prepare a very good report for the next meeting on 21 November.”

“Yes, and be able to show significant progress!”

“I think we need to enlarge our group quickly”, Stefan added. “We’re working too much as a select committee. We need to gather around us a lot of young leaders who share our ideas.”

“I agree. We shouldn’t be working in isolation. We need to move quickly and compare our proposals with reality and test them out in the field. We need experimental groups, and I think Stefan is obviously in the best position to organise them”, Eva concluded.

“Explain your idea!”

“Well, it’s clear. Our work can’t come to anything if it remains purely theoretical. In the face of our critics, we have to prove that our proposals have been put to the test in the field and that they work. Stefan, you’re a man of action, and you know a lot of leaders. So you can identify about 10 local groups from different economic, social and cultural backgrounds. Their leaders should be put in contact with us to test out our proposals with the young people and send us their feedback.”

“Eva, you’re brilliant! A good field record showing how our project works on the ground is just what we need to shut Viktor and his cronies up!”

“We’ll never manage to prepare that for 21 November!” Vladimir objected.

“And what’s more, what concrete elements do we have to test right now?”

“If we could already present a plan showing the results that we want to achieve with 10 or 15 local groups on 21 November, it would certainly be enough to obtain the support of the board”, Olga observed.

“We should also avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’ in our little corner...”

“What do you mean, Eva?”

“I mean that we can’t consider doing everything on our own. Other associations have certainly already gone down the same path, and it would definitely be in our interest to contact them and talk to them to tap ideas and experience, which would help us gain time. And in that respect, I’ve got a suggestion to make.”

“We’re listening”, said Olga.

“I met Lidija, our new international commissioner, yesterday. She gave me an invitation that we’ve just received from the European Scout Office. A programme workshop is being organised from 25 to 31 October in Strasbourg. It would be an ideal opportunity for us to meet representatives from other associations, exchange views and ideas with them, and perhaps enter into partnerships...”

“Are you sure we measure up to the rest?” Vladimir queried.

“Of course!” Olga retorted. “We’re not daft, and I think we’ve made good progress in just a few weeks. I’m all in favour of Eva’s idea. We should send someone there to make contact with other associations involved in the same work. But... do we have the budget for it?”

“Lidija assures me that we could get a grant from the European Scout Region.”

“But who could we send?” Vladimir asked.

“I see only one possibility”, Eva replied, giving him a knowing look.

“What me? Just a minute! Who said I was available?”

“Whoever goes has to be able to speak English”, Eva added in an unruffled tone.

“And then we’ve all got jobs, whereas you’re unemployed”, Olga went on.

“But I could have a course or temporary job!”

“Right now, are you or aren’t you free on those dates?”

“I’ve got nothing planned for the end of October, but...”

“Well done, and congratulations”, Stefan exclaimed, slapping poor Vladimir hard on the back. “You’ve been elected unanimously as the Board’s representative! That calls for a drink! The drinks are on me!”



X. Stages of Development and Age Sections

Sunday, 25 October, 15.10 hours

Vladimir was dozing, barely aware of the drone of the engines.

It was the first time that he had been on a plane, but after the excitement of the first few minutes, he had quickly sunk into a deep sleep, from which he had emerged for just long enough to eat the frugal lunch served by a smiling hostess. The last few days had been one mad rush, and the days too short to get everything done to be ready for the seminar — without counting all the bureaucratic obstacles that had had to be overcome to obtain a visa. Now, the seminar was not taking place in Strasbourg in France after all, but at Gilwell Park, the training centre of the UK Scouts. Vladimir was terribly excited at the thought of visiting this historic Scouting place. Stefan, who had taken him to the airport, would have liked to accompany him, but, unfortunately, the association's funds did not stretch to sending two representatives.

Suddenly, the engine speed changed, and the plane tilted slightly to the left. The pilot announced that they were approaching Heathrow, and asked the passengers to fasten their seatbelts, to put their seats back in an upright position and to stow their tables away. Vladimir leaned to look out of the window. He felt a muted bump and his hands tightened on the armrests. The plane was losing speed fast.

“It's just the air brakes”, his neighbour muttered coolly, stretching out his arms to fold a hefty Sunday Times.

The Airbus cut through a layer of cloud, and suddenly the English countryside came into view, lit by a pale, low autumnal sun. Vladimir watched excitedly as the Lilliputian scenery passed in front of his eyes, wondering at the thousands of features that he could see dotted beneath him: the villages with virtually identical houses, attached here and there to roads, rivers and woods; miniature cars and lorries moving along the motorway. Was Gilwell in sight? He did not like to ask his neighbour.

Now the plane was circling Heathrow, awaiting its turn to land, and

the cabin crew was handing out small white immigration cards. Vladimir extracted his passport from his pocket to write the number on the card. He felt a surge of anxiety. How would he be welcomed at Gilwell Park? Would he be up to following the seminar? And the first problem he would have to face: how to find his way through the labyrinth of the London underground to get to Chingford, where someone was supposed to be meeting him...

The plane finally landed gently, and Vladimir soon found himself in a queue of passengers heading for passport control. A young, smiling immigration officer checked his visa, stamped his passport and welcomed him to the United Kingdom. Once he had recovered his rucksack from the conveyor belt and found the Exit sign, he went through a corridor under the nonchalant regard of two laid-back customs officers and found himself in the cosmopolitan crowd of the airport. At the bureau de change, the counter was occupied by a giant of a man wearing a turban and sporting a carefully trimmed beard and moustache, held in place by a small net. It's the first time I've seen a real Sikh, Vladimir said to himself, handing him some notes to change. Without saying a word, the Indian gave him ten pounds and some loose change.

Rather distracted by the noise and agitation, Vladimir deciphered a poster telling people to watch out for pickpockets, then headed for the Underground sign. A sort of spiralling tunnel took him to the entrance to the underground, where he found another queue to buy a ticket, then a platform and curious carriages in the shape of a half-cylinder. It's so small, Vladimir marvelled, more used to the huge Soviet-built underground in his capital. Once through the sliding door, he removed his rucksack, found a seat and sat down. The train moved off with a creak, then gathered speed in a long tunnel. Soon he was travelling through the countryside, and Vladimir pulled out of his pocket the map he had taken from the counter to check the stops: Hatton Cross, Hounslow West, Hounslow Central, Hounslow East, Boston Manor, North Fields... It was the right line, but never-ending. Vladimir had to fight to stay awake, despite the jolts. Baron's Court, Earl's Court, Gloucester Road, South Kensington...

Vladimir straightened up with a start; they were in London, and he had to get out at Victoria, the next station! When the train came to a stop, he had to

fight his way through the crowd, jostling some passengers in the process. In his haste, he banged his head on the frame of the narrow door and jammed his rucksack. Someone pushed him, and he jumped awkwardly onto the platform. Two punks, their heads shaven and sporting green and red combs, with their ears and noses pierced with metal rings, went past him sniggering. Despite his fears, the connection was easy to find. A sign announced the next train in three minutes... two minutes... one minute... the train arrived.

Vladimir removed his rucksack and edged his way into a carriage. It was not as crowded this time. More stations flew past: Green Park, Oxford Circus, Warren Street. He had to change at Walthamstow Central (how on earth did you pronounce that!) to get to Chingford. At each stop, the number of passengers diminished. Finally, Vladimir found himself on his own with a large West Indian lady who was snoring opposite him. As if it felt lighter, the train hurtled into an endless tunnel. The carriage was shaken by violent jolts and the tracks pounded under the wheels. Vladimir held firmly onto the handrail, terrified of being thrown onto the large lady who was continuing her siesta quite unperturbed.

Chingford, at last! Vladimir left the station and found himself somewhere that looked exactly as he had pictured a small town in Essex. On the left, there was a small taxi shelter. You just had to unhook the phone and dial the number. Across the road, a narrow double-decker bus was going past. There were some houses and pedestrians. It was quiet and peaceful.

A Ford van came round the corner and came to a stop at the pavement. A tall, thin, red-haired man got out. He was wearing a beige uniform and green tie. He held out a firm hand to Vladimir, mispronouncing his name horribly, and introduced himself.

Vladimir only got his first name, John, and shook his outstretched hand. As quick as a flash, Vladimir's rucksack was hoisted into the van, he then got into the van himself, and the vehicle set off for Gilwell Park.

Vladimir was truly impressed with Gilwell: the beauty of the park, the style of the buildings, the warm welcome, the impeccable cleanliness and order. Led by John, he registered and received the key to his room. Dinner was to be served at 7 o'clock, so he was free until then.

He opened the door to the room that he would be sharing with someone else on the seminar, and approved of the simple but comfortable furnishings. He put his rucksack down on the floor and checked the softness of the bed. Then he got up, opened the window and inhaled the fresh air of the English autumn.

The park called out to him. He dashed along the corridor and hurtled down the stairs. A wide door led outside. He went down a path and stopped in front of a bust of Baden-Powell. A bronze plaque stated that it had been a gift from the Mexican Scouts. The founder of Scouting was done up in strict uniform and looked soldier-like and severe. Vladimir remembered a photo of Baden-Powell disguised as an Indian, with a roguish, lively glint in his eyes. He preferred to imagine 'B.-P.' like that. He made an about-turn and went towards a type of caravan sheltered under a canopy. As he examined it, a voice behind him exclaimed:

“That’s the camping van offered to B.-P. by the Scouts at the Birkenhead Jamboree in 1929. There was also a Rolls-Royce to tow it, but it’s not here.”

Vladimir turned round. A thin, tanned young man wearing classic Scout uniform — sky-blue shirt with a dark-blue scarf and shorts — stood behind him.

“I’m Mario, and I’m from Italy”, he said with a smile. “There’s Baden-Powell’s footprint. A good size, isn’t it?”

He spoke fluent English, with a slight accent. Vladimir introduced himself and shook Mario’s hand. They examined the cast of the Founder’s foot and continued to look around Gilwell together. Vladimir liked Mario. He was a law student, and national Rover commissioner with the Italian Catholic Guide and Scout Association AGESCI.

“Do you have Rovers in your association?” Mario asked.

Vladimir explained the work he and his friends were doing to revise their association’s entire youth programme.

“That’s great”, said Mario. “I’d like to help you if I can. Naturally, my first piece of advice would be to build a solid senior age section. That’s what gives a Scout association its strength.”

Mario launched into a passionate account of how the Rover age section operated in Italy, its objectives, structure and activities. Vladimir listened, absent-mindedly chewing on the stalk of a daisy he'd plucked from the grass. He marvelled at the enthusiasm of Mario, who interrupted his account from time to time to explain some detail or other about Gilwell, which he knew really well.

"It's certainly not your first visit to Gilwell, is it?" Vladimir asked.

"No, I've been on several training courses here. I'm also a trainer in my association. I admire the British training system. Gilwell is a bit like the Mecca of Scouting, you see. It's here that Baden-Powell organised the first training courses for Scout leaders. For a long time, the trainers of every national association had to train at Gilwell if they wanted to be allowed to organise training courses in their own countries. But now, that's a thing of the past, and every recognised national association does its own training, but Gilwell's prestige lives on."

All of a sudden, the sound of a bell rang out.

"It's time for dinner", said Mario. "Let's go. Other participants will probably have arrived by now."

He was right. Several tables in the restaurant had already been occupied by the first guests, and a small queue had formed at the counter where the meals were being served. Copying Mario, Vladimir took a tray and got in line. He made his choice and soon found himself at a table where a young man and three young women were already sitting. Mario made the introductions. Vladimir tried to remember their names and to associate them with their faces: Maarti, from Finland; Erika, from Sweden; Katarina, from Greece; Christiane from Switzerland. He apologised for not having already pinned the name badge he had received upon arrival onto his shirt. A good-humoured conversation soon started up. Vladimir was bombarded with questions. The associations of central and eastern Europe were not well-known and aroused curiosity.

"Look who's coming", said Mario.

A tall, smiling young woman came into the room with a few other people.

“That’s Jane, the European Youth Programme Director. She’s really nice.”

After dinner, everyone headed for the bar, which was decorated with paintings depicting the origins of Scouting. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. Vladimir slumped into a deep leather armchair.

“I didn’t expect such class...”

“Very British”, Mario replied, handing him a beer.

Vladimir vaguely listened to the hubbub of the conversations as he sipped his beer. He thought about his friends, Eva in particular.

The noise of a spoon being banged against the side of a glass interrupted his daydreaming. Someone was calling for silence.

“That’s John. He’s on the Gilwell organising team”, Mario whispered.

“I’ve met him”, Vladimir replied.

John welcomed everyone, and introduced Jane, Youth Programme Director at the European Scout Office. Jane took the floor, first in English, then in French. She greeted the seminar participants who had already arrived, and announced that some would be arriving later that night. The seminar would start tomorrow. Breakfast would be served from 7.30, and the first session would start at 9 o’clock. Everyone should prepare posters to introduce themselves, present their association and state what they expected from the seminar. All the practical details and material would be provided the next day. She wished everyone a nice evening and told them not to go to bed too late, so that they would be raring to go the following morning. Vladimir applauded, like everyone else, then leaned back in the armchair. The noise of the conversations and the laughter formed a kind of background noise to which he was no longer paying any attention. He was starting to feel tired from his journey.

Mario offered him another drink, which he declined politely.

“No, thank you. I think I’m going to slip away before much longer. I got up very early this morning to catch my flight.”

Mario acknowledged that he understood, and resumed his impassioned conversation with Erika and Maarti. Vladimir made his way discreetly towards the door, went along the corridor decorated with official portraits of the Chief

Scouts of the United Kingdom, and went out into the park. The trees, lit by the full moon, rustled under a slight breeze. The air was cool and damp. When he reached his room, he brushed his teeth, got undressed in a flash, threw his clothes onto a chair, pulled on his old pyjamas and blissfully got into one of the beds. He fell asleep almost at once, without noticing the other rucksack leant against the wall.



Monday, 26 October, 07.00 hours

A strident ringing woke Vladimir from his sleep. It was followed by the crash of a chair falling over and a resounding curse. He switched on the bedside lamp and sat up. An enormous backside, clad in tight-fitting green fluorescent tracksuit bottoms, stared back at him. Then the bottom disappeared and was replaced by a ruddy face topped with a crown of blond hair.

“I’m ever so sorry. I was trying to switch off this blessed alarm clock, and didn’t see this damned chair.”

He’s huge, thought Vladimir, watching the young man straighten up. The room seemed tiny around him.

“My name is Emmanuel, but my friends call me Manu. You’re Vladimir, aren’t you?”

Still surprised, Vladimir nodded. Manu had a strange accent.

“I’m from Belgium. My English isn’t very good. Last night, I managed to get into bed without waking you up, but I failed this morning. Sorry.”

“It’s all right”, said Vladimir, looking at his watch. “It’s seven o’clock. Time to get up. I’m going for a shower.”

At 7.45, Vladimir and Manu went into the restaurant. They were the first, and an appetising smell of grilled bacon welcomed them.

“I’m starving”, said Manu, grabbing a tray, which looked tiny in his enormous hands.

Vladimir looked him up and down: at least 1 metre 95 at a guess, and 110 kilos — best to be on good terms with him...

Over breakfast, Vladimir got to like the Belgian giant. He was witty and cultured, a fan of classical music. He played the flute, he was a computer enthusiast skilled in computer-aided design, as well as a keen Scout, who was responsible for his association's youth programme.

"I have to be careful. I'm on a diet", said Manuel, devouring his third slice of toast spread with butter and marmalade. He swallowed a mouthful of coffee and asked:

"What brings you here? Personally, I want to learn about the experiences of other associations relating to Scouting with adolescents. We're losing a lot of members around 13 or 14 years' old, and we think that our system of age sections needs revising."

In a few words, Vladimir told him about the work he'd taken on with his friends.

"Wow! You mean you're going to reconstruct your association's entire programme? What a job!"

"Our first problem is our isolation", Vladimir replied. "We have to start completely from scratch. Knowing what other associations do would help us enormously, especially as we haven't got the unanimous support of our members. There are some who refuse to change anything and who want to continue using the old handbooks from the 1930s."

"I know all about that. It's always the same story. Some people confuse Scouting's fundamental elements with its external appearance. They refuse to change the appearance and, at the same time, miss the main point because they're unable to meet young people's aspirations. I know quite a lot of people in Europe. I could introduce you to leaders from some other associations... Here you go, this is Mario by the way. He's from Italy. Have you been introduced?"

Mario had appeared at the door to the restaurant and was waving in their direction.

"We met yesterday evening. He's with Maarti from Finland, Erika from

Sweden, Katarina from Greece and a young woman from Switzerland whose name I can't remember.”

“I see you haven't been wasting any time.”

At 8.55, Vladimir went into the main seminar room with his new friends. On the way in, everyone received headphones for simultaneous interpretation. Manu led the group to a row of free seats and sat down with a sigh of relief. The chair groaned but held out well. John adjusted the overhead projector while the interpreters settled into their cabins at the back of the room.

At 9.05, all the participants were in their seats. There were about 30 of them altogether, Vladimir reckoned. John took the floor to wish everyone a good day and to give some practical advice on the timetable and meals. He pointed out good-naturedly that they were five minutes late starting, and that it should not become a habit. Vladimir put on his headphones and tuned into the French interpretation just as John started to explain how to use the system. Jane then took the floor, while Vladimir struggled in vain with the dial of the equipment to try and find the right channel. He swore and took the headphones off. Looking up, he suddenly realised that his neighbours were giving him a strange look. Deafened by his headphones, he had sworn out loud. He reddened and huddled into his seat.

Meanwhile, Jane was presenting the objectives of the seminar: to analyse the various stages of development from childhood to adolescence in Europe and to evaluate the various age section systems adopted by European Scout associations; to identify the needs of young people at different ages and how each association tried to meet those needs; to share solutions that seemed to be the most interesting in terms of the qualitative and quantitative development of Scouting in Europe. The subject would be introduced by a Norwegian university professor, Mrs Dorthe Hansen, an expert in the comparative development of boys and girls. Before that however, the first step was for each participant to introduce him- or herself and to share his or her experience and expectations. The success of the seminar would in fact depend on the ability of each participant to communicate with the others and to make an active contribution.

John then invited the participants to split up into small groups, and the team of Gilwell technical assistants handed out posters and felt pens to each group. The purpose of the exercise was to make two posters, one introducing yourself and expressing your expectations on the subject, and the other presenting the experience of your association in relation to the seminar topic. The results would be shared within each small group.

Vladimir was lost; he had no experience of this type of method. For him, a seminar was a series of presentations. Normally, you just had to listen and take notes. He scratched his head, looking despondently at the blank sheet. Manu noticed his disarray and went over to him. Kindly, with a few specific questions, he steered him in the right direction and helped him express his ideas.

Vladimir realised he could put his artistic skills to use, and a few minutes later, he had made two original and attractive posters, which attracted the interest and compliments of the rest of his group. Gradually, through talking to the others, he understood the usefulness of the method. By listening to each other, all the participants gained confidence in themselves and helped work out a common language and reference points.

After the coffee break, all the posters were put up on the wall. Jane explained that the posters would stay up until the end of the seminar for the group to refer to during the daily and final evaluations and as a reminder that the aim of the seminar was above all to meet everyone's expectations. Then Jane introduced the speaker, Dorte Hansen, who embarked on a fascinating comparison of the main stages of development of boys and girls in childhood and adolescence. Listening to her, Vladimir recalled the weekend at St Sophie's and the explanations of old Professor Kessel. He could picture the Green Island with its old mill, and Eva's silhouette in the setting sun. He missed his friends; he missed Eva...



At that very same moment, Eva, Stefan and Olga were in a meeting at the association's headquarters with a group of 30 Scout leaders, the members of the programme committee and representatives of 15 or so local groups.

They were discussing how to organise and run a pilot network.

“Our intention”, Eva was saying, “is to actually test our ideas and hypotheses in the field. We don’t want to propose vague ideas to the national board, but precise suggestions that have been tested and validated in the field. That’s why we need you. You’re qualified local Scout leaders who specialise in the various age sections. Your job will be to test our proposals with your boys and girls and to assess how apt they are. We’ll revise our proposals on the basis of your observations.”

“How exactly do we put that into practice?” one of the participants asked.

“I’ll hand over to Stefan, who’ll explain the method we recommend.”

Stefan went and stood in front of a large blackboard and started to speak, illustrating his words with rapidly sketched diagrams.

“You’re the leaders of 15 pilot groups, with units in the various age sections. So, we think you’re representative of the different parts of the country and of the different environments in which the association operates. With us, you’ll form a test network — or an action research network, if you prefer a more grandiose term.”

“Shouldn’t there be more of us if we’re to be representative?”

“Yes, but, unfortunately, the budget we’ve received from the national board is very limited, and we can’t run to more than 15 pilot groups.”

“How are we going to communicate?”

“Well, the ideal solution would have been to have computers and to communicate by email but, unfortunately, we’ll have to make do with ‘snail mail’. It will be slower and not always very regular, but it’s the only way. Every month, you’ll get a typed, photocopied file outlining a test to conduct during the following two months. From you, we expect a detailed report at the end of the test, with photos if possible, and even audio or video cassettes. In other words, we’ll be testing one subject per quarter. We want to get you together at the end of each quarter, to share your remarks and draw conclusions. Yes, Alexander?”

A group leader from a large town in the south raised his hand.

“What are the different aspects that you want to test?”

Eva took over.

“As you know, our task is to present an outline of a new youth programme to the national board, then the general assembly. So far, we’ve defined a draft educational proposal and final educational objectives for the association. You’ve received copies of these documents. The next steps are: (1) to adjust the age section system and define educational objectives for the different age sections; (2) to identify activities corresponding to the fields of interest of the different age ranges and through which the selected educational objectives can be achieved; 3) to develop section methods and a progressive scheme.”

“Why not start by revising the age section methods?”

“We prefer to take a pragmatic approach, and we know that the association’s most urgent need is to improve the way Scouting is practised. We want the activities to be more varied, to correspond better to young people’s interests and meet precise educational objectives. Then, on that basis, we’ll revise the methods of each age section. You need to understand that the results of our tests have to be made available to all leaders as soon as possible, to enable them to do a better job and arouse the interest of young people. But I’ll let Stefan continue.”

“Thank you, Eva. We therefore have three main subjects, and we’ll devote at least one quarter to each: from November to January, the age sections and section objectives; from February to March, the activities; and from April to May, the section methods and progressive scheme. In conclusion, we’d like to organise a national camp for all the pilot groups next summer, to test the whole programme one last time. We’ll give you more details in due course. At the end of this month, you’ll receive the first test file, on the age sections and section objectives. We hope to receive your first test report in January, and we’ll organise an evaluation meeting in February to work on the conclusions from the first stage and to launch the second.”

“Have you decided to retain the traditional age sections?”

“Good question. No decision has been taken yet. We’d like to test various solutions. I’ll let Olga tell you more.”

“The age section question is one of the key issues that we’re tackling. Vladimir is in the UK at the moment, at Gilwell Park. He’s attending a European seminar on the different age section systems. He should come back with some useful information. We’ll draw up several hypotheses, which we’ll test in the field with your help.”

“Do you plan to test a pre-Cub section for five to seven year olds, like the British or Canadians?”

Olga spotted who had raised the question. It was Anna, a Cub Scout leader from the capital.

“Anna, I know you’re interested in Beavers...”

“I correspond with a Canadian friend about them, and I know that they get interesting results. We should give it a try.”

“I’m sorry, Anna, but the board doesn’t share your opinion. We don’t think that the association has enough resources to embark on such an experiment. You’ll have to make do with Cub Scouts for the time being; we need your expertise in that area.”

Olga saw Anna’s face harden, and she resolved to go and speak to her during the break. Another group leader raised his hand. It was Marko, an old friend. Eva let him speak.

“I’ve heard that you have to put a first proposal to the national board on 21 November. But the experiment will have hardly got under way by then...”

“Our goal is to ensure that the general assembly can discuss and adopt the new programme in October next year. The national board will be closely involved in our work, and will have to approve each step. On 21 November, we hope to present our first results and the selected working method to the board.”

“All right, Eva, but let’s not pretend to ignore the problems. We all know that the national board isn’t unanimous. A strong minority disapproves of the idea of developing a new programme.”

“I’m well aware of the problems we have to overcome, but our work is part of a democratic process. We’re working according to an assignment given to

us by the last general assembly and by the national board. We'll report back on that assignment, and the democratic bodies will take their decision. I'd like to add that, in my view, the decisive element will be the quality of the work produced with your help. If we make a first-rate proposal, we'll get the backing of most leaders. But if our proposal is only second-rate, it will be rejected. It's the basic rule of the game, and we accept that."

"May God hear your prayer! We're by your side to develop a new programme that meets the needs of today's young people, but let's watch out for those who have no intention of playing by democratic rules!"

Marko's comment triggered a general commotion. Eva had to bang on the table insistently for silence.

"Marko, I understand your concerns, and I share them. We have to be on our guard against various ploys, but I repeat that the best way of challenging them is by working in the open, and producing convincing results. Now, I suggest a break, before Olga presents the general objectives that we've selected."

While one of the programme committee members served the coffee, Olga went from one group to another looking for Anna. She saw her in animated discussion with Marko. Anna had her back to her and did not see her approaching.

"You can say what you like, Marko", Anna was saying. "I've talked to Viktor Gomerek about it. There would be less opposition if we settled for improving the existing programme. Everyone would agree to reasonable changes. Opposition surfaces when revolutionary ideas are proposed which are obviously more costly and which prevent the development of Beavers for example, despite the fact that Beavers could rapidly provide us with thousands of members!"

Marko raised his eyes.

"You're forgetting one thing, Anna", Olga interrupted gently. "The assignment given to us by the general assembly says nothing about the development of a pre-Cub section."

Anna paled and gave a starchy reply:

“You can also make a so-called democratic process into anything you want, but watch out that it doesn’t backfire!”

On that note, she turned her back and walked away. Olga wanted to go after her.

“Leave her”, said Marko. “It’s impossible to make her see sense. She won’t take part in the experiment. I think she’s being totally manipulated by Viktor Gomerek. He’s promised her that Boris Koncewitz will develop a Beaver Cub section if he’s elected chairman.”

“What!”

“That’s what I wanted to explain to Eva. There’s manipulation in the air!”

“I don’t really see how Boris Koncewitz could get himself elected chairman. Most of the national board is against him.”

“Let’s be on our guard even so”, Marko concluded.

Before the end of the break, Olga managed to quickly recount her discussions with Anna and Marko to Eva.

“Boris Koncewitz and his henchman Viktor Gomerek are plotting something ...”

“You’re right, but don’t panic. For the time being, the only thing we can do is to concentrate on our work in order to get fast results. I hope Vladimir will bring back some interesting information.”



Later that same day, at Gilwell, Vladimir was involved in the daily evaluation in a group with Mario, Maarti, Erika, Christiane, Katarina and Manu. Dorthé’s presentation had clearly highlighted the major stages of children’s development, as well as the differences between girls and boys. The afternoon had been spent exchanging information on the age section systems adopted by European associations. Vladimir had just expressed his surprise at how many different systems existed.

“It seems to be total confusion”, he added. “Some associations have kept

the traditional system of three age sections with Cub Scouts, Scouts and Rovers, with just one section for adolescents aged 12–17. Others, meanwhile, offer two age sections for the same age range, one for 12–14 year-olds, and one for 14–17 year-olds. Then there are those that have introduced Beavers for 5–7 year-olds, and those that have abolished Rovers and stop their system at 16 years of age, and even those that offer a senior section up to 22 years of age... It's so bewildering!"

"It reflects the diversity of Europe", Katarina replied. "Why do you want to see the same age sections everywhere, when the cultural and economic conditions, not to mention the school systems, vary such a lot from one country to another?"

"Yes, Scouting's strength lies in its ability to adapt to different situations", Christiane added.

"Even so, I have my doubts", Manu interrupted. "Dorthe clearly showed that there are identical stages in children's development which follow on from one another largely independently of cultural or economic conditions."

"That's true as far as following on from one another goes, but the transitions from one stage to another can take place a year or two earlier or later, depending on the circumstances."

"I agree, but I wonder if some have not become excessively sophisticated. I'd like to know, for example, why some associations felt they needed two age sections for 8–11 year-olds."

"Age sections that cover one or two years reflect the school model", Mario explained.

"Yes", Maarti added. "Under those conditions, the patrol system is unworkable."

"Why?" exclaimed Christiane.

"Because the patrol system is based on the principle of different levels of experience and age between the patrol leader and the members of his or her patrol."

"That's not true!" Christiane retorted. "I think it's based primarily on co-

operation within a group of peers.”

“So how can it be applied with children under 7?” Manu asked. “As Dorthie said, children under the age of 6 or 7 aren’t really capable of co-operating properly within a group.”

“Personally, I think”, said Vladimir, “that the Scout method has been stretched in all directions so that it can be adapted to any purpose...”

“Even so, it has to evolve”, Erika broke in. “We can’t stick with what Baden-Powell proposed before the First World War!”

“No, but there are fundamental elements to be respected. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be Scouting”, Manu added.

“Easy does it. We’re not here to argue! We need to give some order to our discussion.”

Mario had stood up, arms outspread, and was calling for calm.

“We have to recognise and accept that each association is entitled to develop as it wants, provided it respects the fundamental elements of Scouting. Across Europe, we are very different, that’s a fact. But the usefulness of a seminar like this one is that it allows us to exchange views, understand why we’re different, examine our choices and also question them, so that we can make progress.”

“You’re right”, Maarti put in. “There’s no point in yelling contradictory arguments at each another! What’s important, at this stage, is to note the debatable points and to work together.”

“I agree”, said Katarina.

“OK, let’s do it”, Mario stated. “I’ll note them up on the board.”

“I see the main problem as the adolescent age range”, said Manu. “Many associations are losing members after the age of 14. I’d like to discuss the various solutions that have been tried out to resolve that problem.”

“And I’d like to know”, Erika added, “what the reservations expressed about the pre-Cub section, the Beavers, are based on.”

“If I may”, Mario interrupted. “The problem isn’t the Beaver section itself,

but the fact that the duration of the Scouting experience can't be extended indefinitely. Those who join Scouting younger will also leave it younger. That's why associations that have a lot of Beavers have so few Rovers!"

"I don't see where the problem lies", Erika responded. "What matters is one's experience of Scouting. After all, an excellent experience in the Beavers is certainly as important for the character as an excellent experience in the Rover Scouts!"

"I seriously doubt it", Mario retorted. "It's between 16 and 20 years of age that young people's characters are built and that they find their place in society."

"Hey! Don't start again! Nobody wants to abolish the Beavers, or the Rovers", Maarti went on. "But it's true that we have to pay attention to the length of the Scouting experience offered. In the beginning, Scouting extended over 10 years, from 8–18. Today, in some associations, it can theoretically last 17 years, from 5–22 years of age. Isn't that rather excessive? There are certainly limits to be respected."

"I'd also add", said Christiane, "that although nobody wants to abolish one age section or another, there's still the question of balancing the different sections."

"What do you mean?" Vladimir asked.

"In my view, in order to have a balanced age section system, a Scout association should have about half of its members over 12 years of age and the other half under 12. I noted this afternoon that in some associations the under-12s account for up to 90% of the membership."

"And why is that dangerous?" Vladimir asked.

"An association in that situation runs the risk of looking like a children's association and of putting off adolescents."

"I totally agree with Christiane", Manu intervened. "It's an extremely important point."

"And something else!" said Katarina. "We mustn't forget the question

of boys and girls. The way in which co-education is developing in Europe makes me wonder.”

“Are you against it?” Erika asked.

“No, I think there are lots of advantages to educating boys and girls together. It lets them learn to co-operate and to free themselves of sexist prejudices. However, as Dorthe demonstrated, boys and girls — particularly in early adolescence — also need time for separate activities, the boys on one side and the girls on the other, particularly as they don’t mature at the same rate.

“How should we express this point?”

“Age sections and co-education”, Maarti suggested.

“Or rather: ‘Age sections and gender approach’. Co-education is often confused with mixed education. ‘Gender approach’ means taking account of the differences between boys and girls and their specific needs, both in a situation where they are together, as well as in a situation where they are apart.”

“OK, noted”, said Mario. “But we’re also supposed to be evaluating today. What do you think?”

“I think we’re really dealing with key issues for our associations”, Erika replied. “And I like it when the discussion heats up!”

“I think Erika speaks for us all”, Manu confirmed. “The seminar has got off to a good start, but we’d like to really go into the issues that we consider essential.”

“And don’t forget that we have the international evening tonight. There’s just time to get ready.”



Monday, 26 October, 21.00 hours

The international evening was in full swing in the large hall in the Gilwell conference centre. Like everyone else, Vladimir had brought along some specialities from his country: a bottle of wine, some cooked meat and some biscuits. He was surprised and amused to discover this tradition of international Scout gatherings in Europe. Stands had been rapidly set up with the maps and flags of the various countries. Some participants had put on national dress, while others sang traditional songs accompanied by a guitar, or organised folk dances. It was all very colourful, noisy and filled with laughter. Vladimir was on the same stand as someone from Slovakia, called Juraj. He asked him if he could leave him on his own for a few minutes, to visit the other stands.

“No problem, Vladimir. As long as you come back and replace me in 30 or 40 minutes, OK?”

Vladimir gave him the thumbs up, and set off to visit the other stands. One of the most popular was the one manned by Mario with his friend Cristina, who was representing the other Italian, non-Catholic association, CNGEI. They were offering various Italian cheeses, Parma ham, Chianti wine, and an enormous dish of spaghetti that they had cooked with the help of the Gilwell staff. Mario welcomed him like an old friend and presented him with a plate of spaghetti sprinkled with Parmesan, and a glass of Chianti.

Vladimir found a place at a table to sample his feast, and was joined by Manu.

“Hey, Vladimir. The Belgian stand awaits you. We’ve got chips and beer!”

“Thanks. I’ll pop along later, but I’m trying the Italian specialities at the moment. You don’t half need a strong stomach to cope with these evenings, don’t you!”

“I recommend the Icelandic stand. They’ve got some very original specialities.”

“Really? What exactly? I’m not familiar with Icelandic cooking.”

“I’ll say no more, but let you judge for yourself... See you later. I’d better get back to my stand.”

Vladimir was finishing his plate of spaghetti when Jane sat down at the table smiling.

“How are you doing, Vladimir? We haven’t had the chance to talk yet. Are you happy with the seminar?”

“Er... it promises to be very interesting for me. In our association, we’ve started revising our programme and we need to know how other associations have gone about it. In that way, we can collect some good ideas and avoid mistakes.”

“I’d like to hear more about your work in the programme field. Where have you got to? Do you need any help?”

“We’ve already done quite a lot of work, but it’s a mammoth task and our resources are very limited. But in spite of the difficulties, we’re very enthusiastic and we’re getting there.”

Encouraged by Jane’s interest, Vladimir then started to tell her the background of the group, their objectives and the work they had undertaken.

“That’s fantastic!” Jane exclaimed. “We’d like to see a lot of associations embarking on that type of approach. Did you know that we’re developing a method that we call RAP — The Renewed Approach to Programme — in order to help associations like yours?”

“Have you published any documents that could be of use to us?”

“A few, but we first want to set up a network of associations involved in the development of their programme, in order to facilitate exchanges of experience and co-operation. It would be futile to produce documents without testing them in the field.”

“Could we be part of that network?”

“Of course. In fact, I’m counting on everybody taking part in this seminar to help develop it.”

“We’d definitely be very interested in taking part, but could you also pay us a visit to guide us more concretely in our work?”

“That would be possible. The World Scout Bureau has actually asked me to make contact with your association as soon as possible. To be honest, there are some concerns about you...”

“What do you mean?”

“The process of recognising your association as a member of the World Organisation has been at a standstill for several months.”

Vladimir was surprised by this remark. He knew that his association, which had been re-established after the democratisation of the country, had applied to be a member of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, but he was not aware of any problems.

Jane continued:

“Maybe you know that I went to your country last year to work with your chairman, Piotr, on the new constitution that your association would have to adopt to be accepted as a member of the World Organisation?”

“No, I didn’t know that. I wasn’t a member of the national team then.”

“When your association was re-established three years ago, you carried on with the constitution in force in the 1940s. But it no longer corresponds to the current criteria of the World Organisation. You need to make a lot of changes, as requested by the World Scout Committee.”

“Yes. In fact, the last general assembly adopted a new constitution...”

“Which has to be registered with the Ministry of Justice. But we haven’t heard anything about it for several months. Do you know what’s happening?”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t know anything about that. You’ll have to contact Piotr.”

“We’ve tried to, but without success, and we’re rather worried because time is passing and we have no information whatsoever. Once your constitution has been registered, we can carry out a postal vote among our member associations, to finalise your recognition. But everything is blocked at the moment.”

“I could call Eva, the chairman of our programme committee, and ask her to find out.”

“That would be really helpful. Thank you. But don’t let me stop you from enjoying this international evening any longer. I could do with a nice glass of

French or Italian wine, couldn't you?"

Vladimir allowed himself to be led away, deep in thought. The discussion with Jane had given him some cause for concern. All his friends were impatient for their association to be recognised by WOSM. So why hadn't Piotr replied to the World Scout Bureau? Had he run into unforeseen difficulties?

Suddenly, Vladimir was grabbed by a strong hand. It was Manu.

"Hey, Vladimir. Belgium is waiting for you!"

"Sorry, I was with Jane."

"But Jane is invited too! What do you say to a little 'Gueuse' beer?"

"I was on my way for a nice glass of wine, but why not a beer instead!"

"Since we're going past the Icelandic stand, it would be a good opportunity to introduce Vladimir to the Icelandic specialities, wouldn't it, Jane?"

Putting his suggestion into immediate action, Manu led Vladimir to a table full of lots of dishes and decorated with the Icelandic flag.

"There's no one here!" Vladimir exclaimed.

"They're probably looking round the other stands. Let's make the most of it! Try that and tell me what you think", said Manu, handing Vladimir a plate of small squares of something whitish.

Jane watched him, smiling mischievously.

"Is it cheese? It's got a strong smell!" Vladimir remarked, carefully taking a step back.

"Don't be afraid! Try it!" Manu insisted. "You have to discover the cultural diversity of Europe!"

Vladimir took a piece and warily swallowed a mouthful.

"It tastes really odd, he said, swallowing with difficulty. It's a funny kind of cheese..."

"Cheese? It's not cheese!"

One of the Icelandic participants had just returned and was put out that Vladimir didn't know what he was eating. Manu roared with laughter.

"It's not cheese. It's shark!" the Icelander continued.

"Shark?" Vladimir stammered.

"Yes, but not any old shark. It's rotten shark, our national speciality. This one is really good, don't you think?" the Icelander added proudly, while Vladimir's face went green and Manu's laughter got even louder.

"Stop it, Manu", Jane interrupted, smiling. "Or you'll upset our friends. Each country has its specialities, and we should learn to appreciate them", she added, turning to Vladimir. "Now, Manu. You owe us a round to wash down the Icelandic shark. I love it, in any case!"



Tuesday, 27 October, 08.55 hours

In the Gilwell conference room, meditation time had just finished. Mario and Vladimir were chatting while waiting for the first session to begin.

"Did you enjoy the international evening?" Mario asked.

"It was great", Vladimir replied. "I even learned a Scottish dance. Mind you, it was hard to get up this morning."

"Ah, here's Sophie from the World Scout Bureau. She's the one who's going to introduce this morning's topic."

A slip of a woman, with blond, curly hair and a turned-up nose went up behind the lectern. She adjusted the microphone down to her height, and started to speak.

"Good morning everyone. I hope you enjoyed the international evening and that the night wasn't too short. I need your full attention and hope that you'll stay awake until the end of my presentation. Then I hope we'll have some time for discussion.

I've been asked to talk to you this morning about the research that has

just been carried out on the educational impact of Scouting. The aim of this research, which was led by the Research and Development Committee of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, was to assess how Scouting is practised and the various effects it has on the development of adolescents in the 14–18 age range. It was conducted over two years by three university researchers in three European countries — the UK, France and Belgium. I was responsible for analysing the results and drawing up the conclusions. A document called ‘The Educational Impact of Scouting: Three Case Studies on Adolescence’ is under preparation and will soon be published.

But first I’d like to remind you of what Dorthe told you yesterday.

Generally speaking, in the process of development from childhood to adulthood, certain stages are easy to identify and are not really open to debate.

To give you an example, ‘late childhood’ lasts from 7–8 to 10–11 years of age. This stage is characterised by a certain level of stability. The child is at ease with his or her body, accepts adult authority and is easily integrated into a group. This is the ‘Cub Scout’ age.

This stability is perturbed between 10 and 12 years of age, when many changes occur: rapid physical growth, puberty, a new stage of logical reasoning, etc. It’s what psychologists call the crisis of early adolescence. It’s characterised by the rejection of childhood rules, the questioning of adult authority, a search for closer-knit social groups, etc. Then between 13 and 15 years of age, a new stage is reached with the advent of sexual maturity and the development of abstract logical reasoning.

However, the restructuring process that started at 11 or 12 years of age continues, and stability is not re-established until 16 or 17 years of age.

So, the time between 11 and 16 years of age is a rather confused stage, where the rhythms of development vary according to gender, as well as social and cultural influences. That’s why there are so many different age section systems applied by associations.

However, a distinction is generally made between early adolescence from 10–11 to 14–15 years of age and late adolescence from 14–15 to 17–18 years

of age. After that, the period of youth starts, when the main challenge is that of taking on adult roles and becoming integrated into society.

As you know, a lot of Scout associations, especially in the industrialised world, are experiencing a drop in membership at around the age 14 mark.

The key question that concerns us here is whether Scouting is still able to meet the needs of adolescents and, if so, how. You could say that adolescence is the stage of life when a young person is no longer a child but is not yet accepted as an adult. To a large extent, adolescence is a social phenomenon created by the extension of schooling and an ever later entry into professional life.

This transition is getting longer and longer. It's an experience shared by many young people around the world. On the positive side, it gives them time to equip themselves better for adulthood. But, in terms of the disadvantages, it means that adolescents suffer from being restrained for too long in a marginal position, with no recognised responsibilities. As Stephen F. Hamilton writes in 'Apprenticeship for Adulthood: Preparing Youth for the Future', they are, 'too young to get married; largely excluded from professional life; they cannot vote; they cannot play a real role in the life of their community at political, commercial, financial or cultural level'.

Social scientists think that, to be assisted in their development, adolescents have to find opportunities to assume real responsibilities outside the family and to meet adults other than their parents who are able to serve as mentors.

What's a mentor? It's someone older and wiser who seeks to support the development of the character and skills of a younger person by guiding him or her to gradually master increasingly complex skills and tasks.

That's why we assume that Scouting can be of interest to adolescents and help them to develop, if it's able to offer:

1. Adult models able to display certain values and encourage the acquisition of a positive self-image.
2. Activities that allow adolescents to acquire skills and to test out roles perceived by the young people themselves and by others as being socially significant and useful in preparing them for adult responsibilities.

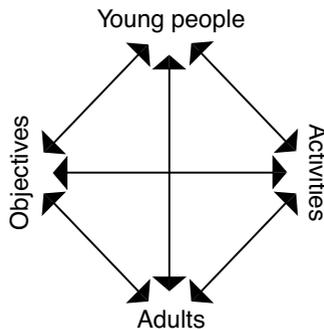
How did we verify this assumption?

We applied a qualitative approach that consisted in gathering different points of view: the points of view of Scout leaders, of parents and, in particular, of young people themselves, in order to understand the various practices and their impact on the development of young people. All this information was collected through in-depth interviews and by observing groups during activities and meetings. The research was conducted from October 1991 to May 1992. It concentrated on three units: a Belgian Venture Scout unit in Charleroi, a French Venture Scout unit in Bourges and a British Scout troop in Edinburgh.

Twenty-nine percent of the young people interviewed were 13 or 14 years of age, 41% were 15 or 16, and 30% were 17 years of age or older. Only the Belgian and French units were co-educational. Girls were therefore under-represented. In all three cases, the team of adult leaders comprised three to five people. The British team consisted of only male leaders, whereas the Belgian and French teams were male and female.

What are the main results of the research? I don't want to go into too much detail, and will therefore comment instead on this diagram.”

Sophie switched on the overhead projector and the following diagram appeared on the screen:



“I've called this diagram the Scouting ‘diamond’, because it shows the main elements of the educational dynamics we use: the relationship between the adult leaders and the young people, the relationship between the educational objectives and the activities designed to achieve those objectives, and the life

of the group as determined by its structures and the way it operates. Let's look first of all at the relationship between the adult leaders and the young people, the vertical line of the diamond.

The first question we asked ourselves was to what extent the adult leader represents a model for the young people. All the young people interviewed held their leaders in high esteem, but they didn't really perceive them as models to imitate. Most of the young people didn't think that their leaders had any direct influence on them, but they did accept that they exercised a motivational role. They didn't see them as 'mentors' but, at best, as advisors, guides or friends. In all three units, there seemed to be a relationship of respect, loyalty and mutual commitment between the young people and the adults. However, this relationship existed more between the group of adults and the group of young people than as an interpersonal relationship.

The older adolescents often mentioned the notion of partnership in characterising relations within the group. It's mainly on this notion of partnership, based on voluntary participation, dialogue and complementary ideas and experience, that a strong intergenerational link seems to have been established between the adult leaders and the young people. To illustrate this, I'd like to quote what one young person said about a leader:

*Of course, Marc knows loads of people and it's thanks to him that we can do tons of things. He's involved 95% of the time, but even if it's less than that, our involvement also counts because while we can't do anything without him, he can't do anything without us.*¹⁶

We wondered how the adult leaders helped the young people to build their own system of values and to make the necessary choices as regards their future roles in the adult world.

A majority of the young people mentioned one or more 'values' when they talked about the skills they'd acquired and what they had learned as Scouts. Many of those values were similar, irrespective of the group. For example: responsibility, respect for others, the ability to fit into and take part in the life of the community, a sense of sharing and tolerance... Other values were specific to a particular group, such as discipline in the case of the British group.

In this respect, it should be said that the more the adult leaders tried to encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, the more the young people were receptive to dialogue and were able to express their opinions. Whilst recognising the legitimacy of the adult leaders' authority and the need for some constraints to channel the group's energy, the young people appreciated and particularly sought a relationship with the adults that was based on more active listening and communication than they found with their family or at school. They appreciated the fact that Scouting, more than anywhere else, gave them the opportunity to be self-governing.

Many of the comments made by the adolescents showed that once they had identified a value that they considered to be of significance to them personally, they tried to modify their attitudes or behaviour to respect that value in their lives. Such efforts must, however, be stoked and strengthened by force of repetition."

One of the participants asked to speak. Vladimir recognised the Frenchman by his red shirt.

"Yes? What's your question?" Sophie asked.

"Did you make any observations about spiritual values? I think it's a very important question in adolescence."

"You're quite right, and I was just coming to that aspect. According to the interviews conducted, most young people attach importance to the search for spiritual values, but many of them are very critical of the formal religious practices that they have to take part in. For example, they often feel that they are subjected to sermons instead of being helped to find spiritual meaning in their own lives. They regret that they rarely have an active role to play in parish celebrations; they expressed the view that religious services do not encourage those in attendance to have contact with the others who are there, but focus more on the rite. On the other hand, most young people appreciate the religious services organised within the framework of Scouting, because they can play an active role and because they allow them to express the meaning of their own relationships and experiences.

Let's move on now to the relationship between the activities and the educational objectives, the horizontal line of the 'diamond'. We asked

ourselves how Scout activities offered young people challenges and significant roles, which meet their needs as adolescents.

At the age of 14–15, the activities that young people prefer and that most enrich their personal development are those that meet their need to broaden their horizons and acquire greater experience of life. Both the young people and their parents felt that Scouting offers greater possibilities in this respect than the family or school.

Most young people stated a preference for ‘exotic’ adventures, such as camps abroad, which give them the opportunity to discover new places and to surpass themselves.

The older ones stressed the interest of discovering other ways of life and cultures. They all attached great importance to being active, to spending meaningful time with young people their own age outside the family, to discovering new places and people, and to exercising their growing capacity for autonomy.

Being personally involved in choosing projects, as well as in planning and evaluating them, helps young people become aware of their own potential and progress, as well as those of the other members of the group.

In the Belgian and French units, activities were selected on the basis of relatively long-term projects. In the British unit, the focus was rather on learning Scouting skills (orientation, knots, first aid, etc.), and inter-patrol sports competitions geared towards physical development, psychomotor coordination and the ability to co-operate within a team. Greater emphasis was placed on the recreational aspect, to arouse the interest of the 11–14 year-olds, who made up most of the group.

In the French and Belgian groups, the emphasis was more on acquiring professional skills: bricklaying, mechanics, cooking, woodwork, accountancy, journalism, photography, dramatic art, etc.

The French and British adolescents often talked about particular sports activities in terms of the acquisition of skills: climbing, abseiling, canoeing, kayaking, etc. In the different units, skills are acquired on the basis of the young people’s personal interests and aptitudes. Some young people develop

their manual and technical skills more, others focus on their ability to express themselves (through journalism, photography, etc.), and yet others discover that they have talents when it comes to organising parties and shows. However, whatever their skills and character, all the young people stressed that Scouting had taught them to assume responsibility and to be receptive to others.

This opinion was shared by the parents: 86% thought that the main impact of Scouting lies in learning to take responsibility and to assume the consequences of one's actions.

The young people expressed some reservations about the service activities that they had undertaken within their unit. They didn't dispute the fact that the principle of serving others is one of the fundamental values of Scouting, but they did regret that the service activities proposed to them were often boring and fastidious.

They quoted, for example, collecting money for charities. Most of them preferred activities that lend themselves to interaction and mutual enrichment. By way of example, they quoted the building of a school for children with disabilities, going to a children's hospital to distribute gifts and organise entertainment, etc. What interests them the most about these types of activity is the possibility to discover a new environment and to develop warm and mutually beneficial relations with people in difficulty. This type of experience stimulates reflection on the group's values.

In general, what they learn from such activities, apart from practical skills, appears to relate less to the theme of the activity than to the general experience that it results in. Therein lies the importance of coherence between the educational objectives and the learning opportunities offered through the whole Scouting experience.

Now I want to look at the centre of the 'diamond', the group life. The research reveals the fundamental importance – in educational terms – of the relations among the young people themselves.

In all three units, the activities engender group dynamics. The desire to progress is stimulated by these dynamics and by the prospect of taking part in more adventurous and more appealing activities with friends of the

same age. Taking part in memorable activities together strengthens bonds among the young people and fosters a feeling of solidarity and of belonging to the group. The greater the cohesion of the group, the more the young people feel they can undertake ever more demanding activities. Likewise, the more exciting the activities, the more the young people are stimulated to exceed their own limits and to feel proud of their collective and individual achievements. It's clear that the peer group constitutes a key force in terms of synergy and stimulation.

Through group life, each young person learns that most of the experiences that he or she encounters have been made possible through joint effort. Everyone is therefore encouraged to contribute to this collective effort, in order to make the group experience richer and more exciting. In this way, awareness of the concept of interdependence develops. Most of the young people stated that the quality of the relationships that they have in Scouting, within their group, are deeper and more genuine than those they can find at school or elsewhere. The quality of this relationship seems to be a decisive factor in terms of maintaining and strengthening the young people's interest in Scouting.

In addition, life in a group of peers seems to play a substantial role in helping each young person acquire attitudes and values which, according to most parents, constitute the most important educational contribution of Scouting: sense of responsibility, being receptive and attentive to others, spirit of sharing and tolerance, etc.

The internalisation of those values doesn't seem to be directly linked to the adults' influence. Generally, the young people listen to what their adult leaders say, and observe how they react in certain situations. But it's personal experience that seems to be the most powerful factor in building young people's values, as well as the evaluation of that experience within the group of young people, or peer group, itself."

Sophie paused for a moment, and took a sip from her glass of water. Then she asked:

"All right so far? Am I going too fast? Do you have any questions or remarks at this point?"

Maarti pressed on the red button on his microphone and raised his hand:

“I’ve noticed that you insist on what appears to be one of the most significant results of the research: that as far as learning values is concerned, interaction within the peer group seems to play a decisive role. Does that mean that the adults don’t play any role in this?”

“Definitely not. What the adults have to say on the subject of values from their own personal experience remains a fundamental element of Scouting education. Apart from this, one thing needs to be stressed: although the three units operate with very different forms of organisation and methods, in all three cases the young people work within a structured framework that stimulates each of them to assume responsibility towards the group.

This is done through tasks that are assigned to them or that they choose to undertake. The fundamental role of the adult leaders is, therefore, to put that structure into place, to manage the way it operates, and to mobilise the young people within it. In fact, this framework plays an essential educational role, by helping create a special living environment with its own style, rules, traditions, and its values that have been discovered and tested concretely by doing things.

To conclude, I’d like to sum up how the young people themselves perceive the essential contributions of Scouting:

Many of the comments made by the young people indicate that life within the group — multiplying the possibilities for encounters and fresh discoveries, offering the opportunity to share meaningful moments — has played a decisive role in broadening their outlook on life.

Many of them insist that the challenges they’ve faced in Scout activities, the chance they’ve had to be involved in taking decisions, to test their skills, and even to make mistakes, have taught them to react more analytically and more maturely. This makes them feel better equipped to face life.

Thanks to the experience they’ve acquired over the years, they feel more able to react properly in unforeseen circumstances and to resolve problems they encounter in everyday life.

So that’s a brief summary of the research — the first, as far as I know, to

have been conducted on a scientific basis about Scouting. You'll soon be able to get a full report. Now, are there any more questions?"

Katarina was the first to raise her hand.

"I'm Katarina and I come from Greece. I found your presentation very interesting, but I'd like to know if the research revealed anything about co-education."

"Only the Belgian and French units were co-educational. In both cases, the young people felt that having boys and girls together had a positive influence on the group. From the age of 14–15, it would seem to be what young people need. All the young people in the co-educational units that we interviewed appreciated being in an environment that facilitated communication between boys and girls. They felt that school didn't offer the same atmosphere."

"Does being co-educational affect the type of activities undertaken by the group?" The question came from a British participant.

"The observation of the co-educational units", Sophie replied, "showed that putting boys and girls together in the same group doesn't prevent them from undertaking projects which are stimulating for both girls and boys. However, the projects have to be conceived to take account of the different interests and skills of all the members. What we noticed was that as far as projects and the life of the group was concerned, the activities and responsibilities were chosen first of all on the basis of personal interests and not at all because of gender stereotypes. In other words, roles typically reserved for boys and roles typically reserved for girls did not appear within the group, for example. In their responses, the young people themselves said that what distinguished co-educational groups from single-sex groups was not so much the nature of the activities but the fact that the atmosphere within the group and the way in which the activities were carried out were different when boys and girls worked together."

Another participant put up his hand. Jane invited him to speak.

"I'm Ovidiu, from Romania. Can you tell us how the parents react to co-educational groups?"

“According to the responses we gathered, most of the parents of the young people in the co-educational units were very positive about co-education. To start with, when the decision was first taken to welcome girls and boys, strong reservations were expressed. The parents were afraid of sexual promiscuity, but the attitude of the adult leaders reassured them. Moreover, young people themselves tend to discourage the formation of couples because they feel that it would have a negative impact on the dynamics of the group and on the development of its projects.”

Manu joined in:

“Have you brought to light anything to do with age differences within the group of young people?”

“In all three units,” Sophie replied, “the older members, especially the team leaders, played an important role towards the younger ones. For example, they helped newcomers understand how the group worked by giving them advice and encouragement, which facilitated their integration. They also helped them acquire the basic skills they needed to join in the activities. The younger ones often expressed a certain admiration for the skills displayed by their elders, but without really trying to emulate them. Several comments stressed the fact that an excessively wide age gap could be counter-productive, because it led to the older members not feeling at ease in the group as the younger ones settled in.”

“What you mean then is that if the age gap is too wide, the older members, those who are in the 15–17 age bracket, no longer feel comfortable in the group?”

“Exactly.”

“Isn't that the main reason for the loss of members over the age of 14–15?”

“It's certainly one of the reasons. As I said before, the quality of relations within the peer group seems to be a decisive factor in maintaining and strengthening the interest of the young people in Scouting. But if the gap between the youngest and the oldest is too wide, such a peer group doesn't exist. The fields of interest, the motivations, the ways of reacting, etc. are too different.”

Jane entered into the discussion:

“There are two things that are important in education: firstly, the influence of the elder on the younger. It’s what the renowned psychologist from Geneva, Piaget, called ‘unilateral respect’. It’s a bit like the master-apprentice or parent-child relationship. I respect my teacher and my parents, and even my Scout leader, and I listen to the comments and advice they give me. They teach me new things and I learn values from them that will be valid in my life.”

“It’s the role model”, said Manu.

“Yes, but as the research showed, there’s a second factor which has even greater influence, and that’s co-operation within a group of equals, a peer group. It’s what Piaget called ‘mutual respect’, based on interaction as equals. It’s interaction within this group that stimulates the young people, encourages them to experience new things, motivates them to acquire new skills and leads them to internalise values. So why does the peer group have more influence than the adult leaders? Well, it’s because it allows for real experience. Of course, the adult leaders are there to point out the right way and to establish a framework, but nothing would be possible without life experience within the group of young people. But if there’s too big an age gap between the oldest and the youngest, ‘unilateral respect’ is reinforced. That’s what happens, for example, if you have a 16–17 year-old patrol leader. He or she can advise and help young 12-14 year-old adolescents. But ‘mutual respect’ is weakened because the difference in maturity between the 16–17 year-olds and the 12–14 year-olds is too great to be able to really talk about a peer group.”

“And the young people join Scouting first of all for the peer group experience!”

“Yes, a group of friends of about the same age with whom you can have loads of adventures. That’s what the patrol is all about. What you have to ensure though is that the essential function of the age section system, coupled with the team or patrol system, allows for that peer group experience. If the age range is too broad, the patrol system can’t work properly, because the

patrols aren't really peer groups. That's true not only for the Scout section but for all the sections because, at each age from childhood to youth, the importance of the experiences shared within the peer group is decisive."

Mario spoke:

"Yes, but if the age range is too narrow, the patrol system won't work either!"

"Explain what you mean, Mario."

"Well, suppose you were to set up one-year age ranges. All the youngsters would be exactly the same age and the role of the patrol leader or sixer would be greatly reduced, because he or she wouldn't have more experience or skills that were more developed to share with the others. So I think that this relationship, which I'd call a big brother/sister and a little brother/sister relationship, is also very valuable."

"That's right", Jane continued. "So the age ranges have to be established so as to avoid those two pitfalls. If the age gap between the youngest and the oldest is too great, you don't really have a peer group. And if, on the other hand, the age gap is too small, you leave no room for the transfer of experience from the eldest to the youngest."

"I'd like to point out another important aspect", Sophie added. "You've seen from the research that the Belgian and French units undertook projects that the youngsters chose and organised themselves, whereas in the British unit, the activities were more traditional and largely set by the adult leaders. Now, the Belgian and French units contained 14–17 year-olds, while the British unit comprised 12–17 year-olds, and that's not immaterial. Indeed, it's harder to find common interests when the age difference is wide."

"Yes", Manu resumed. "And what's more, you said that in the British unit, the activities were more in line with the centres of interest of the younger members, the 12–14-year-olds, who made up the majority of the group. It's therefore harder to interest the older ones, unless they exercise leadership responsibilities towards the younger members of the group. But that's only possible for a small number, say a quarter of the group at the most. That's why, in my humble opinion, if the adolescent section is too broad in terms of

age, there's a huge risk of losing a large proportion of over-14s. Basically, all those who don't have the chance to be patrol leaders."

"In addition," Sophie added, "a too broad age section also tends to reduce the young people's involvement in the decision-making process."

"How come?"

"You said yourself that in an age section comprising 12–17 year olds, you'd probably have a majority of 12–14 year-olds, with a small number of 15–17 year-olds, who would mainly be exercising responsibilities as patrol leaders or assistants. In this way, you'd run the risk of ending up with a pyramidal system where the oldest manage the youngest, without giving them enough say in the matter. The older ones make the younger ones experience what they did at their age. The activities are very repetitive. It's 'tradition' that always has the last word. In contrast, with a narrow age gap, the turnover in the group will be greater, the tradition less strong and the spontaneity greater, but the passing on of skills will be more difficult. So what it boils down to is finding the best possible balance."

"Are there any more questions?" Jane asked. "No? OK, then I'd like to thank Sophie for her extremely interesting contribution and for the remarkable work she's done. I hope you found the discussion interesting and that it has helped you identify some key elements for your future work, particularly with regard to the crucial problem of the loss of members over 14 years of age. After the break, I'm going to ask you to work in small groups on case studies taken from several Scout associations in Europe, to analyse how the different age section systems work and what effects they have. That should enable you to figure out how to establish a balanced age section system. But first of all, let's have a well-deserved break. Coffee is served."

Vladimir took advantage of the break to ask John if he could phone home. He was anxious to speak to Eva.



At that very moment, some 1,000 kilometres away, Eva was going down the stairs from her apartment. She had been on duty at the hospital the night before and, after a few hours' sleep, she had decided to do some shopping. When she reached the ground floor and stepped onto the pavement, she glimpsed a motorcyclist dressed in black leather and wearing a black crash helmet on the other side of the road. He seemed to be waiting, perched on a small Japanese trail motorbike.

A few hundred metres on, Eva crossed the road and headed quickly towards the outdoor market set up on a nearby square. She breathed in the air, enjoying the soft sun of the lovely autumn day, which was casting splashes of colour on the stalls of fruit and vegetables.

Suddenly, the noise of an engine accelerating at full throttle made her turn round. The motorcyclist was hurtling towards her. She tried to turn away, but the man snatched the strap of her bag and made her lose her balance. The bag was pulled brutally off her shoulder, and she fell violently to the ground.

“Stop, thief!” a man yelled.

But the motorbike disappeared quickly into the traffic. A crowd gathered around Eva, who was trying painfully to get up. A sharp pain went through her shoulder. Hands stretched out to help her up; others brushed down her clothes.

“He stole my bag!”

“I saw it all!” exclaimed a small, dark-haired man wearing a grocer's apron. “You must report it!”

“It's disgraceful! What kind of a world do we live in?” cried out an old lady. “How are you, dear?”

“I'm OK”, Eva managed to say, still stunned and a bit confused.

She felt the tears starting to well up and made an effort to control them. A policeman appeared:

“What's going on here?”

Ten voices answered him, with a cacophony of muddled explanations and descriptions.

“Er... I was attacked, officer. He took my bag, my money, my papers, everything...”

The policeman quickly took charge of the situation, called an ambulance, and took down the names and addresses of the witnesses. A few minutes later, despite her protests, Eva was lying on a stretcher and being hoisted into an ambulance.

“It’s no good making a fuss Miss! You’ve had a nasty fall and need to have a check-up over at the hospital. Then you’ll have to pass by the station to file a complaint and report the theft of your papers”, the policeman explained. Exhausted, Eva gave in. The ambulance drove away with its sirens wailing, while the small group of onlookers broke up reluctantly.

At the hospital, once she’d undergone a routine examination, which did not reveal anything wrong except for a few bruises, Eva managed to reach Stefan by phone:

“Hello, Stefan? Hi, it’s Eva. I need you to do something for me...”

“Hi Eva. What’s up? You sound upset?”

“No, it’s nothing serious. More annoying. I was attacked and he stole my bag with all my papers, money and the keys to my flat...”

“What? That’s insane! Are you sure you’re not hurt?”

“No, honestly. But I have to go to the police station to file a complaint, then I’ll have to find a locksmith to open my door and change the lock. I was wondering... Could you take me in your office car? I’m shattered...”

It was the first time Eva had asked him to do such a thing; she must really be in a state of shock, Stefan said to himself.

“Of course, Eva. I’m on my way. Where are you?”

“At the hospital. Thank you so much, Stefan.”

A few minutes later, Stefan, at the wheel of a van belonging to the municipal works department, was driving Eva to the police station, where they completed all the necessary procedures, before going on to a locksmith’s,

who agreed to go with them to Eva's flat.

When they reached the landing, the colour drained from Eva's face. She gripped Stefan's arm. The door of her flat was open.

"Stefan, my door's open!"

"Good grief! I don't believe it!"

Inside, there was the biggest mess imaginable. The furniture had been ripped apart, the drawers turned out, and the floor was strewn with papers and clothes.

Eva slumped into a chair. The locksmith scratched his head as he surveyed the sight:

"I think you need a new lock and of a stronger type!"

Eva turned to Stefan, tears in her eyes:

"The man who stole my bag and keys didn't lose any time in robbing my flat! Can you call the police, Stefan. I can't face it."

Stefan nodded and went over to the phone, which had just started ringing. He lifted the receiver.

"Hello? No, it's Stefan. Eva's here. I'll pass her to you." Stefan put his hand over the mouthpiece and spoke to Eva:

"It's Piotr. He wants to talk to you. It's urgent!"

Eva grabbed the phone from Stefan, wondering why on Earth Piotr Gormisko, the chairman of the association, wanted to talk to her. He hardly ever used the phone, preferring face-to-face discussions.

"Hello Piotr. No, you're not disturbing me. I'm listening. What's up? ... What?"

Stefan saw Eva's face go even paler and tenser.

"No Piotr! No! It's impossible. You can't do that. We have to meet at once. I insist! Yes, even this evening if you want. How about nine o'clock at your place? OK, I'll be there!"

Eva hung up, and leaned on the table, her eyes closed.

“What’s going on, Eva?”

“It’s Piotr. I don’t understand it! He’s decided to resign and give his place to Boris Koncewicz! We have to talk to him, Stefan. If he sticks to this decision, all our work will have been in vain! I’ve made an appointment with him for this evening, and you have to come with me!”

XI. Section Educational Objectives

Piotr lived in a small house in an old residential area situated on one of the hills overlooking the town. Access was by a winding road that crossed a vast park of birch and conifer. Stefan parked his van near the ancient Volga that Piotr was driving. The porch light came on automatically, and Piotr appeared on the doorstep. He greeted Stefan and Eva with a smile, and showed them into the lounge.

“I’ve made some tea. Would you like some?”

Cups and a teapot were already laid out on the coffee table. Eva and Stefan sat down, saying nothing. Piotr poured the tea and lit his pipe.

“Thanks for coming so quickly. I realise that I’ve caused the association a setback, and I owe you an explanation...”

Eva could not hold back a first question:

“Piotr, tell us first of all why you’ve decided to stand down and cede your position to Koncewitz?”

“I’m afraid I had no choice, Eva. Let me explain everything, from the beginning... Last year we convened a general assembly, which adopted the new statutes of the association and elected a new national board. Unfortunately, we didn’t respect the required procedures...”

“How come?”

“The statutes in force at the time the general assembly was convened were those that existed before the association was disbanded by the communist regime in 1946. We took them up without giving the matter much thought when we revived the association in 1989. These statutes stipulated that all former Scouts were entitled to attend the general assembly and to vote... It was, of course, a clause that was impossible to respect if we wanted to get new statutes adopted. Most of the former Scouts, grouped around Koncewitz, are opposed to any kind of change. They want to revive the Movement just as it was before the war, and as you know, they outnumber the active leaders in the association.

As chairman of the working group on the new statutes, I was responsible for convening the general assembly, and I thought I could take the risk of not inviting the former Scouts, hoping to present them with the adoption of the new statutes as a *fait accompli*, and that they would agree to let the active leaders decide. Furthermore, it was absolutely necessary to amend the statutes. The Constitutions Committee of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement asked us to amend them to enable us to be recognised as a member organisation. Nowadays, the World Organisation doesn't accept former Scouts being entitled to vote at the general assembly of an association in the same proportion as the active leaders. To start with, I thought I'd got away with it. As you know, the new statutes were approved by a landslide majority of the active leaders. I forwarded them to the Ministry of Justice to be registered, as required by the new law on associations. I was naïve enough to think that it would be a mere formality..."

"So what happened?" asked Stefan.

"Since the Ministry of Justice took its time answering and we needed proof that the new statutes had been registered to complete our recognition file for the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, I got in touch recently with the Associations Office at the Ministry of Justice. And that's when I learned of the catastrophe..."

"What catastrophe, Piotr? Get to the point!"

"Koncewicz had appealed to the Ministry of Justice against the adoption of the new statutes..."

"What? How's that possible?"

"If you recall, before the last general assembly, he was serving as chairman of the supervisory board. According to the old statutes, he was responsible for ensuring that the procedures were respected. He didn't react when we convened the general assembly without respecting the established procedures, because he clearly intended to lodge an appeal to get the new statutes annulled."

"And what happened?"

"Naturally, the Director of the Associations Office was most embarrassed. He's fully aware of the basic problem, but Koncewicz has the law on his side.

I've just received official notice from the Ministry of Justice stating that the decisions taken by the general assembly are null and void."

"In that case, you just have to convene another general assembly. We'll try to persuade the former Scouts of the need to amend the statutes if we want to join WOSM."

"You don't understand Stefan. All the decisions taken by the general assembly — including the election of the national board — have been annulled, because it wasn't convened according to the rules. In other words, I'm no longer president and I'm powerless. On the basis of the old statutes, which are back in force, the only person with the authority to convene a general assembly is the chairman of the audit committee, that is to say..."

"Koncewitz!"

Stefan and Eva looked at each other in dismay.

"Believe me, I've considered all the options, but there's nothing we can do. Tomorrow, I have to hand back all my authority to Koncewitz."

"And what's going to become of all the work we've done?" Eva asked in a flat voice.

"I'm sorry to say that the programme committee, like all the national bodies, will no longer exist from a legal point of view — unless Koncewitz allows you to continue your work until the next general assembly takes a decision."

"Unfortunately, that's highly unlikely. Koncewitz is totally opposed to any programme renewal. He wants things to stay as they were half a century ago!"

Piotr shook his head despondently:

"I know Koncewitz. I should have been more wary. I'll never forgive myself!"

"Do you really think we're going to give up?" Eva hammered out with a hard look.

"But what can you do? You no longer have any means or any official function."

"I don't agree. Most of the active leaders have confidence in us. We can't abandon them. Koncewitz might have the law on his side, but nobody will

follow him. He only has power on paper, not in reality!”

“Eva’s right”, added Stefan. “We can’t give up, Piotr. We have to fight! Koncewitz is going to have to convene another general assembly, and we must do everything we can to obtain a majority and win back the leadership of the association.”

“We’ll have to warn all our friends and rally them right away”, Eva went on.

“You might well be right, but I don’t know if I’ve got the strength”, Piotr sighed. “Koncewitz has powerful allies. There are quite a few people who’d like to take over a re-emerging movement like Scouting for political ends.”

“All the more reason to fight”, concluded Eva. “Tomorrow, we’ll go to the national headquarters and retrieve all the programme committee’s files. There’s no question of us letting our work fall into the hands of Koncewitz. Vladimir will be back on Saturday. We’ll organise an emergency meeting of our group to prepare a plan of action. I hope you’ll be there Piotr.”



Wednesday, 28 October

At Gilwell Park, work on the individual projects had started. Manu and Vladimir had settled down to work together under a wooden awning equipped with a log table and rustic benches. It had been drizzling since early morning.

“I wonder what the weather forecast is like”, Vladimir asked, examining the grey sky.

“Cloudy and wet. It’s back to normal English weather...”

“At least it’s mild. Have you made progress with your project on new age sections?”

“Yes, I’ve made up my mind, at least on the main points”, Manu replied. “At present, we have a system with four age sections: the Beavers from 5–8, the Cubs from 8–12, the Scouts from 12–17, and the Rovers from 18–21. In

reality, the whole system is bottom-heavy: there are very few Rovers, barely a handful of units; most of the Scouts are between 12 and 14. We're unable to retain older adolescents. The under-12s represent 60% of our membership, and the over-15s barely 11%. The imbalance is too great."

"So what do you suggest?"

"Firstly, that Beavers start a bit later, at 6 years of age. We start them off too early, well before the age at which a child is able to really co-operate within a group, with the result that it's hard to apply the Scout method. We'd therefore have two children's or 'pre-adolescent' sections each lasting three years: the Beavers from 6-9, and the Cubs from 9-12. Then there would be one 'adolescent' section, the Scouts from 12-15, and one 'post-adolescent' section, the Rovers from 15-18."

"So you're proposing to reduce the length of your programme by four years?"

"Yes. With a shorter programme, I think we'd be able to achieve better quality."

"But aren't you afraid of having an even lower percentage of adolescents?"

"No, because having shorter adolescent and post-adolescent sections should make it possible to have teams that are more homogeneous, to identify the young people's interests more clearly, to involve them more in the decision-making process and, finally, to minimise the loss of members over 14. My objective is to achieve a ratio of 25% of over-15s."

"But you've missed out the over-18s, haven't you?"

"No. I'm offering a clear choice. At present, the situation of the over-18s is very confused in our association. The distinction between young leaders and Rovers isn't clear. I propose ending our youth programme at the age of 18. That's when young people legally come of age in our country. We don't have the means to go any further. The over-18s can belong as adult leaders. And that's that..."

"I've given a lot of thought to this question. We don't have many resources either, but I'm convinced that the success of our programme will depend on us having a strong senior section. We need them to take the Movement

forward. In our case, we need Rovers aged 17–20 who are dynamic, enterprising and committed to projects with a social impact, to demonstrate in concrete terms the qualities and skills that young people can acquire thanks to Scouting.”

“So what do you suggest?”

“I think that having four-year age sections constitutes a good compromise between the need for young people to share common interests and really experience being in a peer group, while, at the same time, allowing for the older ones to pass on their experience to the younger ones.”

“What age do you propose starting your programme at?”

“At 7 for the Cubs, once they’ve developed the ability to co-operate within a group. Starting any later would run the risk of spawning plans for a pre-Cub section, which I don’t think is a priority for us.”

“So you’d have Cubs from 7–11 years of age?”

“Yes. Then Scouts from 11–14, which in our country corresponds to the first cycle of secondary education. I’m keeping the idea of a one-year overlap between each section, to make the system more flexible and to make it easier to adapt to individual cases. After that, I’d have Venture Scouts from 14–17, and Rovers from 17–20.”

“Don’t young people come of age at 18 where you live?”

“Yes, but I think we need to accompany them a bit longer. They still need some educational support to integrate themselves successfully into adult life.”

“At what age can you become a Scout leader in your association?”

“At 18, when you’re legally of age. But unfortunately, many local group leaders let young people aged 16 or 17 become leaders. To make their lives easier... The creation of a senior section should enable us to raise the average age of the leaders. We shouldn’t recruit leaders before the end of the Rover section, which means not until they’re 20. But I admit that it won’t be easy.”

“We’ve also got leaders who are too young. There are plenty of habits and mentalities that need changing...”

“During the discussions here, I’ve been struck by the fact that each association operates with set mental models that people aren’t always aware of... For example, in some countries, there’s no upper age limit for the senior section, as if there is a natural continuum between young Scouts and adult leaders. People think that in order to be a good Scout leader, someone just needs to have followed the whole Scouting path, from Cubs to Rovers.”

“Yes, unfortunately, that’s a fairly widely held opinion in our association! Because they operate with this mental model, many local group leaders don’t think it’s possible to recruit adults who’ve never belonged to the Movement as leaders! In this way of thinking, the goal of the senior section is not to educate future citizens and to encourage young people to take on a wide variety of responsibilities in society, but only to make Scout leaders out of them. It’s the model of a Movement that operates like a closed shop, whose main goal is to form its own leaders.”

“But it has to be said that it’s rather practical: there’s no need to make an effort to recruit, select and train adult leaders. People who’ve been Scouts are content to do the same activities with their Scouts as they themselves did a few years earlier. That’s exactly the mentality of some former Scouts in our country.”

“You find it in our country too. And the result is that Scouting is often practised as a catalogue of activities that just have to be run over and over again, without even having to consider the educational goals. It’s a sure recipe for ossification after a few years, because of course the model degenerates each time it’s repeated and from one generation to the next.”

“So, you’re really into the philosophy of education from what I can hear!”

Jane had joined the two friends again.

“What’s your view on the subject, Jane?”

“I agree with you. It’s a problem that stems from the very nature of Scouting, which was founded by Baden-Powell not as a theory but as an educational practice. What’s important in Scouting is the educational activity. But the priority we accord — and rightly so — to the practice side sometimes causes us to overlook the reasons why we run those activities. One

of the most serious illnesses in Scouting is ‘activism’; in other words, activity for its own sake. That’s why, in our ‘Renewed Approach to Programme’ — or RAP as it’s known for short — we put the main emphasis on the educational objectives.”

“In our association, we’ve defined final educational objectives to be achieved by the end of a young person’s Scouting career”, Vladimir pointed out.

“Yes, but now that you’ve got a clear plan for your association’s age section system, shouldn’t you be defining educational objectives for each section?”

“Yes, definitely. And that’s my intention. Unfortunately though, I don’t quite know where to start”, Vladimir replied, scratching his head.

“You should start from the final objectives that you’ve defined”, said Jane.

“Of course. But then what?”

“The final objectives are also the objectives for the senior section, aren’t they?”

“Yes, because the end of the senior section is also the end of a young person’s road in Scouting.”

“Good. So the final objectives define the final stage, if you like. Now you have to define the initial step — that is the objectives to be achieved by the end of the youngest section.”

“OK. I get it. I take each final objective and try to define the first step in moving towards that objective.”

“You’ve got it. But, in doing so, you have to take account of the abilities of young people — or rather children — of that age. You should refer to Dorthé’s presentation.”¹

“OK.”

“Good. At the end of that process, you’ll have a series of objectives, running from the initial step — to be achieved by the end of the youngest section — to the final step — to be reached by the end of the senior section. Do you see?”

“It’s crystal clear.”

“Then you have to establish the intermediate step, which is, for each series of objectives, the level to be achieved by the end of the ‘middle’ section.

“You mean the Scout section, between the Cubs and the Rovers?” Manu asked.

“Yes.”

“But what do you do”, Vladimir asked, “if you’ve got two sections between the Cubs and Rovers — the Scouts and the Venture Scouts, for example?”

“The best approach is to first define the objectives for the Scout section, then to establish those for the Venture Scout section, at a new intermediate step between the Scouts and the Rovers. In that way, you build, step by step, a coherent and continuous path from the Cubs to the Rovers.”

“But in each case, referring to the capacities of the young people in the age range in question.”

“Of course. Setting objectives out of context, without referring to the different stages of development, would be a purely theoretical and fairly pointless exercise.”

“Can you give us an example, to give us a clearer idea of how to do it?”

“I’ll try. Remind me of one of the final objectives that you’ve set for your association.”

“OK, hang on... I’ve got the document we drafted here.”

Vladimir pulled a folder out of a bag – the result of the work carried out under Olga’s leadership – and started to leaf through it.

“Here you are. In the ‘social development’ area, one of the ultimate objectives is ‘being able to identify the many causes of conflict, master conflict-resolution skills, and know how to apply them in daily life in such a way as to help build peace’.”

Manu whistled in admiration:

“Bloody ambitious!”

“Maybe. But you know, learning how to manage conflict is crucial in our country. The lid that was holding the pressure in has flown off, and we often have the impression that everything is exploding in all directions!”

“Hmm. You know, we know a thing or two about conflict in Belgium. Your objective is really interesting, and I’m inspired by it.”

“So, what would be the first step corresponding to this objective at Cub Scout level?” Jane continued.

Vladimir looked unsure and said nothing.

“I think I’ve got an idea”, Manu went on. “I remember Dorthe telling us that at around the age of 6 or 7, a key aspect of social co-operation is learning about rules.”

“You’re right”, Vladimir exclaimed. “She told us that a child who’s too young or not mature enough won’t be able to respect the rules; his or her desire to win is too strong, so the child cheats and of course the others don’t want to play any more.”

“So how would you put your objective into words?” Jane asked.

“Let’s say, for example, ‘Able to respect rules and play fairly’.”

“Perfect. You’ve just drawn a line of objectives that goes from respecting the rules of a game, for children, to conflict-resolution techniques, for young adults.”

“That’s amazingly interesting”, Manu interrupted. “But I’ve got a question: if it’s normal to learn to respect rules at 6 or 7 years of age, then why bother to make it an educational objective?”

“Good point”, Jane replied. “Normally, all children start to be able to respect common rules at that age, but it’s still a difficult learning process that needs to be encouraged and reinforced. The effort to learn something should be made at the same time or just before the potential to do it. The objective suggested by Vladimir is therefore perfectly suited for Cubs, but not for Scouts, because 11 and 12 year-olds are normally beyond that stage in their development.”

“So what would be the corresponding objective for the Scouts?”

“I’ll come back to what Dorthe said,” Vladimir continued, “about the early-adolescent crisis. At 11 or 12 years of age, young people start to question the rules and prohibitions imposed by adults...”

“Yes. And they’re able to set new rules by mutual consent, based on group experience.”

“So our objective could be something like ‘be able to analyse problems or conflicts experienced in the team and propose new rules to overcome them’.”

“And for the Venture Scouts?”

“Something between the Scouts and the Rovers. From the age of 14, young people develop an interest in making a personal commitment to universal values, peace and the rejection of violence, for example.”

“Yes, but they still need concrete proposals.”

“So why not suggest acquiring mediation skills. The objective could be: ‘Be able to act as mediator in a conflict situation in the team’...”

“Brilliant! But I’ve still got a question”, Manu resumed.

“I’m listening”, Jane said.

“I’ve discussed this question of educational objectives with the French representative. He told me that in his association, they encountered a problem that made them stop going any further.”

“What was that?”

“Each section proposed educational objectives corresponding to the various growth areas — physical, intellectual, affective, social, etc. — and, finally, they ended up with so many objectives that it was impossible to manage them in a coherent progression.”

“That’s because you have to resist the temptation of covering all aspects of personal development and instead select a few precise ‘educational trails’, as you’ve done, because they correspond to significant issues in society.”

“And what if the issues in society change. Can you set new educational trails?”

“Of course. The Scout programme shouldn’t be rigid. It has to be revised regularly, to take account of the evolution of society and the changing needs of young people.”

“To get back to the objectives, Jane. Isn’t there any way of deciding on an optimum number?”

“Well, what we propose with the RAP approach is to build the personal progressive scheme on the back of the educational objectives. So the number of objectives has to be adapted to the number of years covered by each section.”

“What do you mean?”

“The educational objectives have to cover the five areas of growth: physical, intellectual, affective, social and spiritual, as well as character development. Is that what you’ve opted for, Vladimir?”

“Yes.”

“And how many educational trails have you identified in each area?”

“Three usually.”

“Can you give us an example?”

Vladimir opened his folder again.

“Let’s see. For affective development, we’ve chosen: (1) discovery and awareness of one’s feelings; (2) expression of feelings; and (3) responsibility and personal control.”

“So, in the area of affective development, we should have at least three objectives per section, one for each of the educational trails.”

“Which makes a total of 18 educational objectives per section, for all the areas of growth.”

“You still have to determine”, Jane resumed, “whether that’s enough for a section that goes on for three or four years.”

“Eighteen objectives for... let’s say three years, that makes six a year or one every two months. That’s not so bad.”

“Yes”, said Jane. “But to facilitate progress, it might be a good idea to split each objective into two sub-objectives, in order to set at least two levels in the progressive scheme per section. In any case, our goal should be for each young person to achieve all the objectives by the end of a section. So there shouldn’t be an excessive number of them. Thirty-six sub-objectives for three or four years would seem to be the maximum, I’d say.”

“You’ve just said that each young person should have achieved all the objectives by the end of a section. Isn’t that idealistic? Not all young people have the same possibilities...”

“You’ve touched on a very important point there, Vladimir. We’ll go into it in greater depth later on, but let’s just say for now that the progressive scheme that we recommend in the RAP approach is personalised. The educational objective proposed is designed to help each young person formulate his or her own personal objective. There’s no standard level. Each young person must be encouraged to go as far as his or her ability allows.”

“I see. For example, all the young people are encouraged to be capable of acting as a mediator in a conflict situation, but it’s up to each young person to determine how far he or she can go in that role.”

“Precisely. From that angle, it’s a question of drafting educational objectives not as standards to be achieved, but as guides that allow each young person to formulate his or her own personal objectives through dialogue with an adult leader. This is a key point that we’ll come back to later.”

“That’s all very interesting! But it’s coffee time. A nice cup of coffee will do us good, don’t you think?” Manu suggested.

They were heading for the conference centre when they ran into John.

“Vladimir! An urgent call. Someone called Eva... The phone’s in the lobby.”

Vladimir rushed towards the lobby of the main building, while Jane and Manu continued in the direction of the conference centre on the other side of the park.

“Vladimir and his friends are doing a truly remarkable job, aren’t they, Jane?”

“Yes, they really deserve to be supported in their efforts.”

A few minutes later, Vladimir rejoined Manu and Jane, who were engaged in an animated discussion with a group of participants. Vladimir poured himself a coffee and stayed apart from the others. Manu went over to him.

“You look worried, Vladimir. Bad news?”

“I’m anxious to get home”, Vladimir replied with a worried look. “Events are moving fast. We’re going to have to fight hard. I’ve just had a phone conversation with Eva, the chairman of our programme committee. The Ministry of Justice wouldn’t ratify the decisions of our last general assembly because of a fault in the proceedings. The approval of the new statutes and the election of the national board have been annulled. Our group no longer has any official function.”

“What? But that’s crazy! We must tell Jane!”



Saturday, 31 October

Olga, Eva and Stefan had agreed to meet at the headquarters of the association at 11 o’clock to review the situation. Vladimir was due to arrive back from London at 16.30, and they planned to go to the airport together to meet him.

When Eva opened the door of the office, she found Olga and Stefan already there.

“Hi, Eva. How are you doing? I’ve made some coffee. Do you want some?”

Eva greeted her two friends and collapsed into a chair.

“Thanks. I wouldn’t say no! I had to run for the tram; I was afraid I’d be late. What’s been happening on your side?”

“The despicable Viktor phoned me”, Olga replied.

“Him again! What did he want?”

“To gloat of course! I told you so, Olga: Boris Koncewitz will take this

association in hand again; it's high time. Your place is with us... What are you waiting for!" "

"That's true. What's holding you back?" Stefan interrupted.

"Work with nasty types like that? Never!" Olga retorted, reddening in anger, to the amusement of her friends.

"And Piotr?" Stefan asked. "What's become of him?"

"I've met him again", Eva replied. "He's still just as despondent. He had a visit from Boris Koncewitz, asking for the keys to the national headquarters."

"And did he give them to him?"

"He had to! Koncewitz is entitled to them. He threatened to come back with a bailiff."

"Unbelievable!" Olga exclaimed. "He treats us like crooks, while they... they..."

"Calm down, Olga", Eva said gently, putting an arm around her friend's shoulders. "For the time being, we can do nothing but accept the situation. But nothing is lost yet as far as the future's concerned. You know full well that the vast majority of active leaders is on our side."

"They may well be. But in the meantime, all our work has been for nothing!"

"I don't agree, Olga. We'll simply carry on with it, but in a different way..."

"Have you got a plan?"

"I'll tell you about it this afternoon, when Vladimir's here. Right now, it's of the utmost urgency that we retrieve all our papers, before Koncewitz and Viktor Gomerek take over the premises."

Olga had brought along two large cases. She opened a cupboard and started stacking up the programme committee's files. Eva and Stefan helped her in silence. In just an hour, all the files — itemised and sorted — had been stowed in the two cases.

“I’ve retrieved the coffeepot and cups”, Olga said. “I brought them here after all.”

Stefan lifted the two large cases stuffed with the documents and headed for the door. Olga followed him, head down, carrying the coffeepot and cups in a paper bag. Eva closed the front door carefully and joined her friends on the stairs.

“One door closes and another one opens”, she sighed.

“My car is parked a bit further away”, Olga said. “Shall we go to your place Eva?”

“Yes. We’ll leave the files at mine. Then we’ll grab a bite to eat before going to the airport.”

Just as Stefan was hoisting the cases in the boot of the car that Olga had just unlocked, Eva yelled:

“Look who’s coming!”

A black Golf had parked in front of the headquarters of the association, and Viktor Gomerek was getting out. He was with two young men with shaven heads, wearing jeans and black bomber jackets.

Gomerek took some keys out of his pocket, opened the door to the association’s headquarters, and dived in, followed by his two attendants.

“They haven’t wasted any time”, Olga remarked in an acrid tone.

Stefan closed the boot of the car sharply.

“I’m going to have a word with them!”

“No, Stefan! I won’t let you. Stay here! Provoking them won’t do any good...” Olga cried out, restraining Stefan by the arm.

“Look, Eva! Doesn’t that look familiar?”

Olga was pointing out a small Japanese trial bike being ridden by a youth in black leather, who had just parked behind Gomerek’s car. Eva squeezed Stefan’s arm tightly and turned pale. The motorcyclist had followed the other trio into the building.

“It can’t be a coincidence!”

“That’s too much!”

“Is that your assailant, Eva?”

“I can’t be sure. It’s impossible to tell with the full helmet. But the general appearance is the same...”

“Let’s get into the car and wait for them to come out, then follow them!” Stefan suggested.

“No! I don’t want to play that kind of game!” Eva protested.

“We should at least make a note of the bike’s number plate”, said Olga, dashing towards the headquarters of the association.

“Come back Olga!”

“Let her get on with it, Eva. She’s right. It might be useful. Let’s wait in the car.”

Across the road, Olga had taken a small notebook out of her pocket and was writing down the number plate of the motorbike. Then she returned to the car, gave her friends a resolute look, sat down behind the steering wheel and drove off without a word.

“Let’s stop at the Petôfi café. I need a drink”, said Stefan.

“So do I”, Olga replied.



XII. Educational Activities

Saturday, 31 October, 16.50

The plane was a few minutes late arriving. At the airport, Vladimir had just passed through customs and was waiting for his luggage to come off the conveyor belt. On the other side of the plate-glass windows in the arrivals hall, he could see hoards of people pushing forward to welcome back friends and loved ones.

The seminar at Gilwell Park had finished on a really good note. Jane and Manu had promised to help. Jane would soon be coming to meet the whole team and to review the situation in the association. For his part, Manu had promised to find some second-hand computers, which would enable Vladimir and his friends to equip the local groups involved in developing the new programme.

“Then you’ll be able to communicate with the leaders of your pilot groups by email. One of my friends has got a van. We’ll come and deliver them in a few weeks’ time. You’ll be able to introduce me to the whole team. After everything you’ve told me about them, I can’t wait to meet them.”

Vladimir recalled the closing moments of the seminar and his warm handshake with the Belgian giant.

“You’re more than welcome to visit.”

“See you, Vladimir. Take care.”

A shrill buzz interrupted Vladimir’s reminiscence. The conveyor belt started moving with a creak. The first cases would soon be appearing, hurtling down a steep descent before finding their way onto the horizontal belt. A large bald man with a moustache bumped into Vladimir while trying to grab his case, a huge red object, which was passing by on the conveyor belt. Vladimir deftly stepped out of the way, just managing to steer clear of the contraption, which almost escaped from the clutches of its owner. He spotted his own case and looked for the best strategic location in the crowd to retrieve it easily.

Standing next to Stefan right opposite the arrival doors, Eva was scanning the crowd, checking the face of every passenger who emerged.

“There he is”, said Stefan.

Eva felt something stir inside her. Her gaze settled on Vladimir’s smiling face. She ran towards him and hugged him. Vladimir kissed her fondly. It just happened, spontaneously, and now they were looking at each other, surprised and happy.

Stefan had taken Vladimir’s case. He gave a little cough. Vladimir turned to him, a big smile on his face. They shook hands affectionately.

“Pleased to see you again, Vladimir. We’ve got loads to tell you. Did you have a good trip?”

“Everything went without a hitch. I’ve also got lots of things to tell you. Where are we going?”

“We’re kidnapping you, Vladimir. We’re abducting you! Olga’s waiting for us outside in her car. We’ve decided to hold a ‘war council’ at St Sophie’s. We’re going to spend the weekend there. We’ve even invited your friend Professor Kessel. He’s meeting us there.”

“Great! But I’d like to go home quickly first, to unpack my case and fetch some clean clothes.”

“Let’s get going then. It’s getting late!” said Stefan, heading for the exit.

Olga got out of her car to greet Vladimir and kissed him affectionately. While Stefan was putting the case in the boot, she saw Eva putting her arm around Vladimir’s waist and snuggling up to him.

“A lot has been happening while you’ve been away, Vladimir”, she said. “Some of it worrying, some of it pleasing...”

Vladimir blushed, feeling stupid and happy at the same time. Olga laughed heartily and exchanged a friendly glance with Eva. She got behind the steering wheel, Stefan got in beside her, and Vladimir and Eva got into the back.

The Skoda shook and moved off.

After a brief stop at Vladimir's place, the car took the road towards St Sophie's monastery.

Everyone was quiet, as if lost in thought. Vladimir recognised the passing landscape and remembered the first weekend at St Sophie's... That had been on 25 September, just over a month ago. So much had happened in so little time... The silence was too heavy. Vladimir couldn't take it any more and spoke:

"So Koncewitz has the law on his side and there's nothing we can do about it?"

"Nothing other than prepare the general assembly", Eva replied. "But Koncewitz will apply the procedures of the old constitution, which leaves us little hope of obtaining a majority. All the old guard will support him."

"Well let's try to convince the old guard that our way makes sense. After all, they're decent people. They must understand the need to look to the future!"

"Don't be naive, Vladimir", said Olga. "According to the old constitution, Koncewitz, as chairman of the supervisory board, has the power to prevent us from attending the general assembly. According to him, we no longer have any role in the association, because we were appointed by a national board that was illegal."

"We can take on roles in a local group again!"

"Yes, but do you really think that would enable us to attend the general assembly? Koncewitz would certainly make sure there's no time to register us!"

Eva carried on:

"Let's not kid ourselves. Our only course of action is to continue with the work we've started and to try and enlist all the active leaders, so as to have a majority at the general assembly, or else..."

"Or what?"

"If all else fails, we could still create a new association with all our friends."

It was a moment before anyone responded to this suggestion.

“That would cause a split in the Movement”, Vladimir said.

“Few people would stay with Koncewitz”, Olga reassured them.

“Still, it would be a serious step to take”, said Eva.

Stefan flared up:

“For goodness sake, it’s the only possible course of action, as you know very well! We can’t leave the Movement in the hands of those crooks! Have you forgotten about the incident with the motorcyclist, the attack on Eva?”

“What?” Vladimir exclaimed.

“Stefan, you promised!”

“I know, Eva. But after what we saw this morning, I can’t keep quiet any longer!”

“But what are you talking about? What attack? Make yourself clear! What’s all this secrecy about?”

“Calm down, Vladimir. It’s not serious”, Eva said. “I’ll explain.”

Eva briefly recounted the incident with the motorcyclist and the visit to her apartment. Then Stefan added:

“This morning, when we were leaving the association’s headquarters, we saw Viktor Gomerek and his crew coming to take possession of the premises. One of them was the motorcyclist who’d attacked Eva! Olga took down the number of his bike.”

“I must be dreaming”, Vladimir exclaimed! “I’m hallucinating! We’re in the middle of a whodunit!”

“What I don’t understand”, said Olga, “is the reason for the attack.”

“I don’t think Koncewitz knows anything about it”, Stefan went on. “He wouldn’t stoop to such behaviour. I think Viktor’s behind it. He’s trying to play the ‘tough guy’, the gangster.”

“In any case, you have to report it to the police. It’s the best way to put an end to all this carry-on!”

“But Vladimir,” Eva replied, “what can I tell the police? The motorcyclist who snatched my bag was wearing a full-faced helmet. I’ve got no proof! There’s nothing to say it was the same person. . .”

“Let’s start by collecting some information”, Stefan suggested. “I’ve got a friend who works at the vehicle registration centre. I can easily get the name and address of the motorcyclist... Then we’ll see.”

“Let’s not waste time with all of that. It’s a trivial matter. We should be concentrating on our work and enlisting all the active leaders to save our association. That’s what really matters!”

“Hang on a minute, Eva”, Vladimir replied. “Your safety is no trivial matter!”

“Come on now, Vladimir. You know Viktor! He lives in a dream world. It’s all a game that he wants to draw us in to, no doubt to scare and undermine us. Let’s not fall into the trap of giving it too much importance!”

“Too much importance! For goodness sake, Eva, do you realise what’s happened?”

“Calm down, Vladimir”, Olga intervened. “Eva’s right. Let’s not react emotionally. We’ll proceed with care and also obtain information like Stefan suggests. If we start to have any inkling of doubt, we’ll call the police. But it shouldn’t distract us from our task.”

“Our priority is to organise a meeting of the network”, Stefan concluded. “That’s why we’re here.”

Eva put her hands over Vladimir’s clenched fists and gently loosened his fingers one by one.

“We’re there”, said Olga.

Eva pointed to the white buildings and the dome of St§ Sophie’s bell tower emerging from the forest. Eva turned slowly onto the dirt track leading to the monastery entrance. As the car pulled up in the inner courtyard, one of the monastery doors opened and a monk came out to greet them.

“Hello my friends, I’ve got a message for you from Professor Kessel...”

“Couldn’t he make it?”

“No, it’s not that. Don’t worry. He’s here. But he’s waiting for you on the Green Island. He wants you to leave your luggage at the doorkeeper’s lodge

and to meet him over there. The path is a bit difficult, but I think you know the way..."

"That's a great idea. We could do with some fresh air, Olga agreed. Nothing like a good walk to put some colour back in your cheeks. Let's go!"

Having quickly deposited their luggage in the corridor of the gatekeeper's lodge and parked the car, the friends set out on the path to the Green Island.

It was a lovely day. A gentle autumn sun lit the pine forest. From the first bends in the path that led down towards the river, a fresh and fragrant breeze wafted their way. Below, the island met their gaze like a jewel in a casket.

Stones rolled under their feet and a flock of jays flew off in a flurry of wings, letting out shrill squawks.

"The colours have changed", said Eva.

"It's autumn. It's turned russet."

"Flaming, you mean! It's gorgeous!"

The Green Island had indeed put on its autumn clothes and sported a monochrome of glowing hues, dominated by reds and yellows. They paused silently and contemplated 'their' island. They drew closer together instinctively and linked up by their shoulders, forming a group united by a kindred spirit. A faint glow flickered near the ruins of the old mill.

"Look", Stefan exclaimed. "The professor's lit a fire. He's waiting for us. Let's go!"

He sprung onto the slope, the rest of the group in tow.

The professor was sitting on a stump in front of a small hornbeam fire. Vladimir recognised the spot where they had stopped during the first meeting to discuss social development. An old battered and blackened kettle was sitting lop-sided on the stones of the fireplace.

"Hello, my friends. Welcome home. Sit down."

Near to him, on a white cloth laid on the short grass, the professor had placed five beakers and a teapot. With calm and precise movements, he took spoons and two jars, one made of glass, the other of metal, out of a small

rucksack. Above the embers, the old kettle began to whistle. The professor lifted the lid of the teapot and poured in a little boiling water. Then he swirled the water slowly around in the pot to warm it. After putting the teapot down on the cloth, he undid the lid of the metal jar and took out a pinch of fragrant black tea, which he dropped into the teapot.

Eva had come up silently. She knelt down next to the professor, lifted the kettle and slowly poured the steaming water into the teapot. Softly, the professor said:

“When things get chaotic and we’re in danger of being overwhelmed, it’s good to revert to the simple gestures of daily life, like picking flowers in the garden or making tea for one’s friends. It’s a lesson I learned from an old Japanese friend.”

The professor unscrewed the lid of the glass jar.

“It’s honey from the monastery. I recommend it for the tea. Seize this moment of happiness that’s being offered to you. Listen to the birds singing, the river babbling. It’s an inimitable luxury in today’s world. Drink your tea in silence. Then we’ll talk.”

Eva filled the beakers and passed them round to her friends with the pot of honey. They helped themselves and drank in silence. After a long moment of quiet, the professor spoke:

“Olga has told me all about your misadventures. I was expecting them to happen, which is why I was so insistent with Vladimir that you should examine your plan — the *raison d’être* of your association if you like — in more detail. Those who were involved in its re-creation a few years ago had very different motives. Those differences have remained in the shadows for some time, but now they are out in the open.”

“But why are there such differences?”

“In view of the tensions that are perturbing our society, not everyone shares the same view of what Scouting should be, nor of what purpose it should serve. For some, like yourselves, it’s an educational tool that should meet the needs and aspirations of today’s young people. Others, meanwhile, think that Scouting is nothing more than a tradition to be upheld... a way of satisfying personal ambitions...”

“Or an adolescent dream to be pursued.”

“Are such conflicts common in associations?”

“They’re always possible”, the professor replied. “An association is a group of individuals ‘associated’ around a common aim. The understanding of that aim, the manner in which it is conveyed to new members, and the method by which it is implemented, have to be discussed continuously in meetings, training courses, assemblies and committees. Inevitably there are differences, and consensus or a common vision constantly has to be re-established, because that forms the glue which keeps the members bound together as an ‘association’.”

“So, what you’re saying”, Stefan cut in, “is that an association can’t exist without ongoing democratic discussion?”

“Quite. Unless it’s a sect, that’s to say an organisation whose members agree to be manipulated by a charismatic, all-powerful ‘guru’ who’s responsible for defining the mission and objectives of the organisation. But in most cases, that type of ‘association’ is short-lived. Generally, when the guru dies, the group breaks up or it’s carved up into rival factions. Don’t you agree, Olga?”

“Yes, I do. But I have the impression that some associations can operate like an administration or bureaucracy, without any real democracy or charismatic leader.”

“You’re right. We’ve all been very familiar with that in the past. We’re talking about structures that exist solely for the purpose of ensuring their existence. They’re like empty shells that only survive because of support from an external power. When that support disappears, they collapse like a house of cards. But your plan doesn’t correspond to either a ‘sect organisation’ or a ‘bureaucratic organisation’, does it?”

“No, because they’re based on the members conforming and being passive, whereas our plan involves developing active and responsible citizens.”

“Just a minute”, said Stefan. “You mean that our educational choices and the way that the association operates have to be coherent?”

“Of course”, Olga took over. “How can you develop group life at unit level as a school for citizenship and democracy within an association that operates in an autocratic or bureaucratic way? You can’t ask unit leaders to

set up a system where the young people are involved in evaluating the life of the group and taking decisions, and, at the same time, tell the leaders that they can't express their views concerning the life and orientation of the association!"

"Olga, do you think that's what your disagreement with Koncewitz is all about?" asked the professor.

"But of course! Koncewitz has his idea about Scouting in our country and wants to impose it on the current leadership by relying on the old guard. I wouldn't call that democracy!"

"I'm going to play the devil's advocate", resumed the professor, "and suggest that maybe he simply wants to preserve the traditions and spirit of the Movement?"

"In that case, he could have expressed his position in a democratic discussion, instead of taking advantage of out-of-date constitutional procedures to seize power", Eva broke in.

"Which is why it's important to have a constitution that lays down clear and democratic procedures."

"What we want", Olga went on, "is for the active leaders, those who run the units, to have a say in the matter and to be allowed to take part in decisions concerning the life and direction of the association. After all, they're the ones who keep the Movement alive. The old guard might carry the history and traditions, but they're not involved in the day-to-day activities. They should content themselves with acting as supporters or advisors..."

"What the old guard have to recount is important", the professor stated. "A movement can't face the future without having a clear picture of its past, no more than an individual can. Do you think it would be a good thing for you to cut yourselves off from the old guard?"

"No", replied Olga. "But they have to understand that it's not up to them to control the association."

"I'm sure that most of them would understand if their role were explained to them clearly", said Stefan. "They listen to Koncewitz because he's from

their generation and he controls all the information they receive. They've never had the chance to meet unit leaders and present their point of view."

"Perhaps such a meeting should be arranged", remarked the professor.

"It's worth a try", agreed Stefan. "If we really believe in our plan, then I think we're capable of turning most of the old guard and current leaders against Koncewitz."

"We have to finish our work so that we have something coherent and sound to present", broke in Vladimir.

"But where could we present it?" asked Olga. "You forget that we won't have access to the general assembly."

"There are other ways of making ourselves heard apart from the general assembly: the press, radio, television, local meetings..."

"Is it simply a matter of discussing ideas?" asked the professor.

Stefan appeared somewhat thrown by the old man's question.

"Er... yes! Koncewitz's plans have to be opposed."

"The battle of the new brigade against the old guard?"

"In a sense, yes... I don't see what you're getting at."

"In my view, a battle of ideas, one position against another, would remain theoretical and achieve nothing. What you should do is demonstrate."

"Demonstrate?"

The professor was aware of the confusion he had caused. He took the time to savour the moment by finishing his cup of tea. Then he smiled and spoke.

"Think about it. What's the issue? To get rid of Koncewitz and put an end to his manipulations? What would be the point, if that were only to result in a similar situation to the one that he would have created himself. No... what's at stake is the type of association that you want to develop, a plan that's likely to win the resolute support of the old guard as well as the enthusiastic backing of the current leaders. You've already described the broad lines. Let's try to go a bit further. What are the characteristics of the

Scout association that you dream of? Let me have your ideas. I'll note them down..."

The professor took a notebook and pencil out of his rucksack, pushed up his glasses and looked at the group expectantly. There was a pause before Olga threw a twig onto the fire and said:

"An association that is open to all, excludes nobody, irrespective of their sex, religion, social class... And concerned about reaching the underprivileged."

"Ready to meet the needs of young people today", added Vladimir. "Let's not forget the educational proposal that we drafted."

"Yes", said Stefan. "I agree. But if we want to make sure we don't just do any old thing, then we have to base the association on the fundamental elements of Scouting: its principles, purpose and method. We also have to show the old guard that we're faithful to the Movement."

"I wonder", started Eva...

"What?" asked Vladimir.

"I agree with everything you've said. We've talked about it so often... But there's one point that's always been vague until now... I think it's... the sharing of power."

"The sharing of power?"

"Yes. That's what we have to change radically."

"Explain, Eva", said the professor.

"Well, if you take the way we've worked until now: a small committee that thinks for the rest and prepares a plan for them to approve. That doesn't seem very sensible to me. We should be basing ourselves a lot more on the questions, expectations and experience of the unit leaders. We should be evaluating experiences, successes and failures with them; working with them to identify what solutions should be implemented; co-operating with them to set the objectives to be achieved, the methods to be used, and so on."

Eva paused for a moment, then added:

“I dream of a Movement where the unit leaders are not at the bottom of the pyramid but fully involved in the decision-making process.”

“Turn the pyramid upside down, you mean?”

“That’s right. Because, after all, the most important role in an educational movement is that of the educators, isn’t it?”

“Eva’s right”, said Vladimir. “One of the points that struck me during the seminar at Gilwell was how cumbersome the associations are, the number of levels of responsibility between the local leaders and the national level. The masses of people involved in co-ordination, administration and support tasks compared with those who really work in an educational role with young people... I noted that in some associations there are only three young people for every adult!”

“Many associations have modelled their structures on an administration,” added Stefan, “with a national centre, then regions or provinces, districts and finally the local group. But isn’t that what’s needed to ensure good internal communication?”

“In the early twentieth century perhaps”, continued Eva. “But is that still indispensable nowadays, given the way that means of communication have advanced? The essential element is the local group. It’s there that Scouting’s educational programme is actually proposed to young people in the different age sections.”

“At Gilwell, I met Mario, an Italian leader. He was adamant that Scout groups should operate like an educational community, giving the Scout leaders the possibility of analysing the educational needs of young people in the local circumstances, defining educational objectives together and helping each other improve the way they work with young people.”

“That’s exactly what I had in mind, Vladimir! Looking at it that way, we could imagine a Scout association like a sort of federation of local groups.”

Vladimir recalled the idea of Manu, the Belgian leader. He added:

“Each group could be equipped with a computer and communicate via the Internet with all the other groups and the national centre!”

“Whoa! Easy does it! You’re trying to create science fiction”, argued Stefan.

“And what would you say if I were to announce that in a few weeks’ time we could start building up a computer network?”

“Are you serious?”

Vladimir explained Manu’s offer to his friends. Stefan reacted enthusiastically:

“That’s great! We could create a website where we could make all our documents on the new programme available to the local groups. The leaders could download them, test them in the field and send us their feedback by email!”

“Would all unit leaders be involved in developing the programme?” asked Vladimir.

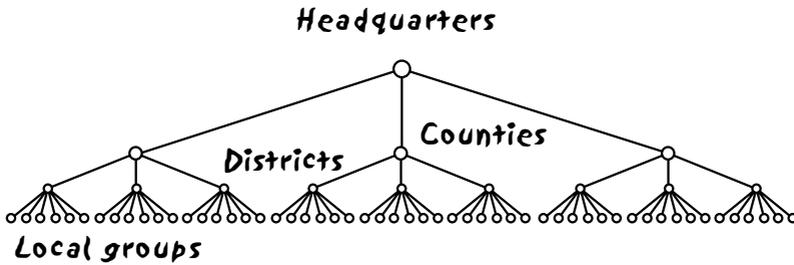
“Why not?” cut in Olga. “We have to stop thinking that a unit leader has to content him- or herself with applying a youth programme. Passive application can only result in failure. In reality, a good programme is a bit like a musical score. To bring it alive, you need someone to play it. It’s the unit leader who really develops the programme through which a group of young people have an exciting time. What do you think, professor?”

“I’m listening to your discussion with great interest. I think you’re on the right track. It’s by putting such a plan into action that you’ll succeed in filling the current leaders, and even the old guard, with enthusiasm. Your Koncewitz would be totally out on a limb...”

“But do you think it’s realistic to organise an association on that kind of model? I mean like a network of local groups?” asked Eva.

“Actually,” replied the professor, “an association could well be described as a communication network. In the classic model, communication passes from top to bottom, radiating from the national centre down to the local groups on the periphery through a series of intermediate levels, which are the areas and districts. Like this:”

The professor made a quick sketch in his notebook to illustrate what he meant.

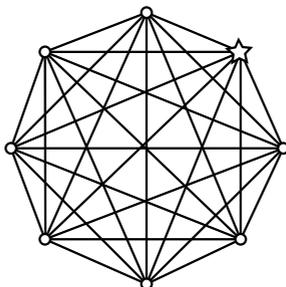


“You see, I’ve shown four levels in this sketch: the national level, the provincial or county level, the district level and finally the local level. It’s the old way of organising big groups that humans discovered thousands of years ago. It has its advantages: it facilitates a chain of control from the upper levels down to the lower ranks. Each level works like a filter, letting communication through or blocking it. The real power lies in controlling the information. The more levels whose information I control, the greater my power. But each filter also has the possibility of distorting information according to its own interests, so under such a system there’s a proliferation of filters. This means that information isn’t circulated very efficiently. When the national level sends information to the local level, that information passes through two successive filters and there’s no guarantee that it won’t be distorted before reaching its destination. The same is true when the local level sends a message to the national level.”

“Which means you could improve communication by reducing the number of intermediate levels”, remarked Olga.

“Yes, but on condition that you have an efficient communication ‘channel’. This pyramidal system of successive levels was invented at a time when the only way to communicate was by sending mail by messenger on foot or horseback. You had no choice but to use successive relays to circulate information. Nowadays, the possibility of using electronic means of communication changes everything. You can set up what is called a fully integrated network. This is what it looks like:”

The professor did another quick sketch in his notebook and showed it to the group.



“You can see that each element of the network is able to communicate directly with all the other elements. The filters have been removed.”

“But there are fewer elements”, remarked Stefan.

“In fact, the number of potential connections is so great that, with a larger number of elements, I wouldn’t be able to show them all. But it’s a valid point: until now, this kind of system could only work with small groups because ordinary means of communication — mail and the phone — are not efficient enough. But communication via the Internet, which makes it possible to send loads of information to an unlimited number of elements in a very short time, makes this kind of system feasible.”

“That means there’s no more hierarchy, no more top level...”

“In theory, yes, but in reality, some tasks still have to be separated out, for example to regulate the traffic and administer the network, to summarise or combine information, to organise decision-making processes, etc. The main difference is that these are service tasks and not power-related roles. These tasks are shown by a star on the diagram.”

“How is it possible to reorganise a national association on the basis of such a communication network?” asked Eva.

“Well, you first have to put the local group at the heart of the system. As Vladimir said, it’s the most important structure because its job is to actually offer Scouting’s educational programme to young people in the different age sections. All the other structures of a national association should serve the local group. Often in an organisation — and this was particularly the case under the last political regime — the bulk of the resources is at the top or at

the intermediate levels. That's where you find the best fitted-out premises, modern equipment, well-paid professionals; whereas at local level, people have to make do with limited budgets, little equipment and goodwill. If you want to implement a quality youth programme, you have to see things the other way round and give the local groups most of the human, material and financial resources."

"You're talking about the local group and not the units in each section, aren't you?" asked Stefan.

"Yes. The local group should in fact be viewed as a kind of educational centre, which is capable of implementing the whole Scout programme, from childhood until the end of adolescence. The units in the different sections have to be part of a local group and not isolated. Is it sensible to offer Scouting to only one age section, without bothering about what happens beforehand and afterwards? It seems to me that Scouting is effective when it develops a continuous programme that runs from childhood through until the end of adolescence, with educational objectives that meet the needs of each age group, but which at the same time fit into an overall progression. That's what you want, isn't it?"

"Quite."

"So, if that's the job of the local group, have you thought about the extent of the tasks involved? There are tasks to do with relations and communication — with parents and the local authorities; administrative tasks — enrolling members, collecting fees; financial tasks — establishing budgets, fundraising, managing the accounts; tasks concerning human resources — recruiting leaders, giving them basic training and support; educational tasks — organising the different units, analysing the young people's needs, establishing educational objectives, planning and running attractive activities to achieve those objectives, and so on."

"So the local group in fact carries out almost all of the tasks of the association", observed Stefan.

"And often with very limited support from the higher levels", added Vladimir.

"And very limited access to the evaluation and decision-making processes concerning the direction of the Movement", chipped in Olga. "That's what needs changing."

“Well, in that case,” concluded Eva, “the strategy we need to follow is clear. We’ve got a hundred or so local groups. Let’s invite them to join forces in a network, which will be the backbone of our association. Thanks to this network, they’ll be able to share their experiences, problems and successes, and have access to useful resources. A smaller national team will be there to make sure the network runs properly and to support co-operation among the local groups with a view to producing resources that are of use to all of them.”

“Thanks to the Internet, we could distribute those resources to all the groups for next to nothing”, added Vladimir. “What do you think, Stefan?”

“We have to create a website that’s accessible to all the local groups and allows them to supply information, discuss and download documents.”

“Kitting each local group out with a computer connected to the Internet costs money”, said Olga.

“Each group would also need a scanner and printer in order to digitise and print documents. But none of that is out of reach”, replied Stefan. “We can find second-hand computers at knock-down prices, and a subscription with an Internet provider is not all that expensive, particularly if we’re then able to reduce printing costs because handbooks and reports will be distributed via the Internet.”

“Fantastic! And can you set all that up?”

“With the help of some friends, it’s possible. But we first have to run a test on a small scale in order to perfect all of the tools and prove that a system like that is useful.”

“Don’t forget that we have our 15 pilot groups”, Olga reminded him. “We’ve drawn up a plan of action with them to finalise the section system, test the educational objectives and activities, and develop the section methods.”

“We could equip them with the computers that Manu is going to bring us, and set up an experimental network”, suggested Vladimir.

“That’s a brilliant idea”, said Eva. “I agree with a pilot network, but we mustn’t isolate ourselves in a small experimental group and leave the rest of the association under the control of Koncewitz. Our work has to result in something useful for all the groups as soon as possible. Any ideas, Stefan?”

“Yes. I think we should start with a pilot network, like we’ve already decided, but leave it open to the other groups. In other words, each group should be able to join us when they want to and, with our help, acquire the necessary means like a computer and cheap Internet access.”

“Just a minute”, cut in Olga. “Access to the network isn’t enough. It has to be something of real benefit to the local groups. Now, what’s the most urgent need the units have right now?”

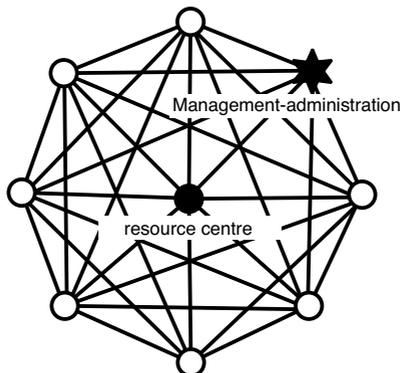
“Activities!” exclaimed Stefan. “The main problem for the local leaders is finding exciting activities that are educational at the same time to propose to the youngsters. According to my information, the situation isn’t brilliant at the moment...”

“That means,” continued Olga, “the network needs to produce activity handouts as quickly as possible and make them available to the local groups on the Internet.”

“You’re right”, said Eva. “That way, we can prove to all the groups that we’re able to respond to their needs — or rather that everybody’s needs can be met effectively thanks to a co-operative process that is open to all. It would be a far more interesting and attractive type of association than what Koncewitz is proposing! What do you think, professor?”

“I’m still finding your discussion very interesting, and while listening to you, I’ve finished my sketch. Here’s the new version:”

The professor opened his notebook to reveal the new diagram.



“You see, in the middle of the network, I suggest putting a resource production centre. That would be a small team with the skills and equipment to produce educational or technical handouts according to the needs expressed by the local groups and their experiences. It wouldn't be a team that exercises control or power, but a production and service team. It seems to me that it's the role that you should take on at present, by gathering around you some graphic designers, editors, secretaries and... IT experts, no doubt, for the Internet distribution.”

“I see”, said Stefan. “The job of this ‘resource centre’ would be to collect and analyse ideas and experiences, to use them as inspiration for educational or activity handouts, to produce these handouts and make them available to the local groups on a website.”

“That's exactly it.”

“When do we start?”

“Hang on”, interrupted Eva. “Less haste. I think we've got a good strategy, but it all needs to be organised and prepared with care.”

“And this idea of activity handouts needs to be developed a bit further”, added Olga. “I agree with Stefan. The local groups definitely need help in this area, but not any old how. Not only do the unit leaders need documentation, but they especially need to be trained to select and develop activities according to clearly identified educational objectives.”

“You're right”, Eva went on. “I suggest that we take some time tomorrow to go deeper into this idea of a resource centre. What products should be developed? And on the basis of what kind of co-operation with the local groups? What communication system should we use, etc. Let's call it a day now. I think it's time to head back to the monastery for dinner.”

Vladimir and Stefan helped the professor gather up his bits and pieces, and carefully extinguished the embers of the fire. The setting sun was making the river sparkle. Fluffy clouds were racing across the sky, and the leaves on the trees were rustling in the light breeze. Olga glanced across the whole island and said:

“In a few months, we'll organise a big camp here, on the Green Island. We'll invite all the groups, and the old guard too, and it will be the camp for the rebirth of our Movement.”

“Have you become a clairvoyant all of a sudden?” asked Stefan with a mocking grin.

“It’s not a prediction. It’s a plan”, replied Olga. “If we really want to rally the whole Movement and show the old guard that they have to support us, we have to demonstrate the quality of what we’re proposing.”



Sunday, 1 November, 09.00

Breakfast was taken in a happy mood. The weather was looking good, and after the previous day’s meeting, morale was high.

Eva led the team into the meeting room and opened the meeting:

“Today, we have three objectives. First we have to look at how we can help the unit leaders offer young people quality activities. What’s a quality activity? What resources do the leaders need to be able to prepare and run such activities? How can we prepare and distribute those resources? And that brings us to our second objective: the resource centre. How should it be organised? How should it work? And finally, our third objective is to prepare a meeting of the pilot group network, in order to identify what results we want to achieve and to decide how to work together. Do you agree? OK. Let’s start by thinking about the concept of activity. Who wants to start? Olga?”

“OK. The first thing to remember is that Scouting is an active method of education. We choose not to educate young people by way of lessons or classes, but by getting them to experience an activity.”

“Learning by doing”, said Vladimir.

“In the traditional school system,” Olga went on, “there’s a direct relationship between the teacher and the pupil by way of words. In Scouting, another element comes into play between the adult and the young person, and that’s activity.”

“But can you really learn by doing? How can an activity be educational?” Stefan asked.

The professor took over:

“That’s an interesting question, Stefan. It’s been the subject of many discussions in the field of educational science. Olga mentioned the traditional school system. If we put it in the form of a caricature, you could say that it’s a system whereby those who are taught are considered to be simple receivers of ready-made information provided unilaterally by a lecturer. In other words, the child is an empty receptacle or a blank page to be filled. His or her feelings, motivation and own ways of thinking don’t matter. Only the teachers, the adults, have knowledge, and education can be described rather like the decanting of a full bottle — the teacher — into an empty bottle — the child.”

“The child is passive. He or she just has to listen and repeat.”

“Quite. One could say that the traditional educational approach — which is still deeply engrained in some cultures and many minds — is based on two notions, which concern knowledge on the one hand and childhood on the other. Learning is looked upon as a collection of knowledge that has been determined once and for all and that just needs to be conveyed. And as for children, they are perceived as miniature adults. Their ways of thinking and feeling aren’t deemed to be fundamentally different from those of adults.”

“So they can be addressed as if they were adults?”

“Yes, and if they don’t react positively, if they don’t listen, you have every right to make a moral judgement on them — they are at fault, lazy or disobedient, so they have to be punished.”

“And how does the new educational approach differ?”

“So-called new education is based on a radically different notion of learning and childhood. Knowledge is not defined once and for all. It is something that has to be acquired and developed continuously. And the certainties previously acquired are continuously being put into question by the advances of science. The child is therefore encouraged to wonder about what is actually true and to look for answers to questions for him- or herself. Moreover, the child is no longer looked upon as a miniature adult. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the first to say: ‘Each age, each condition of life, has its

suitable perfection, a sort of maturity proper to it'. The child goes through successive stages of development. At each of these stages, he or she shows particular motivations and ways of thinking that are different from those of an adult."

"So if we want to teach a child something, we have to take account of those specific ways of thinking?"

"Yes. And since knowledge isn't something that comes ready-made, but is something that develops continuously, the child has to go through certain processes that are alien to the adult way of thinking in order to make discoveries. The best way to proceed is therefore to encourage children to search by themselves and to communicate among themselves in order to discover and share their own ways of going about things using their own language — even if that language isn't what an adult would use."

"Is that what is meant by active education?"

"Yes. It's the principle of learning by doing. Methods of active education put the child at the heart of the educational process. They seek to encourage him or her to search by him- or herself for the information needed to solve a problem, for example."

"Was Baden-Powell a follower of active education?"

"Baden-Powell was in touch with those promoting the new school movement in England and it was at their request that he organised an experimental camp on Brownsea Island in 1907. He wanted to see if the training methods that he'd developed for military scouts could be applied to young people. In fact, I've got an interesting quote here on the subject. In January 1912, he said in the Headquarters' Gazette that:

The secret of sound education is to get each pupil to learn for himself, instead of instructing him by driving knowledge into him on a stereotyped system.

So you see that we're in line with the concept of learning by doing. Furthermore, Baden-Powell was in contact with Maria Montessori, a famous Italian educationalist and advocate of active education, who said that:

The task of the educator lies in seeing that the child does not confound good with immobility and evil with activity...

Again in the Headquarters' Gazette, Baden-Powell wrote in August 1914 that:

The key to the Montessori system is that the teacher limits himself to organising the work, suggesting objectives, and the child enjoys complete freedom in choosing the means of reaching them ...

And Baden-Powell went on to say that:

Scouting has been described as an extension of the Montessori system..."

"So, if I've understood correctly," Olga broke in, "learning by doing means involving children in an experimental process: through action and experience they'll learn — with the help of an adult who guides them — how to react to a given situation or problem?"

"That's right."

"And of course this experimental process has to be applied in all areas of personal growth, not only in the areas of physical and intellectual development, but also in the areas of social, emotional and spiritual development."

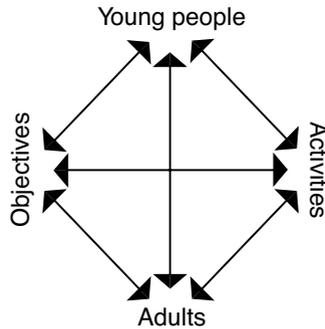
"Of course."

"That may well be the case," Stefan cut in, "but that's where the difficulties start for unit leaders. How do you go about choosing activities that will support this experimental process? And on what basis?"

"Not so fast, Stefan!" Eva interrupted. "Let's take the time to analyse the different elements that we've mentioned. There are young people with their particular ways of thinking, needs and desires. Then there are the adults who help and guide them. There's activity and experience. And last but not least there are the educational objectives..."

"That's right, Vladimir exclaimed. It's the 'Scouting diamond!'"

While his friends looked at him mystified, Vladimir headed to the board and drew a diamond shape.



“At Gilwell, someone from the World Scout Bureau presented the results of a research study on Scouting and adolescents. She represented the four fundamental elements of Scouting in the form of a diamond — the ‘Scouting diamond’: young people, adults, activities and educational objectives.

Vladimir wrote the four words and joined them with arrows.

“The four elements are interrelated.”

“Yes. That’s what’s interesting about your diagram, Vladimir”, the professor broke in. “In actual fact, the diamond is a set of four connected triangles. Do you see?”

“Um... the adult-activities-objectives relationship”, said Stefan.

“Right! Can you expand on that, Stefan?”

“OK. The adults have to be able to formulate the educational objectives of the chosen activities.”

“Good.”

“That works in both directions”, Olga added. “In other words, identifying the educational objectives of the chosen activities, but also choosing activities according to the defined educational objectives.”

“Well done. And that’s certainly one of the main problems. It seems to me that a lot of adult leaders suggest activities without having a very clear idea of the educational objectives that those activities will serve to achieve. Or else, if they have objectives, they have difficulty in identifying activities through which those objectives can be achieved.”

“That’s a point that has to be emphasised in training courses”, Olga added. “Teaching leaders how to identify and handle the relationship between activities and educational objectives.”

“Yes, it’s essential. Can you see another triangular relationship?” the professor went on.

“The young people-activities-objectives relationship”, suggested Vladimir.

“What does it mean?”

“Er... that the young people also have to have an idea of the educational objectives that the activities are intended to achieve?”

“I’d say”, said Olga, “that it’s more a case of the young people having to set themselves objectives for their personal development to be achieved through the activities.”

“Yes. Self-education is a central element of Baden-Powell’s thinking”, added the professor.

“I can see another, complementary triangular relationship”, said Eva. “The young people-adults-objectives connection. Doesn’t that mean that the adults have to help the young people set objectives to be achieved through the activities?”

“Quite right, Eva. I’d add that the young people and adults also have to evaluate the activities together, in order to determine how useful they’ve been in achieving the educational objectives.”

“I can see yet another important triangular relationship, declared Vladimir. Adults-young people-activities. The adults shouldn’t choose the activities without consulting the young people.”

“And why not?” asked the professor.

“Because if the activities don’t correspond to the young people’s interests, they won’t be motivated to take part in them and nothing will work.”

“You’ve put your finger on a key element, Vladimir. It’s not so much the activity in itself that has an educational value, but the experience the young person has whilst doing the activity. If a young person isn’t interested in an

activity, he or she won't make much of a personal contribution to it, the experience will be unrewarding and, finally, the results, in educational terms, will be poor."

"So the young people have to be involved in choosing and evaluating the activities."

"And with the help of adults, they have to draw up objectives for their personal development that they aim to achieve through the activities", Eva concluded.

Stefan remained pensive.

"I've got a problem with that", he said in the end. "Scouting has always been presented to me as a series of specific activities: hikes and camps in nature, observing animals, plants and the stars, orienteering and topography, etc. I thought you just had to do these activities to achieve the educational objectives of the Movement. But now you say that we have to continuously be on the lookout for new activities. Isn't Scouting first of all about practicing a certain number of very precise activities — those proposed by Baden-Powell in 'Scouting for Boys'?"

"Ah! Now there's an interesting discussion", said the professor. "It reminds me of one of my correspondents, a university professor. He was put in charge of organising a seminar on Scouting for future teachers, and what he presented was in fact a list of activities: learning how to read a map and find one's bearings, how to tie knots, how to send a message using semaphore, recognising animal tracks, etc. During his course, he demonstrated the educational interest of each activity in terms of physical, intellectual, social development, and so on. He thought that the practice of Scouting had been defined by Baden-Powell once and for all in as codified a manner as football or cricket, and that it was simply a matter of replicating them well, thanks to intensive training. What do you think of that approach?"

"It has the advantage of being simple", said Olga.

"That's exactly what Koncewitz and his friends propose", added Eva.

Stefan reddened.

"But still, activities in the outdoors play a central role in Scouting!"

“Yes”, replied Olga. “Life in nature occupies a central place in the scheme of Baden-Powell, and I think there are at least three reasons for that. Firstly, nature provides a healthy environment away from pollution and the putrid fumes of the town or city. And that’s vital for physical development and health. Secondly, observing the wonders of nature is an aid to spiritual development. And finally, numerous activities that meet young people’s need for discovery and creativity can be developed in a natural setting.”

“I fully agree with you”, said the professor. “But I would add just one thing. I think that Baden-Powell believed that a natural setting was indispensable for child’s social development.”

Greeted with a surprised look from Olga and her friends, the professor continued:

“That may surprise you, but it’s essential. In the preface to ‘Scouting for Boys’, Baden-Powell wrote: ‘Scouting is a school of citizenship through woodcraft.’ Don’t you find that sentence surprising?”

“Yes”, said Stefan. “Life in the woods is more like living apart from society!”

“So how can woodcraft be a ‘school of citizenship?’”

“Don’t you see? Have you read Robinson Crusoe?”

“Robinson Crusoe?” questioned Stefan.

“Yes, ‘The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe’, written by the English author Daniel Defoe”, added the professor. “This novel, which was written in the eighteenth century, was enormously successful. Do you remember the story of Robinson Crusoe? Shipwrecked on a desert island, he gradually settled there, taking advantage of all the resources of the environment, with the help of a few tools that he’d salvaged, and practising in turn all the trades — carpenter and joiner, stockbreeder, gardener. He built a shelter and put a roof on it. He captured wild goats and bred them. He built a hut and made clothes for himself. He rediscovered and gradually rebuilt all the elements of civilisation, right up to human brotherhood, the day he saved Friday from the hands of the cannibals. In this novel, Defoe exalts the values of his time, which preceded and anticipated the industrial revolution, a time when material progress, the needs of productivity and

technical improvements led to changes in the way society was organised. Did you know that Jean-Jacques Rousseau condemned all books for children published in his era, with the sole exception of Robinson Crusoe? He understood why this book appealed to so many young people. Robinson Crusoe, on his island, stood for the distress of the child in the incomprehensible world into which he or she had been thrown, a world which he or she would, however, understand and master one day.”

“I don’t see the connection with Scouting”, said Stefan.

“Of course you do!” exclaimed Eva. “When Scouts go to camp, they relive Robinson Crusoe’s experience. They have to settle in unknown territory, discover all the resources, shelter from bad weather, prepare their food, organise the life of the group, and so on.”

“Rediscover and experience the foundation of social life”, Olga added.

“You’ve got it”, the professor resumed. “And I think that it’s this process which explains most fundamentally Scouting’s success. All children, and adolescents in particular, need to leave society for a while to rediscover the basis of social life within a small group, by themselves and on their scale.”

“You find that in the Jungle Book too”, remarked Olga.

“That’s right. In the Jungle Book, Rudyard Kipling recreates the myth of the wild child who is taken in, fed and taught by wise animals, who teach him the ‘law of the pack’, that is the basis of life in society. What’s more, it’s no coincidence that Baden-Powell proposed the Jungle Book as the symbolic framework for the Cub Scout section. Scouting is essentially a socialisation tool, a ‘school of citizenship’. In order to really grasp the usefulness of the activities proposed by Baden-Powell in ‘Scouting for Boys’, you have to look at them from this perspective. The activities of observing, exploring, camping and living in nature, games and service are not aims in themselves but ways of educating future citizens.”

“That explains why”, added Eva, “we’re not forced to replicate the activities proposed by Baden-Powell when he started Scouting. We can and even have to come up with new activities, provided they go in the same direction and correspond to the young people’s interests.”

“Moreover, that’s what Baden-Powell said himself. For example, in ‘The Scouter’, he wrote in March 1939:

Don’t let the technical outwit the moral. Field efficiency, backwoodsmanship, camping, hiking, good turns, jamboree comradeship are all means, not the end. The end is character — character with a purpose. And that purpose is that the next generation be sane in an insane world, and develop the higher realisation of Service, the active service of Love and Duty to God and neighbour.

“Therefore, we can conclude”, said Olga, “that Scout activities are not limited to a precise list, but rather are characterised by two elements: firstly by their setting, and secondly by their purpose. The favoured, but not exclusive, setting of Scout activities is nature, for reasons that we’ve already touched on. Their purpose is to achieve educational objectives that meet the needs of young people of every age range in the different areas of growth, so as to develop the happy, active and useful citizens that society needs.”

“And it’s all too clear”, Vladimir added, “that one of the Movement’s most serious afflictions is that of repeating activities that bear no relation to any educational objective. Activity for activity’s sake...”

“This affliction”, Olga said, “stems from a certain short-sighted pragmatism that is often applied in the Movement. When training unit leaders, instead of helping them define educational objectives and consider what activities could be used to achieve them, we just teach them how to prepare and run a certain number of customary activities: how to play some game or other, tie knots, organise a hike, build a bridge, etc. They’re given the methods, but they aren’t made to think about the needs that they’re supposed to meet.”

“It’s a practice that’s often deeply entrenched in leaders’ thinking patterns”, Eva commented.

“But we talk about Scout activities, don’t we”, Stefan broke in. Scouting has quite a few characteristic activities, doesn’t it?”

The professor picked up the question.

“Let’s think about this more closely, shall we? On the one hand, Scouting seems to have developed a kind of catalogue of specific activities

— orienteering, exploration, hiking, campfires, etc. But on the other hand, Scouting's educational system targets all aspects of a young person's development — physical, intellectual, affective, etc. — and makes the young people's centres of interest its main focus. Therefore, the scope of Scout activities should be infinite. So how do we handle this contradiction?"

"That's exactly what we're asking!" Stefan declared.

"Use your brain, Stefan!" the professor goaded gently. "A limited list of clearly-defined activities on the one hand, and unlimited activities on the other..."

"Doesn't that mean that there are two types of activity?" Olga suggested.

"That's the answer!" the professor continued. "You have to distinguish between the main types of activity. On the one hand, there are what we could call the *fixed activities* — which is what I'd prefer to call them, rather than Scout activities or traditional activities, as they're sometimes called. I call them *fixed* because they have to be practised repeatedly and regularly in order to create a good atmosphere, to strengthen the internal cohesion of the group and to support the implementation of the Scout method, particularly by involving young people in the decision-making processes. As we've already mentioned, we're talking about outdoor activities, hikes, singing and games, as well as the ceremonies, the patrol and unit councils, the unit assemblies, and so on. On the other hand, there are activities that we could describe as *variable*, because they're extremely varied and not in the least restricted. They make it possible to respond to a wide range of interests and to cover all the areas of development. They also relate to the situation and needs of the community. Most of the time, they take the form of projects developed by the teams or by the unit — putting on a puppet show, taking part in an environmental protection operation, organising an international gathering, and so on."

"That's a really good explanation", Vladimir acknowledged. "And I'd even add that you have to try and reach some kind of balance between the two types of activity."

"What do you mean? Vladimir."

“Well, in my experience, if the *fixed activities* constitute the main part of the unit’s programme, the group will tire of them after a while. There’ll no longer be any element of surprise, enthusiasm will wane, and a climate of boredom and disinterest will gradually set in. However, if the leaders encourage the young people to take part in a constant stream of *variable activities* and to come up with new projects all the time, the group won’t have the time to breathe... Let alone to get to know each other by taking part in activities that require less imagination and stress, like a weekend camping in the forest or an undemanding hike.”

“You’re right”, said Olga. “Fixed activities like nature excursions allow the group to rediscover itself and to ‘breathe’.”

“Not to mention”, Ewa added, “to ensure interaction among the teams and to evaluate the life of the group through the councils and assemblies.”

“In other words,” the professor interjected again, “you could also say that a programme with too many *fixed activities* and not enough *variable activities* could cause the group to close in on itself. The young people will become proficient at certain Scout activities, but they won’t be preparing to become active and responsible members of their community. Moreover, a programme like that couldn’t possibly cover all the areas of development, because the range of activities would be too restricted. In contrast, a programme with too many *variable activities* and not enough *fixed activities* could end up losing its Scout characteristics. The cohesion of the group, the sense of belonging, and even the implementation of the Scout method and educational objectives would be jeopardised. Ultimately, you could end up with a programme that functions for the sake of it and which no longer makes young people think about what they’re doing and relate the life of the group to the values of Scouting.”

“I’m sorry to keep on about it”, Stefan cut in. “But I’d like to have a clearer idea of how an activity helps achieve an educational objective.”

“All right”, Eva replied. “Olga, suggest an educational objective, and we’ll try to come up with examples of activities through which it could be achieved.”

Olga opened a thick notebook and thumbed through it.

“Here’s one for the Cub Scout section in the area of physical development: ‘Take part in sports activities, understand the rules and accept losing’.”

“That’s an easy one”, Stefan said, “You just have to organise a sports event — like the Olympics, for example — in which each six represents a different country.”

“OK. Let’s try a more difficult one. Here’s another objective for the Cub Scout section in the area of physical development: ‘Develop good habits for looking after your health’.”

“You could apply that objective to the question of diet”, Eva suggested. “Through a card game, the Cub Scouts could learn to choose dishes from different ‘families’ of food to compose a balanced meal.”

“Not bad”, said Vladimir. “But generally speaking, life at camp is a way of learning simple rules of hygiene and rules of safety for carrying out activities. Have you got anything harder, Olga?”

“What about this one then? An objective in the intellectual development area for the Venture Scout section: ‘Show an inventive and creative mind by using your technical and manual skills’.”

“At camp, each patrol has to compete in the resourcefulness stakes to build practical and comfortable facilities”, Stefan suggested.

“Yes”, said Olga. “But it’s a bit run of the mill. Try to come up with something more original!”

“I’ve got something”, Eva piped up. “For ‘D-day’, each team has to collect all sorts of material to use in building, as quickly as possible, a craft that is capable of crossing a small river. The team that gets across first wins.”

“Now there’s something original and exciting”, said Olga. “Well done, Eva! What do you say, Stefan? Has this exercise answered your question?”

“Yes, now I see what it’s all about. In actual fact, what we have to do is to train unit leaders to use their imagination, as we’ve just done, so that they can think up as many activities as possible that correspond to a given objective.”

“Careful, the professor put in. Everything you’ve just said is right, but there’s one essential limit to bear in mind.”

“What’s that?”

“Even if an activity has been carefully selected, you can’t ever be certain that it’s going to achieve a defined objective in all cases.”

“Why not?”

“Because each individual will experience the activity differently. He or she will put a greater or lesser amount of effort into it according to his or her interests and role in the group. In fact, the activity only counts in terms of the quantity and quality of the experiences that it opens up to each individual.”

“Does that mean that everything we’ve said is unworkable?” Stefan asked.

“Not at all! Your approach is good. But it has to be rounded off with an evaluation that takes account of the each young person’s interests during the activity, his or her personal contribution and how the experience encountered has changed him or her.”

“And how should we go about this evaluation?”

“Basically by observing each young person while they are involved in the activity. What’s more, observation is essential to encourage the leaders to be creative as far as activities are concerned. If they learn to observe the young people, they’ll be able to assess the impact that activities have on them and will therefore be encouraged to look for activities that are likely to arouse greater interest and offer the young people a richer experience.”

“I think”, Olga replied, “that we need to launch a major wave of creativity and inventiveness. This should encourage all leaders who run activities, as well as the young people, to share their ideas, creations and experiences in relation to activities. We need to compile a list that’s always being added to, where you can find hundreds of ideas for activities to do with some educational objective or another.”

“That’s the idea of the resource centre”, Vladimir commented.

“We could compile an electronic database,” Stefan suggested, “containing a lot of activity handouts listed according to the different educational objectives and the different age sections. It could be made available to everyone on the Internet.”

“Would you know how to go about doing that, Stefan?”

“I think it’s altogether possible, but the first step would be to carefully define the different parts of an activity handout.”

“Well, let’s do just that”, said Eva, heading towards the board. “I’ll take the notes. Let me have your ideas.”

“A title”, said Olga.

“A reference code,” added Stefan, “indicating what age section the activity is designed for and what area of development it concerns in the main: physical, intellectual, social, affective, etc.”

“In what setting it can take place: outside, indoors, on irregular terrain or a level surface”, suggested Vladimir.

“The number of participants”, Eva added.

“A description of the activity...”

“How to prepare it...”

“The necessary equipment...”

“Hang on! Not so fast!” Eva complained.

“What educational objectives the activity corresponds to...”

“And how to evaluate its success!”

“OK. I think we’ve got the basics”, said Eva, reading back over what she’d written. “Now let’s think about how we can go about publishing as many of these sheets as possible.”

“By setting up an interactive system with the unit leaders and young people”, Stefan suggested.

“How exactly?”

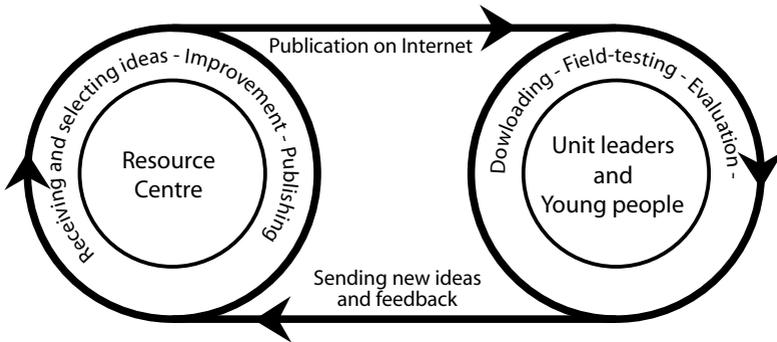
Stefan headed for the board this time and drew two circles aligned horizontally.

“So on the left you’ve got the resource centre, and on the right all the unit leaders and young people. What you have to do is create a two-way flow.”

He drew an arrow going from the circle on the right to the one on the left.

“The unit leaders and the Scouts themselves are encouraged to send activity ideas to the resource centre. The resource centre team selects the best ideas and the rest are sent back to their authors to be developed further. On the basis of the selected ideas, activity handouts are prepared, which are saved in the database and published on the Internet. The unit leaders and Scouts can download them, test them, evaluate them and send their feedback to the resource centre.”

Stefan displayed his diagram:



“Fantastic! It’s a real activity-producing machine that you’re suggesting there, Stefan.”

“A Scouting spinning machine”, Olga added.

“Yes”, said Eva. “But how do we actually organise this resource centre? What skills and roles will it take?”

“We need people with skills in the various main activity areas”, Stefan put forward, “like outdoor activities, expressive activities, manual activities, etc.”

“And who are familiar with the capabilities and interests of young people at different ages”, Vladimir added.

“As well as people able to write the handouts, lay them out and illustrate them.”

“Internet experts...”

“And above all people who are able to figure out the relationship between activities and educational objectives”, Olga concluded.

“Do we have friends with such skills?” Eva asked.

“I think so”, Stefan replied. “I can suggest a few names.”

“Stefan, you can be the kingpin of this resource centre. It’s a key element for building the new kind of association that we’re dreaming of. We’re counting on you!”



XIII. Section Methods

Saturday, 2 January, 15.00 hours

A long suspension bridge crossed the broad motionless river. It was the ‘no-man’s-land’ between the two customs houses. On either side of the bridge, a colossal stream of vehicles of every kind — cars, coaches and lorries — stretched as far as the eye could see. Everything was grey: the sky, the vast foggy plain, the river and the vehicles, gleaming under the halos of the headlights.

“You always have to wait for several hours”, said Stefan.

He had parked his uncle’s car, a clapped-out Lada, a couple of hundred metres from the border and was watching the vehicles through his binoculars.

“I can’t see them...”

“You’re the one who’ll end up being spotted!” exclaimed Vladimir.

“Hey, calm down ‘comrade’! We live in a democratic country now.”

“Democratic or otherwise, it’s always a bit dubious to survey a border through binoculars!”

“Hang on! I think I can see them. You did say a yellow van, didn’t you?”

“Yes, bright yellow, with Belgian number plates — red numbers and letters on a white background.”

“I’ve spotted them! Two people in the cab, a young woman and an enormous bloke.”

“That’s Manu.”

“Your Manu is heading for the customs house with the car papers. He’s huge!”

“Let me see.”

Vladimir took the binoculars from Stefan and adjusted the focus. He had a clear view of the Belgian giant, who was talking to a customs officer.

“They’re going back to the van... The customs officer is checking the load.”

“Good. So we have about another 30–45 minutes to wait. There’s plenty of time for a coffee. Are you coming?”

“Are you sure?”

“Absolutely! There’ll be stacks of papers to check and stamp in several different offices for importing the goods; passports and visas to check... We may be a democratic country nowadays, but the bureaucracy remains. And bureaucracy is never in a hurry; it’s got all the time in the world... Come on, a coffee will do us good. My feet are frozen.”

Stefan was already heading towards one of the many huts that had sprung up near to the border and sold sandwiches, drinks, cigarettes, currency, etc. Vladimir caught up with Stefan, who had stopped to let a huge, badly tuned Bulgarian lorry belching out thick diesel fumes go past. They went into the overheated shed, which was full to bursting and pushed their way through a cloud of cigarette smoke to the bar.

“What do you want?” Stefan asked.

“It’s a toss up between a coffee and a gas mask.”

“Start with a coffee; you can do without the gas mask if you hold your breath for a minute.”

“Maybe you’re right. I’ll give it a try.”

The coffees were strong and bitter. Vladimir put a few lumps of sugar into his cup.

“I hear that Koncewicz has convened a general assembly”, Stefan uttered between two mouthfuls of coffee.

“When for?”

“Saturday, 6 March... that leaves us just enough time to get our friends together to prepare our counterattack.”

“Jane from the European Office is coming to meet Koncewicz at the beginning of February. With the agreement of Piotr and Eva, she wants to try and bring about a settlement.”

“What’s the betting that Koncewitz will refuse to negotiate. He’s got what he wanted – control of the association – and he’ll never relinquish it!”

The two friends remained silent, lost in their thoughts. Stefan swallowed a last mouthful of coffee, put his cup down and took out some coins, which he placed on the counter.

“Let’s go! We mustn’t miss them.”

Outside the bar they were greeted by a fine, cold and unpleasant drizzle. Stefan turned up the collar on his jacket and said:

“I’ve also got some good news, you know.”

“Is good news possible at this time”, Vladimir asked wearily.

“Judge for yourself: the town council has agreed to give us new premises.”

“You’re kidding; really?”

“Absolutely! It’s the old party offices... Independence Square, you see where I mean?”

“Wow! But that’s great, Stefan! I can hardly believe it... There’s even a small park, if my memory serves me right...”

“Yes, but hold on, don’t get too excited! The building has been empty for ages and might be demolished. It’s a temporary arrangement and we have to discuss the terms before agreeing.”

“What terms?”

“You don’t think I could have asked for the use of the house on behalf of the Scout association, do you? Koncewitz would have cornered it. So I said I needed it to accommodate the ‘Network for Education and Training’ that I’d set up with my friends.”

“What are you on about!”

“Think about it, Vladimir. If we want to resist Koncewitz’s takeover of the association, we must have a legal basis... even if it’s only as somewhere to take delivery of the computer equipment that Manu is bringing. So I’m proposing to create a production and publishing cooperative, the ‘NET’, the ‘Network for

Education and Training'. I've got the statutes in my pocket. You're one of the co-founders with Eva and Olga... and me of course."

"And you're telling us just like that?"

Stefan grabbed the lapels of Stefan's old leather coat and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Vladimir, if we want to escape the clutches of Koncewitz, we need to move fast, don't we? We don't have time to scheme. In any case, we won't do anything without your agreement. It's a proposal, that's all. Let's go and shelter in the car; it's starting to get rather too wet here."

Stefan moved towards the car at a pace. Vladimir joined him there, waited for him to open the door, and slumped down in the seat. His glasses were covered in droplets of rain. He took a handkerchief out of his pocket and started to wipe them.

"So," he said, "you've drafted the statutes of an association or company, or whatever your 'NET' is, and you've negotiated with the council for use of a house, without even talking to us about it!"

Stefan tensed his hands on the steering wheel:

"Whoa, slow down, Vladimir! Nothing's been decided yet. It's only a proposal, OK?"

"A proposal? And do you know what I think of your proposal?" Vladimir yelled.

Stefan gave Vladimir a worried and exasperated look.

Vladimir slapped him hard on the shoulder and exclaimed:

"It's a brilliant idea, Stefan, quite brilliant! It's just what we need!"

In a fit of laughter, the two friends clasped each other and slapped one another on the back.

"Hey!" Vladimir shouted suddenly, "The van – it's over there!"

Stefan turned round just in time to see the yellow van go by. He turned the key in the ignition excitedly. The Lada's engine gave a start, then remained lifeless, despite the promptings of the starter.

“Hurry up, Stefan, we’re going to lose them”, Vladimir urged impatiently.

“Calm down! If I flood the engine, we’re done for.”

Stefan forced himself to wait a couple of minutes before turning the key again. This time, the old Lada snorted, spat out a cloud of black smoke, then moved off.

“You see, said Stefan, you mustn’t rush old ladies.”

“They’re stopping at the bar!”

The yellow van was indeed turning to park right in front of the bar. Vladimir got out of the car. Stefan switched off the engine with a grumble and followed him. Manu, barely out of the van, let out a yell of delight on seeing Vladimir and hugged him. Then he crushed Stefan’s hand when Vladimir introduced him and he in turn introduced Doriane, a young woman with laughing eyes.

“Doriane is our national leader for the Scout section”, he said.

Vladimir and Stefan wished her a warm welcome.

“Do you want something to drink? Coffee? A beer?” asked Vladimir.

“No, we were actually looking for a phone so that we could call you. We’d better be on our way. It’s getting on and we have to unload all of the equipment. Where are we going?”

Stefan glanced at Vladimir and replied:

“To our association’s new headquarters. We’ll drive slowly and you can follow.”

Doriane and Manu climbed back into the van, while Stefan and Vladimir went back to their car.

“Do Eva and Olga know about the ‘association’s new headquarters?’” asked Vladimir.

“I phoned them yesterday to tell them. They should be over there at this very minute with a team of my Rovers to do some cleaning. Some rooms can be used as they are.”

“In other words, I’m the last to know!” Vladimir uttered.

Stefan turned the key in the ignition and the engine started up after a few hiccups.

“Hey, there’s no need to get upset. We wanted to surprise you, that’s all. Are they behind us?”

Vladimir half turned round and saw the yellow van through the rear window.

“Yup, they’re with us. Let’s go!”



They reached the capital without any problem after a couple of hours on the road. Stefan headed for the town centre, checking that Manu was still following. After winding their way through the narrow streets of the old town, they came to Independence Square. Several streets converged onto a roundabout, the centre of which was graced with a collection of hundred-year-old linden trees. The square was surrounded by some small buildings dating from the end of the nineteenth century as well as a large abandoned house at the end of a small fallow park.

“It’s there”, said Stefan. “Can you go and open the gate, Vladimir?”

Still a bit annoyed at having been the last to be told, Vladimir had barely said a word during the car journey. But now, pushing the old rusty gate, which opened with a creak, he couldn’t help feeling a kind of amazement at seeing the old sleepy residence. It had something of the baroque style about it, no doubt built in the 1920s. Rounded steps, flanked by two small stone lions, led up to the main entrance, which was sheltered by a porch sitting on two columns. On either side of the porch, the façade was pierced with two large windows. The roof contained two dormer windows, which lit the attic. Despite looking visibly neglected, the house exuded an air of harmony and nobleness.

Vladimir moved out of the way to let through the Lada and the van, which then parked in front of the porch. Eva and Olga appeared at a first-floor window, smiled and waved to the new arrivals in a gesture of welcome. They were wearing boiler suits and headscarves.

Manu, Doriane, Vladimir and Stefan went up the steps and under the porch, where they were soon met by Olga and Eva, accompanied by half a dozen male and female Rovers. After introductions, handshakes and hugging and kissing, the tour of the house began.

Olga and Eva were highly enthusiastic.

“This is where the reception and office will be... That will be perfect for the library and resource centre... Here’s the future meeting room... There’s even a kitchen, and this small room will be ideal as a dining room... We can put bedrooms on the first floor!”

Stefan tried to calm their enthusiasm:

“Calm down girls! Don’t forget that we only have temporary occupancy rights at the moment. We don’t even have a lease... And do you realise how much it would cost to renovate it all?”

“First of all, don’t call us ‘girls’”, Olga replied. “It’s most condescending! And I’m telling you, this house will be our association’s headquarters, whether you like it or not! We’ve adopted it and it us. Isn’t that so, Eva?”

“Definitely”, said Eva, removing her dusty headscarf. “Don’t you worry, Stefan. We’ll put this house to rights. We’re not afraid of work. Look, we’ve spent only ten hours here with the Rovers and you can already see the difference, can’t you?”

Stefan had to admit that the place had changed since his first visit. The wallpaper was still in tatters, many strips of parquet needed replacing and the whole place needed rewiring, but now that the rubble and rubbish had been removed, the floor swept and washed, the windows cleaned, and the light bulbs changed, the house did look in a good state and welcoming.

“There are no spots of damp on the walls”, Vladimir observed.

“The roof’s in good condition. We’ve taken a look at it”, said one of the Rovers, adding, when he saw Stefan’s black look, “We used ropes to be on the safe side.”

“We’re going to take care of the renovation work”, Olga continued. “You,” she added, prodding Stefan in the stomach with her index finger, “your role’s

to sort out the situation with the council and to get a proper lease in due form!”

Manu and Doriane laughed heartily as Vladimir translated what was being said.

“Doriane and I have taken a fortnight off, so we could help you. With the help of some of the Rovers, I could see to the wiring.”

Eva thanked Manu very much and added:

“We’ll organise a leaders’ meeting to take advantage of the visit of Jane from the European Office. We’ll have to set up a meeting room.”

“There might be too many of us. We’d better ask for a room at the town hall”, said Stefan.

“The first thing we need to do is to set up an office for ourselves, with a desk and phone. That’s vital for communicating with the local groups”, Olga added.

“I’ll install a computer and modem for you”, Manu put in. “We’ll have to work flat out all week to get everything ready. Who’s available?”

“It’s the university holidays this week”, said one of the Rovers. “So we’re free — no problem.”

“I’m still unemployed”, added Vladimir. “So I’m available.”

“Perfect! Let’s get down to work. We need to unload the van”, said Manu.



Friday, 8 January, 18.15 hours

Stefan was coming back from a building site at the wheel of a Water Board van. It had been a hard day, and the two workmen with him were dosing in the heat of the cabin. Stefan wound down the window to let in some fresh air. The glare of a headlight in his rear-view mirror caught his attention. It was a motorbike overtaking at high speed, only to then cut back in right in front of the van, forcing Stefan to slow down.

“What an idiot!”

Another motorbike came past and joined the first, forcing Stefan to slow down even more. The motorcyclists were wearing black leather biker suits and full-face black helmets.

“Who are these clowns?”

The workmen were wide-awake by now. Stefan suddenly made the connection with the motorcyclist who had attacked Eva. He braked a bit and dropped down to second gear. One of the bikers removed something from his pocket and made a brusque gesture in the direction of the truck.

“Watch out!” yelled one of the workmen.”

A tin can struck the windscreen, which darkened all of a sudden. Stefan braked sharply and the truck swerved before coming to a halt in the middle of the road. Stefan and his colleagues got out of the vehicle. The motorbikes were already accelerating and disappeared at the next junction.

“What have they got against us, those idiots?”

“More hooligans!”

Half of the truck’s windscreen was covered in a black, sticky liquid.

“Motor oil”, Stefan diagnosed. He took a cloth from the cabin and set about cleaning the windscreen. The drivers of the cars behind were getting impatient and sounding their horns.

“Let’s go. It’s nothing”, said Stefan.

He got back behind the wheel, waited until his colleagues were back in the truck, and set off.

“It’s incredible! I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Stefan looked at his colleague, an old, grey-haired workmen, who was visibly shaken by the incident.

“You see, Stefan. That’s the bad side of westernisation. We’ll be overrun by louts. The police don’t do anything any more.”

Stefan didn’t reply. The Water Board’s garage was in sight. Stefan slowed

down and checked the rear-view mirror; the motorbikes had gone. He indicated, turned and drove into the garage.

“Stefan, phone!”

He was barely out of the truck when the secretary called out to him from the door of her office. He took the metal staircase four steps at time to reach the office, which was located on a sort of mezzanine over the garage, and grabbed the phone.

“Hi, Stefan. It’s Vladimir!”

“Is everything OK, Vladimir? No problems?”

“No, why?” Vladimir was surprised by the worried tone of his friend.

“Eh... no reason. I thought you were calling me because there was a problem.”

“No, everything’s fine. I’m phoning you from a café not far from the house. The work is going well and we’ve decided to have a little get-together this evening, a meal together to celebrate it. Will you join us?”

“OK, I’ll be there around 7.30. That gives me time to have a shower and get changed. Do you want me to bring anything?”

“No, there’s no need. We’ve got it all organised. Something else: Eva’s had a fax from the European Office — Jane’s coming on 4 February. She wants to meet us, and Koncewitz too. We’re going to make the most of it and get the local leaders together for a meeting.

“Yes, we’d already agreed to that. Listen, I’m in a bit of a rush. We’ll talk more later.”

“OK, see you in a while.”

Stefan hung up and headed for the cloakroom.



Something of a party atmosphere reigned at the house. Eva, assisted by the Rovers, had set up a dining room on the ground floor with trestle tables and folding chairs borrowed from the council. Crepe-paper chains and candles lent the room a cheerful and warm feel. When Stefan arrived, she was busy putting plastic cloths on the tables.

“Hi, Stefan! Nice to see you. Come on, I’ll show you round the house. It’s completely changed, you’ll see!”

Stefan let Eva lead the way. In the future office, Stefan, Manu and a Rover, Marija, an IT student, were bent over a computer.

“Stefan!” yelled Marija, “it’s all working. We’ll soon be connected to the Internet!”

Stefan went over to them, admiring the rewired electric circuits on the way. Manu greeted Stefan with a broad smile. The computer keyboard looked ridiculously small under his enormous hands.

“Manu and Doriane have done a great job”, said Vladimir. “Come and see the resource centre.”

In the next room, which was vast and well lit by French windows that opened out onto the small grounds, some of the Rovers were putting the programme committee documentation on the shelves they had just finished putting up. A computer had been set on a table against the wall.

“With this computer you’ll be able to create a documentation database and also produce educational and technical leaflets”, Manu explained. “We’re going to connect it to a printer and a small flat-bed scanner that I’ve brought. Later on, we’ll connect it to the Internet. I’ve also got a dozen or so other, older computers with modems for the local groups.”

“How did you manage to salvage all that?”

“I work in the IT department of a large bank. Every four or five years, the computers are replaced. They don’t usually know what to do with the equipment they no longer want. This year I managed to acquire some of it for you. And there you go!”

“Great!”

“And the kitchen? Have you seen the kitchen?” a Rover put in.

The whole group led Stefan into the kitchen. A lovely smell of stew was escaping from a large pot simmering on a gas burner set up on one of the trestle tables. Two Rovers were busy setting out snacks attractively on platters.

“We’ve brought our camping equipment”, one of the Rovers explained.

“Well done! It smells absolutely delicious”, Stefan remarked.

“Your Rovers deserve to be congratulated. They’ve really worked hard, and always with a smile”, Eva added.

“Olga isn’t here?”

“We’re expecting her. She should be here any minute, with her husband. We can start eating — they can join us when they get here.”

The entire group gathered in the dining room, fruit juice was handed round, and Eva was about to propose a toast, when Olga and Ondrej’s Skoda pulled up in front of the steps.

“Here are the twins!” Vladimir yelled.

Irma and Sarah rushed into Vladimir’s arms, followed by Olga, her arms full with a huge bouquet of flowers, and Ondrej, who was carrying a box of cakes.

“Hello everyone”, said Olga. “Here, Eva, I’ve brought some flowers for the party. We’ve had a terrible journey. Thank goodness it’s the school holidays this week! We’ve also brought a small dessert.”

Eva hugged Olga, Ondrej and the twins, and made the introductions. After another tour of the house, punctuated with questions and laughter from the twins, everyone sat down around the large table.

“You’ve done an amazing job”, Olga said. “Well done! Manu and Doriane, your help has been so valuable. How lovely to see you here!”

Eva raised her glass:

“I’d like to make a toast to our friendship and to the success of our plans. A few days ago we were in despair. Today that’s all changed. Thanks to each and

every one of you, and especially to Manu and Doriane, who have travelled so far to help us.”

After the applause, it was Stefan’s turn to speak:

“Today, I met the deputy mayor, who is responsible for property, and he confirmed that the council didn’t quite know what to do with this house and that if we were willing to pay a moderate rent, then a lease could be arranged in no time.”

Stefan saw Eva’s smile disappear.

“I know we don’t have any money, he added. But let me continue. I mentioned the resource centre and the computers to the deputy mayor, who was most interested and proposed an arrangement. If we organise an Internet club here one day a week for young people, he’s prepared to let us off the rent and to pay for the installation and cost of the necessary phone lines.”

“Superb”, the Rovers exclaimed applauding. Eva, Vladimir and Olga remained silent.

“What’s the matter?” Stefan asked.

“There’s no doubt that it’s a brilliant idea”, Eva replied. “But, Stefan, you know perfectly well that we already have a big job on our hands to get everything done that we have to do. We need to do some thinking before we take on anything else.”

“Hang on! It’s not a question of us having to do it. I’m sure the Rovers would be willing to manage and run a cybercafé themselves, as a service to the community.”

“And what about the equipment, the computers?” Olga put in. “I hope you’re not thinking of using the ones that Manu has brought us; they’re reserved for our network with the groups, aren’t they?”

Manu, for whom Vladimir had translated the conversation, asked to speak.

“Personally, I think Stefan’s idea is very interesting. If you want to get the support of the local authorities, you should open Scouting to the community and offer services, which are aimed not only at members. Organising a cybercafé or Internet club for local youngsters would be a fantastic project.

We could help you find equipment and financial support.”

Vladimir translated what Manu said, then spoke himself:

“Eva, I understand why you’re hesitating. We’ve got so much on our plates already and not much to do it with. But I don’t think we have any choice. We need this house to realise our plans. And obviously there’s a price to pay; nothing’s free. But if the Rovers agree to take charge of the cybercafé project, I think it could work.”

“OK, listen”, Eva replied. “I admit that it’s an interesting idea. It’s also true that we need to win the support of the council. All I ask is that we don’t charge blindly into this new project. We need to think, to weigh up the pros and cons, and do some planning before taking a final decision.”

“If I may”, interrupted one of the Rovers, “We need to start eating if you don’t want to eat burnt offerings!”

While the plates of snacks were being passed around, and amid the hubbub of the individual conversations that were going on, Stefan thought about that afternoon’s incident with the bikers. He had not said anything to the group because he had no proof that it was connected with their situation, but he could not help having a bad feeling about it.



After the meal, and while the Rovers, Ondrej and the twins were improvising an evening of games and singing, Vladimir called Eva, Olga and Stefan to a meeting with Manu and Doriane in the office.

“Manu,” Vladimir began, “do you recall the discussion we had at Gilwell about your section structure?”

“Yes, of course I do!”

“I’d like you to explain what progress you’ve made in developing your section methods.”

“Oh, we haven’t finished yet! Our plan is to produce new handbooks for the unit leaders in each section. At the moment we’re working on the handbooks for the Cub Scout and Scout sections.”

“But what approach are you using?”

“We’ve had some support from the European Office and the Youth Programme Service of the World Scout Bureau, and they’ve recommended quite a logical approach.”

“Which is?”

“Well, the section methods are merely adaptations of the general Scout method to the characteristics of each age range. So you have to have a clear idea of the Scout method to begin with.”

“Could you present your ideas? I’ll translate as you go along.”

“You know, I’m a man of action rather than a theoretician, but I’ll try. Well, the first thing to bear in mind is that the Scout method is based on two fundamental relationships: between the young people and the adults on the one hand, and between the educational objectives and the activities on the other.”

“Yes, that’s the Scouting diamond!”

“Exactly. Sophie talked about it at Gilwell. If you remember, she explained how the adult-young people relationship is special in Scouting. It’s characterised by the fact that the adult leader is on the same footing as the young people, strives to understand them and allows them to assume responsibilities and take decisions. The leader doesn’t put him- or herself on a pedestal and doesn’t create an impassable distance between him- or herself and the young people. The leader views young people in a positive light and pays more attention to their qualities than to their faults. He or she knows that if they develop their qualities to the utmost, their faults can be curbed.”

“Yes. That’s Baden-Powell’s approach: don’t repress but express.”

“That’s right. Well, this attitude of the adult — who creates a positive relationship with the young people — is fundamental. It’s absolutely vital for applying the Scout method.”

“And the relationship between the educational objectives and the activities is also one of the essential characteristics of Scouting. It’s defined as an active method, learning by doing. We’ve already looked into this.”

“So these two relationships — young people-adult and activities-educational objectives — form the Scouting ‘diamond’. Now, if we explore the content of the diamond, we can see how the method works.”

“We’re all ears.”

“Well first of all, it’s based on group life. It’s through the social relationships within a group that Scouting reaches each young person. Scouting can’t function without group cooperation. You can’t do Scouting on your own, in isolation. That’s why the Scout method can’t really be applied until children are old enough to be able to cooperate within a group. In Scouting, the way that the group operates is determined by what’s traditionally known as the patrol or team system. Can you tell me how you define this in your association?”

“Er, well basically as a system of working in small groups which allows everyone to communicate easily with everyone else.”

“Yes, that’s the first approach. But more profoundly, the team system is a system for involving young people in decision-making. To understand it properly, you need to compare it with the way a democratic state is organised. Every democracy has local communities. If you like, they’re the grassroots groups where neighbouring people share the same environment and same living conditions. They know each other, communicate easily and are spontaneously supportive towards each other. In the Scout unit, these grassroots groups are the teams, or sixes (in the Cubs) or patrols (in the Scouts). The teams really need to have all the characteristics of natural groupings for the Scout method to fully work. They have to be ‘natural’ and not ‘artificial’; in other words, they have to bring young people together according to their natural inclinations. That means that the members of a team choose each other. The teams can’t be formed arbitrarily by the adult leaders. Each team has to elect a leader from among its members — a member of the team who’s responsible for helping it work and representing it. Here again, it’s essential for the team representative to be freely chosen by his or her peers, the other members of the team, and not imposed by the adult leaders.”

Stefan, who had not said a word until then, entered the discussion:

“But isn’t it a bit dangerous to let young people choose their own teams? You could end up with a totally unbalanced situation with all the older ones in the same team. And what about those who aren’t accepted into any team?”

Manu listened carefully to Vladimir’s translation and replied:

“I’m not saying that the adult leader has to passively accept the young people’s choices. He or she has to analyse them and, if need be, make the youngsters aware of the problems raised by their decisions.

“Then”, Stefan went on, “it’s up to the adult leaders to intervene if they feel that Scouting’s values are not being respected — for example, if a young person gets elected as the team leader by bullying the others or otherwise imposing him- or herself with force.”

“Of course!”

“So what you’re saying”, Eva came in, “is that, apart from a few extreme cases when adult intervention is indispensable, it’s better to let the young people decide for themselves on the composition and leadership of the teams. And there are two reasons for that: firstly, to allow natural affinities to be expressed so that natural groupings form based on friendship and mutual support; and secondly, to allow the young people to go through the sometimes difficult experience of building a community and to learn from the problems they encounter.”

“That’s it in a nutshell!” Manu agreed. “But I’d add one key point — giving the teams the freedom to organise themselves according to their natural inclinations is the only way of ensuring that they are primary groups.”

“Primary groups?”

“The primary group concept was developed by an American sociologist, Charles Horton Cooley. He defines family and childhood playgroups as primary groups. A primary group has the following characteristics: a limited number of members (five to eight), which enables each person to have a clear perception of the other members and permits close interpersonal relationships; relationships based on affinity being established between the

members (what they like, dislike, feel indifferent towards); the division of labour within the group; and a high frequency of meetings, because of the adhesion of group members to common goals.”

“So, if we want Scout teams to be primary groups, they have to be limited to five to eight members, be allowed to organise themselves according to natural affinity, be invited to share out the roles needed for the team to function, and be given the possibility to meet frequently.”

“That’s right, and that’s how two essential aspects can be achieved: firstly, a primary group is characterised by a strong feeling of loyalty among its members and a shared feeling of belonging based on mutual care and identification. And secondly, the group develops a micro-culture with its own values, norms, language and traditions.”

“But what does the term ‘primary’ mean?”

“That’s the most interesting part. Cooley describes these groups as ‘primary’ because they develop the moral ideals of the individual. They constitute the essential reference for an adult’s moral and social life. A number of sociological studies have demonstrated the influence of the primary group on individuals; for example, observing teams of workers for several years revealed that the productivity of the team increased as relationships among the members strengthened, irrespective of pay increases or decreases. Studies conducted during the war showed that the main reasons why a soldier fights have nothing to do with hatred towards the enemy, nor with ideological beliefs, but stem from the desire to defend the members of a small group of friends, and the desire to fulfil their expectations. Some other significant facts have also come to light; for example, during electoral campaigns, the key factor that influences the way someone votes is not the action of the mass media (TV, radio), but the reciprocal influence of the members of primary groups.”

“That’s exactly what Sophie told us at Gilwell”, said Vladimir. “Young people’s behaviour is influenced above all by the peer group; that’s to say, by the interpersonal relationships within the group.”

“And friendship within the peer group is the main reason why young people stay in Scouting. Young people are eager to belong to a peer group

because it's a way for some of their needs to be met, particularly during adolescence: the need to belong, the need to be recognised and respected — satisfied through friendship, sharing and cooperating with others; the need for freedom — satisfied through being able to make choices and take decisions as a group; the need for stimulation and entertainment — satisfied through being able to laugh, play and take part in a range of interesting and amusing activities.”

“I've got a problem with that”, Stefan put in.

“What's that?”

“You say that it's in the teams, thanks to the friendship and confidence developed by the youngsters, that the educational values of Scouting are adopted. But if that's so, how can the adult leaders influence the process and make sure that it moves in the right direction? After all, a peer group can also have a negative influence.”

“Good question, Stefan! Peer influence does in fact happen naturally. It's often positive, but it can be negative. In youth gang culture, we see how risky behaviour is caused by group pressure. So it's a question of knowing how to steer the group's influence in a positive way and use it for the best. That's where a key figure comes into the picture — the ‘team leader’. He or she's one of the team members, who's been elected by his or her peers.”

“How do you view that role?”

“It certainly can't be defined in the same way for every age range. The role of the Cub sixer is different from that of the Scout patrol leader, or that of the team leader in the Venture Scouts or Rovers. But generally speaking, we can say that it comprises three dominant characteristics: a team leader is, to a greater or lesser degree, a ‘mentor’, a ‘mediator’ and a ‘tutor’.”

“Whoa!”

“Let me explain. A mentor is someone who leads someone else in a positive direction by listening, being attentive, and showing empathy. As a mentor, the team leader has to show an interest in others. He or she shouldn't occupy this post only out of personal ambition, but to support and serve peers.”

“Doesn't that imply that team leaders will be older than the rest?”

“Maybe. Or at least they’ll already be more mature. Team leaders also have to be mediators. On the one hand, as their team’s representative vis-à-vis the adult leaders and other team leaders and, on the other hand, within their team, by helping to find solutions, resolving conflicts and making joint decisions. And finally, team leaders have to be tutors; in other words, capable of passing on skills to the others or helping them acquire them.”

“Don’t you think it’s too hard a role for a young person?”

“A sixer can be responsible for welcoming and supporting a new Cub joining the pack (mentor role), or for preparing and running a sixes’ council for a quarter of an hour to evaluate an activity (mediator role), or of teaching a ‘tenderfoot’ how to tie a reef knot (tutor function). Of course, these three roles have to be adapted to the capacities of each age range. They’ll be developed to the full at the end of the Scouting trail, in the Rovers. They’re at the heart of the peer education concept developed to a large extent by Scouting, but which is practised nowadays in numerous non-formal educational programmes, for example in the area of health education or youth crime prevention.”

“In any case,” Vladimir interjected, “the adult leaders have to support and assist the team leaders in their role.”

“Indeed. But the team system doesn’t boil down to the existence of teams and the role of the team leaders. It also involves elements that govern interaction among the teams. The first such element is the ‘Scout Law’. If you like, it’s the basic law of the small democracy constituted by the Scout unit. It expresses the values that every member of the group adheres to. It’s used as a reference to evaluate group life and to improve it by establishing collective rules.”

“What’s always struck me about the Scout Law”, Vladimir remarked, “is that it’s altogether positive. Nothing’s prohibited.”

Vladimir opened his notebook and rapidly flicked through a few pages:

“Hang on! I noted down a quotation from Baden-Powell which corresponds very well to what we’re talking about. Here it is. In January 1916, he wrote in the ‘Headquarters Gazette’:

Education must be positive, not negative — active, not passive. For example, the Scout Law in each of its details says: 'A Scout does' this, that, or the other. Authorities have come along to improve the Scout Law, and not recognising the active side of it, have changed it to the reverse — a series of 'Don't's'. 'Don't', of course, is the distinguishing feature and motto of the old-fashioned system of repression, and is a red rag to a boy. It is a challenge to him to do."

“The Scout Law as proposed by Baden-Powell is neither moralistic nor repressive”, Manu added. “And in this very interesting quote — which I thank you for having noted, Vladimir — we see that, even back in 1916, Baden-Powell warned against certain deviations and hidebound attitudes that were already leading Scouting towards the errors of what B.-P. called the ‘traditional educational system’.”

“And the Promise?” Olga asked.

“Well, the Promise marks a young person’s personal adherence to Scouting’s values. Through the Promise, a young person shows that he or she has understood the values expressed in the Scout Law and promises to ‘do his or her best’ to respect them not only in Scouting but also in everyday life.”

“Fair enough”, Stefan resumed. “That’s all very interesting, but I’d like you to expand on what you started to tell us about how the ‘team system’ is not only a system of working in small groups but also a system where young people are involved in decision-making.”

“OK. The teams are the first organisational level. But you then have to generate interaction among the teams, in other words, move to a second organisational level, that of the unit.”

“That’s all a bit too theoretical for me. Can you be more concrete?”

“All right. In every country, there are grassroots communities like villages and parishes. But to organise democratic life at national level, that’s not enough. You have to add legislative and executive organs. The legislative power decides on the broad lines, evaluates society and establishes rules and laws. In a democratic state, it’s the parliament that plays this role. And in a Scout unit, legislative authority is exercised by the ‘unit assembly’, which

gathers all the Scouts and adult leaders together regularly, once a month, for example. That's where the major decisions are taken concerning group life. They choose their activities together, based on suggestions made by each team; they evaluate their activities and group life in the light of the Scout Law; they decide on common rules designed to improve interaction among the Scouts and among the patrols and, consequently, to improve group life."

"And the executive power?"

"In a democracy, that role is played by the government. Well, the government of the Scout unit is the unit council. This body is composed of the representatives of each team and the adult leaders. There's one important thing that you should note in relation to this. In Scouting, organisational decisions are not taken by the adult leaders but by the unit council. For example, the unit council decides on the calendar of activities, fund management, division of responsibilities, etc."

"So you could describe a Scout unit as a sort of little 'republic' or youth democracy with its fundamental law — the Scout Law; grassroots communities — the teams; parliament — its unit assembly; and government — the unit council?"

"Spot on!"

"So then, what's the role of the adult leaders?"

"They're advisors, facilitators. They're also there as guarantors vis-à-vis the adult world and the Movement."

"What do they guarantee?"

"First of all, the physical, moral and emotional well-being of the children, and also respect for Scouting's mission."

"I'm finding your presentation fascinating", said Eva. "What do you say, Olga? You haven't said a word yet!"

"I've been listening with great interest", Olga replied. "I'd just like to make a comment and ask a question. My comment is that if the team system is a tool for educating young people for democracy, you can understand clearly why Scouting was banned by all successive totalitarian regimes."

“Very true. And what’s your question?”

“It’s this: how come that in the tradition of our Movement — I’m going back to the pre-war years — the team system hasn’t always been presented in this way?”

“How did it use to be presented?”

“Like a military-type system where the adult leaders played the role of superior officers — the unit leader was even called ‘Commander’ — and where the team leaders played the role of NCOs. Great emphasis was placed on the leader’s role, and the unit council — which was called the ‘Patrol Leaders Council’ — was, for the most part, only the time when the adult leaders passed on their instructions to the team leaders.”

“Well, all I can say is that it was a deviation from our Founder’s vision. Re-read Baden-Powell’s writings, which are quite illuminating on the subject.

“Before the war,” Eva interjected, “our societies were governed by a very conservative and authoritarian system. It’s hardly surprising that B.-P.’s ideas, which came from an old democracy, ended up somewhat contorted.”

“That was the influence of ‘certain authorities’ representing the ‘traditional educational system’, as B.-P. put it”, Vladimir added.

Olga had left the room for a minute. She came back carrying a tray loaded with a teapot, cups and cakes:

“You know, I think it’s pointless criticising our elders. Their Scouting was influenced by their way of thinking. And ours probably is too.”

“Yes,” Vladimir said, “but it’s important to know the difference between the original principles of Scouting and the way they were interpreted in the past. It would be disastrous to apply authoritarian pre-war mindsets to today’s young people. Our ‘friend’ Koncewitz is a good example of what that leads to.”

“You’re right, Vladimir, as long as you remember that we also have our own mindsets, which could lead us off on different tangents, like ‘laissez-faire’ for example. Haven’t you noticed that some of our leaders tend to avoid suggesting anything to the young people and to expect everything to come from them?”

“We’ve got the same problem in Belgium”, said Manu. “However, good training on how to practise the ‘team system’ helps unit leaders avoid both authoritarianism and ‘laissez-faire’, because the roles and responsibilities of everyone — the young people and the adults — are clearly defined through the different group ‘institutions’: the teams, team council, unit council and unit assembly.”

“We need to talk a bit more about leader training, but right now, let’s take a little break.”

As quick as a flash, Stefan cleared the desk of the folders that were cluttering it, so that Olga could put the tray down. Then he handed round the cups and served the hot black tea and cakes.

“How are you going to organise your work on the section methods?” Doriane asked.

“We’ve already set up a working group for each of the four sections,” Eva replied, “and we’re going to organise a joint working seminar when Jane’s here next month. But we want to give them a common reference framework, based on the general elements of the Scout method. That’s why this evening’s discussion is very useful for us. Manu’s presentation has given me lots of new ideas.”

“Wait, he hasn’t finished!” Vladimir piped in.

Manu nodded in agreement.

“I’d like to deal with the last two elements of the Scout method — outdoor life and the symbolic framework... unless you’re too tired...”

“I think you can continue”, confirmed Vladimir, after glancing around at his friends. “I’d like you to show us how all the elements of the Scout method adapt to the different age ranges.”

“I hope I’ll be able to, but don’t hesitate to interrupt me if you have any questions or if you think I’m wandering off the subject.”

“Don’t worry!”

“OK. Let’s start with outdoor life.”

“This was a core theme in Baden-Powell’s thinking”, Olga came in. “In his ‘Aids to Scoutmastership’, he even quotes the French writer Alexandre Dumas, who suggested banning young people from entering a town before the age of 12.”

“Returning to nature to regenerate man?” Stefan remarked.

“It was in the air around the start of the twentieth century”, Manu agreed. “Nature as a healthy environment where man could rediscover his own nature, far from the unwholesome fumes of urban civilisation. But there was something else: Baden-Powell said that nature was at the same time a *club*, a *laboratory* and a *temple*. A club, because it’s somewhere where a team, a ‘gang’ of friends, can meet and develop friendship in contact with nature. A laboratory, because nature is a place for discovering the laws of the universe, the phenomenon of life, how the ecosystem works, and so on. Young people can experience the fact that man is not outside nature but an integral part of it, and that he has to protect all of its elements to ensure his own survival. Nature, as B.-P. also said, is an open book from which man can learn the secrets of life and wisdom. Finally, nature is a temple where man can find, in creation, the hand of God. Outdoor life has a decisive impact on spiritual development by putting young people in touch with the wonders of creation, but according to B.-P., it’s also the best place for social education.”

“Yes, the story of Robinson Crusoe!” Stefan piped in.

“Robinson Crusoe?”

“We’ve already worked on this issue with our friend Professor Kessler when they organise a camp, Scouts create a little autonomous city in the great outdoors, with all the structure and services it needs to run, and where they can experience a true-life democracy.”

“Exactly! And that experience prepares them to become active and responsible citizens in the real city.”

“So, we’ve talked about outdoor life. That leaves the symbolic framework”, Stefan added. “It’s quite a new concept for me, and I’d like Manu to explain a bit what it’s all about.”

“A symbol is an object, which has certain characteristics that allow it to

represent an idea or a concept. Children start to use symbols when they're capable of using language — at around two years of age. One of their favourite activities is symbolic play.”

“Yes, we've already discussed this issue with the Professor too”, Olga interjected. “In symbolic play, a child uses symbols to explore situations or relationships through imagination. He or she identifies with characters. The child becomes a cowboy or an explorer.”

“Excellent! When I identify with someone, I want to acquire the characteristics of that model, to be as strong and intelligent as him or her. That encourages me to progress. Baden-Powell understood the force and interest of symbolic play. By inviting young people to become Scouts, he was inviting them to enter the exciting world of adventure. However, at the same time, he was offering them a framework of positive identification, which was capable of encouraging and supporting their development. Don't forever be a shy girl or boy stuck in a closed and over-protective environment, but become an explorer of the great outdoors who is bold, shows initiative, able to cope alone in any circumstances and to help others.”

“So the symbolic framework is rather like the fuel of the Scout method?”

“Yes. It's what gives young people the energy and motivation to progress.”

“But at the same time,” Stefan chipped in, “the symbolic framework in Scouting not only addresses each individual but is also a collective element.”

“You're right. For the group, it represents a common language, a common reference, which gives direction to all the group's institutions. So the symbolic framework strengthens the feeling of belonging to a community that is oriented towards common goals.”

“And the symbolic framework is different for each section, isn't it?” Stefan took up.

“Yes, of course! And now perhaps it's time to talk about how the Scout method is adapted for each section...”

“OK, fire away”, Vladimir agreed. “I've brought along a flipchart so that I can note everything down.”

Once the flipchart was set up, Manu took the marker pen that Eva was proffering and drew a table divided into five columns and six rows.

“Vladimir told me you intend to set up a four-section system.”

“Yes”, Eva confirmed. “Cubs from 7–11, Scouts from 11–15, Venture Scouts from 15–18 and Rovers from 18–21.”

Manu held the marker pen out to Vladimir:

“Can you write the names of the key elements of the Scout method in the first column, putting one element in each row: ‘Symbolic framework’, ‘Youth-adult relationship’, ‘Activities’, ‘Outdoor life’, ‘Team system’, ‘Promise and Law’...”

Vladimir did as Manu asked him.

“Right. Now, we’ll write the names of your sections at the top of each of the other four columns. Will you do that, Vladimir? Good. Our table’s ready. We’ll be able to work out how the elements of the method are adapted for each age range. We’ll start with the symbolic framework. To start with, Scouting was created for adolescents between 11 and 15 years of age, the first age range that Baden-Powell targeted, using, as a symbolic framework, identification with an explorer, a trapper: ‘being a Scout’. So let’s put that in the ‘Scout’ column. Vladimir, do you know why this symbolic framework of exploration is relevant for young adolescents?”

“Because it corresponds to the interests of this age?”

“More precisely, because it corresponds to the psychological characteristics of this age. They’re leaving childhood behind. Their bodies, their intelligence, their social relationships are changing; they’re seeking their identity; they’re attracted by the new world that’s revealing itself to them, but at the same time, they’re afraid of it; they feel like explorers on the edge of unknown territory.”

Stefan let out a little whistle of admiration.

“I’d never thought of that connection between the symbolic framework and, what would you call it... the psychology of each age range! What about the Rovers?”

“Wait! Let’s not forget the Cubs”, Olga interrupted.

“Your turn, Olga.” Doriane proposed. “How do you see the symbolic framework for the Cubs and its connection with the characteristics of that age group?”

“For the Cubs, it’s traditionally Rudyard Kipling’s Jungle Book...”

“Yes.”

“The Jungle Book story is about a child, Mowgli, who’s abandoned in a forest in India and who’s not only protected but also brought up by the animals.”

“So, how would you analyse that?”

“It’s a way of proposing Scouting to children. At that age, I think that socialisation is the key issue. They’re offered the opportunity to be part of a small group, the pack.”

“The free people of Seonee.”

“Yes, a people which is free because it has a law. And the question of law and of learning moral autonomy, is important for children. But, this people is also a large family characterised by a positive relationship between the children and the adults. When they listen to the story of Mowgli, children can understand what help they can expect from the adult leaders.”

“We can also see how the symbolic framework gives meaning to the pack’s institutions. The unit assembly in the Cubs corresponds to the ‘Council Rock’, the place where the wolves used to meet to assess the situation and take decisions together.”

“Perfect. We’ve dealt with the Cubs and the Scouts. Let’s move on to the Venture Scouts”, Manu suggested. “What’s the symbolic framework for this section?”

“Being a ‘Venturer’”, said Vladimir, “means taking the initiative, doing something you’ve never done before.”

“And why’s that important for adolescents?”

“Because they need to prove themselves, to affirm their identity, to be

recognised for their abilities. I think that the Scouts discover and explore, whilst the Venture Scouts are encouraged to build something new.”

“Yes”, Eva took over. “And I think that, at that age, an important theme is that of personal adventure: I want to measure my abilities and be recognised, so I’m going to try something new.”

“OK. Now to the last section, the Rovers.”

“This name is meaningful in itself”, Vladimir started. “At the Gilwell seminar, I wondered why so many associations seemed to have lost sight of this symbolic framework, which I thought corresponded perfectly to the psychology of older adolescents and young adults.”

“That’s true”, Stefan agreed. “At that age, young people really want to move, travel, discover other places, meet people from different countries and find out about their lives, their problems, their hopes and their values.”

“What’s more,” Olga added, “in many traditional cultures, young adults have to take to the road and travel, so that they grow in knowledge and wisdom before returning to take up their adult roles in their communities. This is how they find the way, the ‘road’, that they’ll decide to follow throughout their lives. Nowadays, with globalisation, this takes on a whole new meaning. It’s essential for young people to discover international relations, to learn to communicate with other cultures and to prepare themselves to be citizens of the world.”

“And there we have it”, said Manu, looking at the table that Vladimir was putting the finishing touches to. “Now, look. Can you see how the symbolic framework evolves from the Cubs to the Rovers?”

“Yes”, Stefan answered. “It moves gradually from the imaginary to reality, from the Jungle Book to discovering the world, from a limited space to something more vast.”

“Excellent”, Manu applauded. “You’ll see that a similar progression occurs in each row, for each of the elements of the method.”

“Okay,” said Olga, “now let’s go to adult-young people relationships. In the Cub section, the adult leaders give the children less freedom, less autonomy. The children need an adult presence and security. Their involvement in

decision-making is limited and the adults take the initiative and propose activities to meet the children's needs. But gradually the children are involved in choosing activities and establishing rules."

"In the Scout section," Doriane broke in, "the young people are often wavering between childhood and adolescence. They still need to feel secure, but the adults have to encourage them to be more autonomous. The teams are allowed to undertake some activities without adults being present."

"In the Venture Scout section," Stefan added, "the role of the adults is to open up to the young people fields of action and experience in real society. They have to encourage initiatives and put the young people in contact with other adults capable of contributing skills."

"You're right", Manu agreed. "That just leaves us with the Rover section."

"In my view, it's the section that has to prove that Scouting's educational objectives are really valid", said Vladimir.

"What do you mean exactly?"

"Well, it's the last stage in the Movement, the one that should achieve our final educational objectives. In my view, the credibility of Scouting is measured by its capacity to develop, year in, year out, a significant number of young men and women who have the motivation and skills to contribute actively to the development of society, by taking the necessary initiatives and responsibilities."

"I quite agree with Vladimir", Olga interjected. "Far too many of our local group leaders think that the role of the senior section is just to produce adult leaders for our units. If we followed their logic, Scouting would operate like a closed circuit, with the sole purpose of reproducing itself. I think our mission is rather to prepare responsible and active citizens who are capable of contributing to the development of society. So the Rover section, the last stage in our programme, should be more particularly oriented towards this goal."

"I quite agree with you," said Manu, "but what does that mean in concrete terms?"

"The adult leaders in this section have to encourage young people to take initiatives and try to give them as much responsibility as possible."

“You’re right, Olga”, Eva confirmed. “In this section, I think it’s not only a question of involving young people in decision-making, but of helping them to develop their initiative and leadership skills. The role of the adult leaders is to be advisors and trainers.”

“Now let’s go to activities”, Olga proposed. “A large proportion of activities, in the Cubs, are run by the adults and, generally speaking, the activities take place in a limited space and time. They have to be short and change often in order to fit with the children’s capacities and interests. Play and the imagination mean a great deal.”

Vladimir tried to write as fast as he could on the chart in order to follow what his friends were coming up with:

“Slow down! Give me time to note down what you’re saying...”

“In the Scout section, the activities last longer and start to have more to do with social reality”, Eva added. “Activities of discovery and community service start to appear alongside activities in which play and the imagination are still important.”

“That’s correct, Eva”, Manu said. “And since adolescents want to practise adult roles, the activities in the Venture Scout section have to take place, as far as possible, in a real social context and enable the young people to really bring their potential into play: mastering new technologies, serving the community, acquiring useful and recognised skills like communication techniques, problem resolution, conflict management, time management, project planning, etc.”

“Giving them the opportunity to do or try something they’ve never done before.”

“Precisely.”

While Vladimir was writing furiously on the flipchart, Stefan remained silent and pensive. Manu noticed and asked:

“And for the Rovers, Stefan? You’re the Rover specialist here. Tell us what you think.”

“I totally agree with what’s just been said, but I’m wondering about my

way of doing things. I think I'm going to have to change quite a lot in my leadership style."

"What, for example?"

"Well, concerning activities to start with. I think I need to be more systematic and effective in the way I give the Rovers the opportunity to discover the society they live in, starting with their community, so that they identify the problems and challenges that people have to face. In that way, they'd get a taste for and desire to discover the reality around them. And then..."

"And then what?"

"Encourage them to identify how they, at their level, can help resolve certain problems by taking different initiatives in the fields of the environment, culture, social work, intercultural understanding, etc. Most activities will be team activities, and the community will have more of a support role. It will be a place of reflection where ideas can be renewed."

"That's right."

"Now, let's go to the 'Outdoor life' row", Eva suggested. "Most children live in towns and cities nowadays, and I think it's essential to give Cub Scouts the opportunity to discover natural elements: trees, plants, flowers, water, air and earth."

"Contact with animals is also very important for them", Stefan added.

"But, of course, you have to take account of the children's physical limits and the necessary safety conditions. So the scope of exploration will be limited and camps short."

"At the Scout age," Eva said, "outdoor activities and camps become more important. You can already start organising real 'immersions' in the great outdoors. The youngsters love setting up camp and living outdoors."

"And for Venture Scouts," Manu suggested, "it seems to me that, at that age, it's both an opportunity to confront natural elements on outdoor expeditions, combined with learning special skills, and an introduction to ecology, through observation and environmental conservation projects."

“At the Rover age,” Stefan took over, “I think the emphasis should be on practising sport and other physical pursuits outdoors for a healthier life and to recharge their batteries. Furthermore, Rovers should be encouraged to adopt a personal lifestyle that’s in harmony with protecting the natural environment.”

“Yes, that’s very interesting, Stefan...”

“I’d like to say something about the team system”, said Eva. “In the Cubs, the autonomy of the team is limited. Team meetings are short and prepared with direct help from the adults. The sixer’s role is also limited. Most activities are pack activities.”

“That’s true”, Olga agreed. “But in any case the team institutions still have to exist — the sixes, the council rock, the sixers’ council and the pack law. It’s essential for children’s socialisation and for developing their capacity to be autonomous.”

“Concerning the Scout section,” Doriane continued, “the team institutions start to really come into their own. The teams are more autonomous, and the role of the team leader is more substantial. The unit council is really the unit government, even if the adults still take a great degree of initiative. In the unit assembly, the teams exchange their activity ideas, which are often combined to form a project. Activities and group life are evaluated and collective rules are established in order to improve relationships.”

“Let’s move on to the Venture Scouts”, Manu suggested. “I think it’s important to note that, at that age, the team truly becomes a team of very close-knit friends, a team which is capable of being quite autonomous. The team leaders therefore have more responsibility. Apart from that, the unit council and unit assembly are run much more directly by the young people themselves. ‘Inter-team’ committees are created alongside the teams, to perform concrete tasks for the group, like preparing a trip, organising a community service activity, managing the budget, maintaining equipment, etc. Each of these committees — which are set up for a variable duration — is led by a young person. So, in the space of two or three years, everyone can be offered the opportunity to practise leadership.”

“As for the team system,” Stefan added, “it seems to me that the Rover group should operate like a small community run by the young people themselves. There are the teams, which are very autonomous, each having its own field of

action and specialities. But there are also the group institutions to support and assist the team projects. The community assembly has to work like a general assembly, sharing information, evaluating community life and taking any necessary decisions to improve community life. Each team certainly has to elect its leader, or rather its delegate, but the community assembly also needs to elect people to certain important posts, like chairman of the assembly, secretary and treasurer. With the team delegates, these officers form the community's administrative board. So the Rovers have a real opportunity to be involved in running a community in a democratic way."

"Speaking of the Scout Law," Manu suggested, "how is it expressed in the pack?"

"In a few articles, with simple wording and in very concrete terms," Olga replied, "proposing some basic values such as being clean, being fair, listening to others, sharing with others, etc."

"In the Scout section, the Law is a very important element at that age, because then the young people discover, more than at the previous stage, that the best rules are those that are set together, democratically, to improve group life. But at the same time, they realise that these rules have to express more fundamental values, which they discover through experience with the help of the adults."

"And for the Venture Scouts?" Vladimir asked.

"In terms of wording, it may be the same as for the Scout section or very similar, but it should lead more directly to the discovery of universal spiritual values, such as justice, solidarity, respect for human dignity, respect for the environment, etc."

"For the Rovers," Stefan added, "it seems to me that the Scout Law should be a charter that proposes the universal values on which Scouting is based — individual responsibility, respect for human dignity and the integrity of nature, international solidarity, rejection of violence, searching for the meaning of life, etc."

"Well, you've just outlined a great project for your association."

"We've been trying to achieve it for years already", Olga added. "Vladimir, have you written everything down?"

Vladimir breathed a sigh of relief. He had completed the entire table by filling in his friends' ideas. He stood back and contemplated the large sheet of paper covered in his fine writing.

“That’s going to be really useful for the rest of our work”, said Eva. “Thank you so much, Manu!”

“I’m pleased that I can be of some help to you. And I think that this exercise has also helped us clarify some of our ideas, hasn’t it, Doriane?”

“Indeed it has. I think we should make a copy of the table and ask Vladimir to help us translate it into English.”



XIV. Personal Progression

The house was quiet. Manu was trying to get to sleep, but to no avail. He and Doriane had decided to ‘camp’ in the house with the Rovers. He had, of course, had to be adamant with Eva, who was eager to have them stay at her place. But finally, she had let herself be persuaded. It was more convenient for their work. Some camp beds and blankets had been unearthed and dormitories had been set up in a basic fashion in the rooms upstairs. Manu was sharing a room with the boys; Doriane was in another room with the girls. The bathroom had been restored to working order, but the shower was only giving out cold water. “It wakes you up better!” Doriane had concluded.

After dinner, while Ondrej and the Rovers were doing the washing-up and tidying the room, Eva had organised a meeting. Manu admired his friends’ courage. With virtually no resources, and despite all the difficulties, they were pursuing their goal of creating a Scout association that truly served young people and society in their country.

During the meeting, they had decided to call together all the group and unit leaders for a meeting with Jane on Sunday, 7 February. It was an opportunity not to be missed, and in spite of the short notice, the meeting was bound to attract many leaders on account of its importance. The meeting would be followed by a seminar with the leaders of the pilot groups, in order to finish drafting the new programme.

In the end, Eva had accepted the idea of setting up a cybercafé for local youngsters in the house, which would be open every Wednesday afternoon. It was the only way of guaranteeing support from the town council, and it would also help promote Scouting among young people. Manu was enthusiastic about the project and determined to support it.

He unzipped his sleeping bag and got up, trying not to make his camp bed creak too much. He was thirsty, so he made his way to the bathroom. Passing a window, he noticed a faint light in the grounds. He went closer to the window and peered into the darkness. A movement attracted his attention. A shadow was creeping from tree to tree, intermittently using a small torch to light the way. A

second shadow then appeared behind the first.

“What on Earth’s going on?” Manu muttered.

He rushed back to the Rovers’ room, took a torch out of his bag and shook Lukas, the team leader, who spoke some English.

Lukas woke up with a start and sat up in his camp bed. Manu signalled to him to keep quiet and pointed at the window. The sound of breaking glass rang out downstairs. Lukas got up swiftly and woke the other Rovers up without making a noise. Manu went over to Lukas and whispered some instructions in his ear, then opened the window and climbed out of it. Moving along a small ledge, which decorated the façade, he reached the drainpipe on the corner of the house and scaled down it. Two Rovers followed him.

A French window had been forced open, and the beam from a torch lit up the inside of the house now and again. Manu, followed by the two Rovers, approached in silence. He heard the sound of liquid being poured onto the floor and smelt a strong smell of petrol. He turned his torch on and ran towards the door. In a fraction of a second, he caught sight of two motorcyclists in black bikers’ suits, who, caught in the act, froze on the spot. One of them had been pouring the contents of a can of petrol onto the floor, while the other held a lighter. Manu made for the biker with the lighter and knocked him to the ground. The other one dropped the can and rushed towards the door, shoving the two Rovers out of the way and then fleeing.

The first biker, crushed by Manu’s weight, had given up all resistance. While the Rovers set him on his feet again, Manu removed his helmet. The violent beam from the torch lit up the face of a boy aged 18 or 19, with short hair and a chubby face.

“Well, well, Anton... How are you?” Lukas asked ironically.

“Do you know him?” Manu asked. “We have to alert Eva, Stefan or Vladimir...”



Lukas had called Stefan from a nearby phone box. Half an hour later, the old Lada entered the grounds of the house. Stefan got out and hurried into the house. He stared at the young biker sitting on a chair surrounded by the male and female Rovers, who had been awoken by the commotion and joined the group. Manu and Doriane were standing behind them, watching.

“What’s your name?” Stefan asked.

“I know him!” Lukas said, “He belongs to Viktor Gomerek’s group. His name’s Anton.”

“Let him answer for himself, Lukas.”

Anton remained silent. Stefan studied him. He was a boy of average height, overweight, bordering on the obese, with characterless features and an evasive look. His worried face was dripping with sweat. He’s not a real tough nut, Stefan said to himself. He drew up a chair and sat down opposite the boy.

“Anton, what do you do for a living?”

“Eh... I’m... I’m an apprentice in the hotel business...”

“And your parents?”

“My father’s a lorry driver and my mother’s a shop assistant in a big store... You won’t say anything to them, will you Mister? I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have done what I did...”

“Anton, do you realise what trouble you’re in? You’ve tried to set fire to an occupied house. That’s attempted murder. If we call the police, you’ll be charged and could spend at least ten years in prison.”

Anton turned pale and exclaimed:

“We didn’t know there was anyone in the house!”

“Who were you with?”

“A friend, but I don’t want to give him away!”

“Whose idea was it to set fire to the house. His or yours?”

Anton said nothing. He was sweating profusely.

Stefan turned to Lukas:

“OK, I think we should call the police...”

“Wait!” said Anton plaintively, “If I tell you everything, will you let me go?”

“Yes, if you make a full written and signed statement.”

“OK, I’ll tell you everything. It was Viktor Gomerek who ordered us to do it. I didn’t want to, but the others forced me. They teased me and called me a coward.”

Anton started to sob.

“So you’re one of Viktor Gomerek’s group?”

Anton nodded.

“How long have you been in it?”

“About two years.”

“Is it a Rover group?”

“Yes... well, not exactly. We call ourselves ‘Cadets’ and we have special training.”

“What sort of training, Anton?”

“Survival, commando, intelligence techniques, you name it.”

“Yes, I’ve already heard of your group; you wear camouflage gear, paratrooper boots, a dagger around your waist, and you follow paramilitary training”, one of the Rovers cut in.

“And you call that Scouting?”

“It’s Viktor Gomerek who proposed all of that. I liked it to begin with, but I’ve been wanting to drop out for a while.”

“Why?”

“Er... well, first of all the training got harder, with former servicemen making us do exercises in the forest. And then we were also forced to listen to political speeches.”

“Political speeches?”

“Yeh, things about foreigners coming to steal our firms and corrupt our national ideas.”

“And who gave these speeches? Viktor Gomerek?”

“No, not him, but others who came to the meetings... party leaders.”

“Party leaders?”

“From the National Party... Viktor Gomerek’s a member.”

“Is he?”

“Yes, that’s what he told us. What’s more, his idea is to turn Scouting into a Party youth movement. He wants to create an organisation that can train real leaders, as he put it — people who have plenty of pluck; people who can put up a good fight.”

“Against whom?”

“Against all the enemies, foreigners... anyone who threatens us.”

“Totally mad!” Lukas let out.

“And do you believe in these ideas, Anton?”

“Not really. In fact, it started to frighten me, especially after Viktor Gomerek told us that we had to put our ideas into practice by launching ‘C’ actions...”

“‘C’ actions?”

“Yes, ‘C’ as in ‘Commando’ — secret actions to scare foreigners and traitors... The others were really keen, but I was scared. I didn’t like it.”

“Can you give me some examples of ‘C’ actions that you’ve carried out?”

“Yes, only nobody must find out that I’ve been talking to you... We had to promise not to say anything.”

“The only way to protect yourself is by revealing everything.”

“So, you know that Viktor Gomerek runs a company?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Well, I don’t think it was doing very well. He had a lot of debts, and clients owed him money. He said it was the foreigners’ fault, so he sent the lads to carry out ‘C’ actions... I didn’t want to go. I said I wasn’t feeling very well... They threatened and attacked people, smashed windows and car windscreens... After that, I think that things improved for Viktor: the clients paid up and his debts were settled. Viktor congratulated the lads and told them that he was going to offer the same service to some friends and that it would be well-paid.”

“It’s a mafia-like set-up!” Marija exclaimed.

“And was what you did tonight also a ‘C’ action?”

“Yes. Viktor thought that if there were a fire in the house, the town council wouldn’t let you stay there. But I promise we didn’t know that you were inside — otherwise we’d never have done it!”

“Do you realise that setting fire to a house, even an empty one, is a criminal offence?”

“Yes, but we planned to limit the damage. We were going to alert the fire brigade straight away, so that they’d come and put the fire out...”

“What a terrific plan”, said Marija ironically.

“And this time you agreed to take part in a ‘C’ action?”

“I let myself be influenced. The others were putting pressure on me. And Viktor had said that you were a threat to the Cadets, because you’d abolish the group if you succeeded in heading the association. Viktor was setting us against you. He said that you weren’t real Scouts, that you accepted girls in the Movement, and that you spent all your time discussing and holding meetings whenever a decision had to be made, whereas we were disciplined and efficient, capable of obeying without question. The others liked all of that. It was like a big game. We followed you, and spied on you.”

“Tell me, Anton, it was you and your friend who threw a bottle of engine oil at my truck, wasn’t it?” Stefan asked.

Anton lowered his head and shrugged his shoulders.

“I’m sorry, Mister. I shouldn’t have done that. But I wanted to show them that I was just as capable as they were... Viktor wanted to scare you into abandoning Scouting.”

“You didn’t mention that, Stefan”, Lukas said, surprised.

“It happened yesterday”, said Stefan. “I haven’t had time to mention it... And tell me, Anton, the attack on Eva and the burglary of her flat — was that you as well?”

“Oh no! That wasn’t me. It was Igor who played that trick!”

“Igor?”

Anton looked down again and sighed.

“The guy who was with you just now?”

“Yes, that’s him. He’s my team leader.”

“But tell me, Anton, don’t you ever talk about the values of Scouting, the Promise, the Law, loyalty, respecting others, universal brotherhood and so on?”

“No, never. Viktor replaced the Scout Promise with an oath of allegiance.”

“An oath of allegiance?” Lukas queried.

“Yes, we had to promise to do as our leader told us without question — to obey Viktor first, and then our team leader. Our slogan was ‘obey your leader in order to become a leader yourself’...”

“That’s really effective as a system of manipulation”, said Marija. “So there were never any discussions, or any decisions to be taken together as a group?”

“No. Viktor was the field officer and the team leaders were junior officers. He got all the team leaders together to give them his orders, and our team leader told us what we had to do. In each team, everyone had a role and a rank. The team leader had the highest rank, the assistant team leader was beneath him, and so on, right down to the last member of the team, who was ranked eighth. If we trained and proved ourselves, we could move up a rank... and we moved down a rank if we failed a mission.”

“I can’t believe it, said Marija... It’s a mad system!”

“And what was your rank?” Stefan asked.

“Oh, I was only ranked sixth. After tonight’s operation, Viktor had promised to move me up a rank. But now I think I can forget about all of that...”

“You said it, sunshine!” Marija commented.

“Calm down, Marija!”

“But listen, Stefan! It makes me sick to see how this pathetic idiot has let himself be manipulated. Boys are so stupid. It’s no coincidence that their group was only open to boys. Girls would never have agreed to act without thinking and with the sole ambition of moving a rung up the ladder for every individual ‘exploit!’”

“You can’t be so sure of that, Marija. Girls may be less likely than boys to blindly obey the ‘law of the group’, but they can also allow themselves to be manipulated by an unscrupulous leader. In any case,” he added, addressing the Rovers, “Anton’s story teaches us a lot, don’t you think?”

“A group that operates like Viktor Gomerek’s, with nothing to refer to except the will of the leader, is a mafia-like or fascist system”, said Lukas.

“They have a team system, but it has nothing to do with the Scout method”, Marija added. “In Scouting, there’s no almighty leader, and decisions are taken collectively and evaluated in the various team and unit councils.”

“That doesn’t stop us from learning to remain vigilant and never abandon our free will”, continued Stefan. “And now what are we going to do with you, my poor Anton?”

“I beg you, don’t call the police!”

“OK, but we need to make sure you’re safe for as long as your friends are still in a position to harm you... I’ve got an idea. Here’s what I suggest”, said Stefan, addressing the group.

Thursday, 4 February, 15.00 hours

The plane had just landed. It was Jane's first time in the country. Despite her experience of working with Scout associations all over Europe, she was rather anxious. It was a delicate mission that she was undertaking. Would she be able to persuade Koncewitz to abandon his plan, which risked depriving the association of its most dynamic leaders or even causing a split? She cheered up at the thought of being welcomed by Vladimir and his friends, whom she sympathised with, but, at the same time, she needed to stay detached enough to analyse the situation objectively. Did they really deserve unconditional support from the World Organisation, at the risk of clashing with the old brigade and quite a few of the authorities? A heavy responsibility weighed on her shoulders.

It was freezing in the airport arrivals hall. After the interminable queue at passport control, Jane entered a hangar where passengers were congregating around a conveyor belt waiting for their luggage. A trolley pulled by a tractor arrived in a cloud of exhaust fumes. Jane spotted her case at once and grabbed it with some difficulty, refusing help from a uniformed porter. Once through customs, she had to fight her way through the dense crowd waiting to meet the arriving passengers. She turned down the offer of a taxi three or four times, then noticed a group of young men and women in Scout uniform. She immediately recognised Vladimir, who was smiling and waving a bunch of flowers. She went over to them and was instantly surrounded. One of the Rovers took her case; Vladimir presented her with the bunch of flowers and kissed her on both cheeks, while the Rovers greeted her by singing a welcome song. She was led towards a van; Vladimir helped her up onto the front passenger seat, while the young people piled into the back. The van set off.

"Welcome Jane", said Vladimir. "You can't imagine how happy we are to see you. We're taking you to your hotel, where you can rest for a bit. It's half past three and you've got a meeting with Koncewitz at the Department of Youth and Sports at six. Eva will come to the hotel at five to help you prepare for the meeting."

Jane thanked Vladimir. She watched the landscape glide past. What did she know about this country? She had put some documentation together

last week and read one or two books, but that had only given her the vaguest idea of the real situation. As if reading her mind, Vladimir started to paint a picture of the current state of the country for her. She did her best to listen while taking in what she was seeing. The dual carriageway was passing through a birch forest. The traffic was moving but was quite heavy. Amidst the stream of grey lorries and cars built in Eastern Europe or Russia, a few Mercedes, BMWs and Peugeots were to be seen. Soon the forest gave way to desolate fields. Then tall, sad, grey blocks of flats came into view, forming vast housing estates, which stretched on either side of the road. Jane watched the people standing at bus stops. Many of them looked sad and resigned, but she noticed the care that the women took over their appearances. Many were quite elegantly dressed.

“Now we’re free”, said Vladimir. “But in this transitional period, life’s become much harder for the poor. We’re discovering unemployment and corruption.”

The hotel was located in the centre, at the far end of an enormous esplanade. The van came to a halt. Vladimir jumped out and helped Jane down. A Rover was already heading towards the reception desk carrying her case. Jane showed her passport to the receptionist and filled in a form.

“Room 1506”, Vladimir informed her, handing her a key attached to a large wooden cube. “We’ll come up with you to make sure everything’s in order.”

They dived into the wheezy lift with two male and female Rovers in charge of Jane’s case. On the fifteenth floor, they went along a long, red-carpeted corridor and went into a room furnished in dark wood, with a table, a chair and two sofa beds. Vladimir inspected the toilet and bathroom and tested the hot water. The red-curtained window looked out over the rooftops of the city. The central heating radiator was rumbling but working properly. Vladimir asked Jane several times if everything was OK and if there was anything else she needed, then, before leaving, he handed her a document on Eva’s behalf, requesting that she read it carefully before the meeting with Koncewitz.

Jane thanked Vladimir and the two Rovers warmly, closed the door after

them and decided to run a bath. She needed to relax before the decisive meeting.

After a hot bath followed by a cold shower, she unpacked her case, changed and set about reading the document left by Vladimir. It was a detailed account of the latest developments and in particular about Viktor Gomerek's scheming. Jane could not believe her eyes; she re-read the document several times. Had Gomerek acted without the knowledge of Koncewitz or else under his orders? Was it a concerted effort to hijack Scouting and turn it into a nationalist and mafia-like movement? What attitude would Koncewitz's adopt? What explanation would he give?

A shrill ringing interrupted her — the telephone... It took Jane a few seconds to find it. It was reception to say that Eva and Vladimir were waiting down in the lobby. She checked her watch; it was 16.55. She hadn't noticed the time pass. She hastily put the report in her briefcase, pulled on her coat, picked up her briefcase, locked the door of the room behind her and headed for the lift.

Vladimir and Eva were sitting on a sofa opposite the reception desk. When Jane appeared, they got up to greet her. Vladimir introduced Eva. He noticed that the two young women took to each other immediately.

“Jane, if it's OK with you, we've got a good half an hour to prepare for the meeting with Koncewitz. I'll act as your interpreter. It'll only take us about ten minutes by tram to get to the Ministry of Youth, where the meeting is to take place. What would you like to drink? Some coffee? Tea? Would you like something to eat?”

Jane was not hungry and settled for a coffee, as did Eva. Vladimir signalled to the waiter and placed the order.

“Why is the meeting taking place at the Ministry of Youth?” Jane asked.

Vladimir translated the question, as well as Eva's answer.

“We've got a few friends at the Ministry. The Director of Youth himself is concerned about the future of the Movement. Koncewitz is well-respected, but his uncompromising attitude is frowned upon. The Minister would like the Scout association to be given international recognition as quickly as

possible, in order to facilitate its development. He's tried hard to obtain a compromise from Koncewitz, but without success. Koncewitz is convinced of his rights and is being quite inflexible. He didn't even want to meet you. The Minister himself had to intervene to get him to change his mind and agree to the meeting taking place at the Ministry with the help of an interpreter."

"I've read the latest report, which Vladimir gave me at the airport. The situation has changed radically, hasn't it, since the revelations about Victor Gomerek's 'little game'?"

Eva took a newspaper out of her bag and put it on the coffee table. Vladimir pointed to an article on page three with a photograph of a young man in handcuffs being pushed into a police car.

"It's Viktor Gomerek, and the title reads: 'Business leader charged with racketeering!'"

"Fortunately," Eva resumed, "the reporter doesn't seem to make much reference to Scouting."

"No, he just says that Viktor was using members of a youth group as his henchmen. But that's only the first article. The next ones aren't likely to be so discreet. It's a hard blow for Koncewitz; he won't be able to hide the fact that Viktor was his deputy. He'll have to prepare a press release to ensure that Viktor's downfall doesn't harm the association."

"To tell you the truth," cut in Eva, "what worries me more than the association's image is the future of those youngsters that Viktor has dragged into this sad story."

"Well, in the case of Anton, the youngster who revealed everything, there's no problem. With the agreement of his parents, Olga had him to stay with her for a few weeks to keep him safe from reprisals from his former friends. It's thanks to his evidence that Viktor could be charged."

"And the others?" Jane asked.

"Only two or three were involved in serious acts — aggression or vandalism. The others just followed, like Anton. I think they'll be acquitted."

"I hope this affair won't leave too much of a mark on them", Eva

continued. "We should try to bring them into the Movement. We owe them a great deal. If Viktor had been monitored more closely, none of this would ever have happened. In future, we have to put a leader 'screening' system in place."

"I wonder how Koncewitz is going to react", said Vladimir.

"We'll know in a few minutes. It's time to go if we don't want to be late."

The ministry was housed in a large sad, grey building a few stops away on the underground.

"1950s, pure Stalinist style", Vladimir remarked.

They presented themselves to the porter, who phoned through to the youth department to confirm the meeting. Vladimir left his identity card and was given directions to the office where they were expected. They went up huge staircases and along never-ending corridors covered in worn red carpet until they reached their destination. An advisor to the minister, a young man with small round steel-framed glasses and a bow tie, greeted them warmly, introduced the official responsible for interpreting and invited them to sit down on large sofas around a pedestal table. They were served strong coffee and little cakes. The advisor gave a discreet cough and started speaking.

"The minister has told me to inform you that he attaches great importance to the success of Scouting in our country, as well as to its international recognition. That is why he insisted on this meeting with Mr Koncewitz. Unfortunately, Mr Koncewitz himself has just phoned to say that he is unable to attend. He told me that he did not see any point in such a meeting. I am very sorry."

Once she had got over the surprise, Eva responded indignantly. The interpreter could not keep up with her and gave up after a few attempts. Vladimir had taken out the newspaper and was showing the article to the advisor, who was nodding his head gravely with a troubled air of understanding.

Jane, who was observing silently, felt anger rising up in her. Suddenly, she gestured to the interpreter and started to speak:

“Sir, I represent the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, and I have made the trip from Geneva specially to take part in this meeting. I am surprised how easily Mr Koncewitz can just announce at the last minute that he is not coming. Now that I am here, I have discovered that the situation is far worse than I had anticipated. There is a deliberate attempt to overturn the Scout Movement in favour of a nationalistic, mafia-like group. Such acts can have harmful international repercussions on the image of your country. They are extremely serious. I demand to see the Minister of Youth immediately, to discuss what measures to take.”

Once the interpreter had finished conveying what Jane had said, the advisor got up and announced that he was going to consult his superiors at once. He excused himself and left the room, followed by the interpreter. A secretary appeared with another pot of coffee, which she placed on the table before also leaving the room.

“Well done, Jane! You did exactly the right thing”, said Vladimir

Eva nodded in agreement and spoke. Vladimir interpreted:

“It’s absolutely vital that we get Koncewitz to agree to call a general assembly. After what’s happened, the old brigade won’t oppose the adoption of a new constitution any more, and we’ll be able to gain WOSM recognition.”

“I won’t return to Geneva until a general assembly has been convened”, Jane stated.

“It’s also important that you meet as many Scout leaders as possible. We’ve invited them to a big meeting on Sunday. They need you to talk about Scouting today and to encourage them. Many of them are bound to be discouraged by the association’s current problems.”

“Once Koncewitz has resigned — which I have no doubt he will — they’ll need new leaders who are determined and enterprising. Are you prepared to take over?”

“Eva’s got what it takes to be the next chairman,” Vladimir responded, “but she’s too modest. You should talk to her about it.”

Eva reddened and was getting ready to answer when the door opened and the advisor returned, still with the interpreter in tow.

“I’m sorry for keeping you waiting. The minister is out of town, but the Director of Youth will see you.”

The advisor led them through an antechamber and knocked on a door before opening it. The Director of Youth was a woman in her thirties, athletic and determined looking. She stood up to welcome her visitors and invited them to take a seat around her desk. Eva spoke first, introducing Jane.

“Welcome to our country, Madam”, said the director. “I have followed the rebirth of the Scout association very closely and deplore the current deadlock. I am willing to help you, but the situation is delicate because we have to respect the law. According to the statutes of the association, everything depends on the goodwill of Mr Koncewitz.”

“Thank you for your support, Madam. The situation that we are facing is indicative of the difficulties in moving towards democracy”, Jane replied. “Mr Koncewitz represents the generation of old Scout leaders. They fought valiantly against totalitarianism half a century ago and now, after waiting for its rebirth for so many years, they find it difficult to step back and leave the leadership of Scouting in younger hands. In order to keep control of the association, they reject a truly democratic structure, which would put the active leaders in the majority. In doing so, they run the risk of distorting Scouting, as recent events have shown. The present statutes of your country’s Scout association do not meet the criteria of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement and prevent it from being recognised at international level. If Mr Koncewitz refuses to call a general assembly to change the constitution, the young leaders will have no option but to create a new association. But that would cause a lasting rift between the old and the new generations.”

“An enquiry is underway to establish who is responsible for the unfortunate matter that you are referring to. We are aware that there are some louts in our country who are against the return of democracy or who are trying to capitalise on the difficulties during this transitional phase. But the case of Mr Koncewitz is different. He is a respectable old man who has been misled by stubbornness and made the mistake of placing his trust in a villain. We know

him very well — what's more, he got on very well with Eva's father, didn't he?"

Eva nodded in agreement.

"So, here is what I suggest. I have two hours before my next appointment. We shall pay a visit to Mr Koncewicz and talk to him. He will listen to us, I am sure of it. Markus," she said, turning to her advisor, "call Mr Koncewicz to tell him that I am coming, and tell my driver... to be on stand-by. We leave in ten minutes."



A few minutes later, the driver pulled up outside a small wooden house with green shutters on the edge of a large park. The Director of Youth turned round to talk to Eva, Jane and Vladimir, who were sitting in the back of the car.

"Jane and Eva, you come with me. Vladimir, you wait here. Koncewicz will be more understanding in the presence of only women. I will interpret for Jane myself."

Vladimir watched the three women enter the small, well-kept garden surrounding the house and go up to the doorstep. The director knocked on the door. A grey-haired woman appeared and invited them in. The door closed behind them.

The minutes passed. Vladimir felt himself becoming more and more nervous. He got out of the car and paced up and down on the pavement. He almost regretted having given up smoking a few years ago. A strong smell of tobacco reached him. The driver had also got out and was having a smoke. Vladimir's edginess increased. He needed to move.

"I'm going to the street corner to buy a paper", he said to the driver. "I'll be back in a couple of minutes."

The driver nodded as if he really could not care less. When he returned a few minutes later, a newspaper in his hand, Vladimir saw that the driver was back behind the wheel. Noticing a bus stop with a bench a few metres from where the car was parked, he went over to sit down and opened his paper.

His eyes jumped from one line to the next without taking anything in. He could think about nothing but the meeting that was taking place in the small green-shuttered house. A bus drew up and stopped with a hydraulic groan. Passengers alighted. One of them made Vladimir drop his paper. He bent down to retrieve it just as the bus moved off again. When he lifted his head, he saw Jane, Eva and the director taking their leave of the elderly, grey-haired woman. He folded his paper up again and stuffed it into his coat pocket. The three young women talked as they left the garden. They waited for a couple of cars to pass before crossing the road. Eva spotted Vladimir and gave him the thumb's up, a broad smile on her face. Vladimir got up. Eva ran over to him and hugged him, murmuring:

“We did it. We’ve won!”

In the car, Eva showed him a letter written by Koncewitz.

“He’s agreed to call an extraordinary general assembly to adopt the new constitution. We offered him an advisory role in the association, but he refused. He’s hurt by what has happened, so he’s decided to resign and wants to be forgotten. But thanks to the director and Jane, everything went well.”

“Our approach has saved him from losing face”, the director added. “I’ve promised him that he will receive a letter of thanks from the minister. Honours are important to him. No doubt we will add a Youth and Sports medal to thank him for his commitment to youth and democracy.”

The director had turned round towards the back of the car, and Vladimir detected a brief look of irony on her face.

“I regret not having taken such action sooner. But thanks go to Jane for persuading me. Now it is up to you, the new generation”, she added, looking at Eva and Vladimir. “Make this association a great youth movement!”



Sunday, 7 February, 09.45 hours

The large meeting room, loaned by the town hall, was filling up gradually. Dozens of Scout leaders were taking their seats in the rows. Jane was pleased to see a lot of women and girls among them. Once more, she checked the set of transparencies that Eva had helped her prepare in their language the previous day. She had been asked to make a presentation on the personal progressive scheme in Scouting. She was pleased to discover the intelligence and skills of her new friends. Stefan had set up a large screen and an overhead projector for her presentation.

Vladimir, followed by a man of mature years, came over to her:

“Jane, I’d like to introduce Piotr Gormisko, the chairman of the association.”

Jane stood up and shook the newcomer’s hand:

“We’ve met before. Hello Piotr, how are you? It’s nice to see you again.”

“Hello Jane”, Piotr answered. “I’m very pleased to see you again, here among us. Now we can finish the work we started together to get the association recognised.”

Jane nodded her approval.

“Now everything is set, thanks mainly to your intervention, and we’re very grateful to you”, Piotr continued. “I’m responsible for preparing the new general assembly.”

“I didn’t have to do very much at all. More than anything else, you’re lucky to have the support of a dynamic Director of Youth. Will you stand for the chairmanship again?”

“Yes, but only if Eva agrees to be chief commissioner. This meeting is her personal success”, Piotr replied, pointing at the room.

“Piotr, please”, said Vladimir. “Sit down next to Jane. We’re about to start. Don’t forget you’re speaking first.”

A cheerful hubbub rose from the audience. The participants were clearly happy to be together again. Vladimir turned to Jane to announce

with satisfaction that Olga, who had been responsible for organising the meeting, had registered 158 participants.

Piotr tapped on the microphone to get the audience's attention, then spoke.

"I'd like to thank you for responding to our call in such numbers. This is a great day for our association, for at least two reasons. First of all, I'm pleased to introduce Jane, who is the Director of Youth Programme at the European Scout Office."

Jane stood up and was greeted by prolonged applause.

"Jane's here to show her support for our association and to make a presentation on the process of personal development in Scouting. The personal progressive scheme is the only piece that's still missing in the renewed youth programme that our programme committee, chaired by our friend Eva, is developing and will present at the next general assembly. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the 15 local pilot groups who've worked with us to test the new programme in the field and who'll take part in a seminar with Jane for a couple of days after this meeting. Could I ask the representatives of these groups to stand up, so that you can see who they are and applaud them."

Some 20 participants stood up and were cheered.

"I'd also like to acknowledge the work carried out by Eva, Vladimir, Olga and Stefan at the head of the programme committee. Thanks to their hard work, not only have they managed to develop a more attractive and more relevant youth programme, which will soon be made available to you, but, again thanks to their determined efforts, they've succeeded in breaking the grip of the internal conflict which has been threatening to paralyse us for ages. And I'm pleased to announce that the problems that have rocked our association and greatly hampered its revival have now been resolved.

In my hands, I have a letter from Piotr Koncewicz, who, before resigning for personal reasons, agreed to convene a general assembly to approve the new constitution and elect a new national board. As chairman of the supervisory board, Piotr Koncewicz asked me to prepare and chair

this general assembly. It should approve the new constitution, which will allow us to be recognised by the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, and elect a new national board. I propose that the assembly takes place sometime in March. I can also announce that, thanks to Eva and her friends, our association now has a new headquarters, a house made available to us by the town council. You'll see it this afternoon. I therefore invite you to show your gratitude to Eva, Vladimir, Olga and Stefan by applauding them warmly."

A thunder of applause exploded in the room.

"Eva, I give the floor to you."

"Thank you Piotr. And thank you for your kind words. But the work that we've started in the programme committee doesn't deserve such praise. The process that we've embarked upon is long and complicated. Let me remind you of the key steps.

We've based our work on three main themes: the age sections and the section objectives, the activities, and finally the section methods and personal progressive scheme. We've lost some time, because of the problems we've encountered, so we've had to revise our timetable accordingly. It now looks like this:

First of all, as Piotr has already announced, this meeting will be followed by a seminar for the pilot group representatives involving Jane. We'll define our section system and educational objectives in detail. A resource centre is now up and running and has started to publish activity handouts for each of the age sections on the Internet, in line with the educational objectives selected. The pilot groups will be equipped with a computer and they'll have access to these handouts in order to test them in the field as from March.

Based on the work we've done already, we should be able to distribute a first draft of the new programme to the pilot groups via the Internet at the beginning of March. This will present the section methods and personal progressive scheme, with a view to testing it in the field until May. Olga's responsible for the Cub Scout section, Vladimir for the Scouts, myself for the Venture Scouts and Stefan for the Rovers.

We'll organise a national seminar at the end of May to evaluate the results of the field tests and identify what needs to be modified.

Finally, we plan to organise a national camp for all the pilot groups next summer for the final testing of the whole programme.

Then we hope to be able to present a report to the national board in September. Once we have the Council's approval, we'll start writing the section leaders' handbooks. We should have completed that task by the end of next year. But by about October, we plan to have launched a website for local groups, where the unit leaders can find enough resources to start using the new programme as soon as possible.

One of the priorities of the new national team, which will be set up after the next general assembly, will be to develop a plan to connect each local group to the Internet and thereby give them access to the resource centre. We've already mapped out the whole content of the new programme. What's still missing is the personal progressive scheme. Jane can give us some basic information about this, which is why I'd now like to hand over to her. Piotr, who speaks English fluently, will interpret."

To the participants' applause, Eva handed the floor to Jane.

"Thank you, Eva. First of all, I'd like to say how pleased I am to see so many of you here today. When I go back to the office, I'll be able to report on how dynamic your association is. I don't want to embarrass Eva and her friends again by praising the work carried out by your programme committee. Piotr has beaten me to it and I share his view completely. Let me simply say that I view the work carried here as a significant contribution to the development of the 'Renewed Approach to Programme', or 'RAP' as it's commonly known. I'll therefore do everything I can to support your programme committee's action plan, both in terms of content and resources. I'm thinking in particular of the creation of a resource centre and the development of an integrated Internet network to encourage cooperation and dialogue, which could revolutionise the very structures of your association.

I've been asked to tell you something about the new concept of personal progression that we envisage in RAP."

As she went along, Jane used the overhead projector to present some key phrases or a diagram to summarise or illustrate what she was saying. She stopped regularly to let Piotr interpret.

“In Scouting, what matters above all else is the individual. It’s clear that the Scout leader has to pay attention to the group, as well as to its individual members. But the group is only a means, whereas the ultimate goal is to help each individual realise his or her full potential. That doesn’t mean that we want to develop perfect little individualists. We want to develop citizens who are autonomous and supportive, capable of getting involved in the community, capable of putting the well-being of the community before their own personal interests.

Yet we realise that, ultimately, what counts as far as the development of a community is concerned is the quality of the individuals who form it: their ability to think by themselves and to resist conditioning and pressure; their ability to take decisions and to get involved by taking personal risks; their ability to empathise with others, to be sensitive to their problems and suffering; their ability to innovate; their ability to solve problems and work with others to develop collective projects for the benefit of the community.

Community development is impossible without this type of individual.

We also know that any educational system runs the risk of locking young people in a mould. We have to resist this tendency. We have to make sure that we bring out the unexpected in each young person. We can’t know in advance the full potential that a young person harbours within him or her. We have to let the young person draw it out. As Robert Baden-Powell said, our aim must be *to develop in each young person, girl and boy, ambition and hope, and the sense of achievement which will carry him on to a greater ventures.*¹⁷

We have to be firmly convinced that each young person harbours unsuspected resources and that our role is to help him or her discover and develop them. We should consider each child, each young person, in a positive light:

*There is five per cent of good even in the worst character. The sport is to find it, and then to develop it on to an 80 or 90 per cent basis.*¹⁸

So our progressive scheme will be based on the personal objectives expressed by the young people. That's a radical change.

Until now, most of the progressive schemes developed in Scouting were based on lists of activities of increasing difficulty, which the young people had to learn to complete. These activities were divided into different categories, such as outdoor life, self-expression, manual skills, observation, etc. The young people's progress was measured by putting them through tests, which assessed whether they had acquired the required skills, and if so, they were rewarded with a certificate, stamp or badge.

A system like this has the advantage of being easy to understand and put into practice, but it has two major drawbacks: firstly, there's a chance that the leaders and young people will consider the activities goals in themselves and overlook the underlying educational objectives. And secondly, it constitutes an identical system for everyone, which is difficult to adapt in order to take account of different individual abilities. To give you an example: how can such a system be adapted for young people with learning difficulties or physical disabilities? Finally, it aligns personal progress with the practice of Scouting and not with the ultimate goal, which is the development of active, responsible citizens who are capable of contributing to the development of society.

To avoid these failings, RAP first of all recommends separating the educational objectives from the activities through which those objectives could be achieved.

For each section, the progressive scheme proposes a series of educational objectives covering the different areas of growth — physical, intellectual, affective, social, spiritual and character development. But these proposed objectives are only for guidance. The role of the adult leaders is to help young people take inspiration from them and then set their own objectives, suited to their own situation and abilities.

From this angle, the aim of our personal progressive system is to help each child or young person cover four key steps with the support of the adult leaders:

1. Understand the proposed educational objectives
2. Adapt them to his or her own situation, personalise and reformulate them
3. Evaluate his or her achievement
4. Have his or her personal progress recognised.

To explain how this can be put into practice, I'll give you the example of the progressive scheme being developed by the Interamerican Scout Region for the Scout section — for young adolescents in the 11–15 age range.

For each of the areas of growth, several lines of intermediate educational objectives have been defined, leading to an ultimate objective. Some of the intermediate objectives correspond to the 11–13 age range; others correspond to the 13–15 age range. Each Scout receives a logbook explaining the different recommended objectives and explaining the progressive scheme.

Four progress stages are proposed. The name given to each stage comes from the section's symbolic framework, in this case exploration and discovery.

- The Stage 1 badge, 'Track', is awarded to a Scout who is starting to work on the objectives for the 11–13 age range.
- The Stage 2 badge, 'Trail', is awarded to a Scout who achieves about half of the objectives for the 11–13 age range.
- The Stage 3 badge, 'Course', is awarded to a Scout who achieves more or less all of the objectives for the 11–13 age range.
- The Stage 4 badge, 'Traverse', is awarded to a Scout who achieves around half of the objectives for the 13–15 age range.

When a Scout embarks on a stage, he or she personalises the objectives in discussion with the adult leader responsible for following his or her

progress. Personalising means accepting the proposed objectives, modifying them or adding new ones according to the individual Scout's needs, interests, abilities and aspirations. Once the personalised objectives have been agreed upon, the Scout writes them down in his or her logbook. Then they're put aside and the Scout gets involved in the activities, because it's through the personal experience gained through the activities and through the roles assumed, that the young person will acquire new attitudes, skills and knowledge corresponding to the objectives.

Since there are no tests, the crucial question is how to make sure that the objectives have been achieved through the activities. And the answer is — by observing!

The objectives proposed refer to adopting kinds of behaviour which involve all aspects of the personality. So the only way to check whether they've been adopted is through subjective evaluation.

Through the life of the unit, through the initiatives that the young people take and the roles that they assume, through a wide variety of types of behaviour, as well as through their contribution to the life of their team and the unit as a whole, they send out multiple signals that the adult leaders have to detect and analyse. The leaders' observations within the unit should be corroborated by talking to different people involved, to various degrees inside and outside the unit, in the young people's education — team leaders, other Scouts, parents, teachers, etc.

It's recommended that each adult leader be responsible for observing eight young people at the most.

At the end of the activity phase, all the Scouts are asked to share and check their own assessment of their personal progress with their peers, in the team council. Then they review that assessment with the adult leader responsible for monitoring their progress. An objective is considered achieved if the young person and the adult leader reach a consensus. The achievement of the objective is acknowledged by putting a stamp in the Scout's logbook.

So to sum up:

- The progressive scheme is based on educational *objectives* covering the different areas of growth.
- These objectives are presented to the young people in a *logbook*, in which they also record their progress.
- The objectives are split into several *stages* corresponding to different age ranges, with names taken from the symbolic framework of the section.
- Before embarking on a stage, each young person is asked to *adapt* the objectives to his or her own situation, individual development needs, capabilities and aspirations.
- The objectives are achieved through patrol and unit activities, as well as through activities outside the unit, within the family, at school and through other activities that the young person is involved in.
- The achievement of the objectives is assessed through observation and discussion between the adult leader responsible for following the young person's progress and the young person him- or herself, the other members of his or her team, and his or her friends, parents and teachers.
- An objective is considered achieved when a consensus has been reached between the assessment carried out by the young person with the help of his or her peers and that made by the adult leader.

So there you have the broad lines of the progressive scheme recommended by RAP”, said Jane, turning off the overhead projector. “Do you have any questions?”

Piotr looked around the room. A group leader from a small town near the capital raised his hand.

“Yes, Stanislas.”

“Thank you. I found Jane’s presentation extremely interesting, but I’ve got a question. Am I right in thinking that according to RAP, the educational objectives are progressive from the Cub Scouts up to the Rovers?”

“That’s right”, Jane answered.

“In that case, what about this example? If a young person joins the Movement as a Scout without going through the Cub Scouts, do we assume that he or she has automatically achieved the objectives of the Cub Scout section and can start with the Scout objectives straight away, or should the Scout be expected to ‘catch up’ somehow?”

“When a new member joins a Scout unit, he or she has either come up from Cub Scouts or is joining the Movement for the first time. In both cases, the Scout will start with an introductory period lasting two to four months. This is aimed at integrating the newcomer into a team and identifying what stage he or she is at in terms of the Scout section’s objectives. If it’s felt that the young person has achieved some of the objectives already, these will be marked as achieved in the logbook and the corresponding stamps will be given. Perhaps the newcomer will receive the ‘*Track stage*’ straight away, or even the ‘*Trail stage*’, because he or she is seen to have already reached this level from past experience either inside or outside the Movement. Maybe he or she will have to work on preliminary objectives in some areas of growth where experience is lacking. Let me stress again that our progressive system takes account of the overall personality of the young person and his or her life as a whole. It’s not restricted to Scout activities.”

A young leader stood up and asked to speak:

“But shouldn’t the progressive scheme test a Scout’s knowledge of essential Scouting skills like camping and orienteering?”

“These skills will be acquired naturally, by taking part in such activities. But we shouldn’t confuse activities — which are a means — with the educational objectives that we are pursuing. The purpose of Scouting is not to learn how to light a fire or use a compass, but to develop active, responsible citizens.”

“Won’t that reduce the technical quality of the activities?” another leader asked.

“The activities remain one of our main concerns, because they’re the only way we can reach the educational objectives”, Jane replied.

“Can you explain in more detail how, in concrete terms, we can run activities, define educational objectives and evaluate personal progress in this system?”

“That’s a good question. In fact, evaluating the personal progress of each Scout, setting objectives for the next phase and choosing activities are closely linked. To deal with this question, the Interamerican Scout Office has produced a very useful tool for unit leaders. It’s called the ‘*Programme Cycle*’. I’ll give you an educational handout that explains in detail what a programme cycle is and how it works. For now, it’s enough to say that the life of the Scout unit is divided into a series of programme cycles, each of which comprises four successive phases:

Phase 1 of each programme cycle focuses on individual and collective evaluation. In discussion with an adult leader, each Scout assesses how far he or she has achieved the objectives set for him- or herself. This personal evaluation is then shared with and checked in the team council. Each team also evaluates the quality of the activities and of the group life. The individual and collective evaluations are shared in the unit council. If consensus is reached among the individual, team and adult leaders’ evaluations, the unit council recognises the progress achieved by the Scout by awarding stamps and possibly badges for the stage in question.

It then analyses the general state of the unit on the basis of the feedback received from each team and identifies a certain number of priorities to take into account for individual and collective progress during the next cycle.

Questions like these may be asked: Is there a good balance between fixed and variable activities? Are there enough outdoor activities? Are all the areas of growth covered, or are some being neglected? How are the team and unit councils working? And the unit assembly? What’s the general atmosphere in the group like? Are the values of the Scout Law really being lived, or is more effort required in certain areas? And so on.

In answer to the question that someone just raised, it’s here that you can decide that the unit’s technical skills need to be strengthened in order to raise the quality of the activities, or that an effort needs to be made to

improve the team spirit and the quality of relations within the unit. In conclusion, the unit council makes a certain number of recommendations concerning the choice of activities for the next cycle. At the same time, each Scout is asked to set his or her personal objectives for the next stage, with the help of the team and an adult leader.

Phase 2 focuses on selecting activities. Each patrol meets and, on the basis of the priorities and recommendations proposed by the unit council, proposes activities for the team as well as for the unit. Then the unit assembly meets and each team presents its proposals. The assembly notes the team activities and democratically chooses the unit activities. It can also decide on a certain number of collective rules designed to improve the group, according to the suggestions made by the teams and unit council.

Phase 3 focuses on organising and planning the activities. That's the job of the unit council, which will make a calendar for team and unit activities, and figure out how the teams are going to work together.

And finally, phase 4 focuses on doing the activities. This is obviously the longest phase and it will run for several weeks. The previous phases have to be as quick and short as possible to prevent the risk of boredom and lack of interest. During this activity phase, the adult leaders observe the youngsters to assess how they are progressing towards their objectives. At the end of the activity phase, the individual and collective evaluation phase begins again. This is phase 1 of the next programme cycle.

So you can see how the programme cycle is not only a method of organisation, which covers the whole life of the unit, but also an educational tool because it involves the youngsters in the evaluation and decision-making processes.”

“Has anyone got any comments or questions?” Piotr asked.

A unit leader took the floor:

“I find this method really interesting, because it focuses the unit leaders' attention on the individual progress of the young people through the activities. All too often, we tend to move from one activity to the next without taking the time to observe the young people, to note their

needs and to think about how to guide and encourage their progress. But I wonder if all unit leaders will be capable of doing what you are recommending...”

“No, certainly not. There are in fact two levels of leadership, and leader training needs to take account of this. New leaders should be expected to be good at running activities. They should be trained to guide young people in carrying out attractive and educational activities. First of all, they must have all the skills required to run what we call the fixed activities; that is to say, basic Scouting activities: hikes, camps, games, explorations, as well as organising the teams and different councils — team and unit councils, the unit assembly. They must be able to ensure the protection and safety of the children by acquiring specific skills like first-aid and by being familiar with and respecting safety procedures. They should also be encouraged to acquire technical skills that will allow them to help the young people choose and undertake their variable activities — self-expression, dramatic art, ecology and nature, handicrafts, etc.

Once they’ve completed this basic training, leaders should be offered further training to become educators. This would involve an in-depth understanding of the purpose, principles and method of Scouting, as well as of the psychology and needs of young people in the age range concerned. At this stage, leaders should be capable of helping young people analyse their needs and set their own educational objectives. They should also be able to understand the correlation between educational objectives and activities. And finally, they should be trained to manage the programme cycle properly. The unit leader training scheme should include both these levels: a basic level and a more advanced level.”

“Any more questions?” Piotr asked. “Yes, Theresa”, he said, pointing to a leader who had raised her hand.

“Jane used the example of personal progress and of the programme cycle in the Scout section, but I imagine that it wouldn’t work in the same way in all the sections, would it?”

“You’re right”, Jane answered. “Young people’s level of participation in the evaluation and decision-making processes has to be adapted to

the abilities of each age range. It will certainly be modest but already meaningful in the Cub Scout section and will progress from one section to the next, from Scouts to Rovers. But the general principle remains the same.”

“Well,” Piotr resumed, “I imagine that we’ll have to come back to this essential question of personal progress and the programme cycle. We’ve certainly got a lot to do to improve our programme in this area. Jane, do you have a conclusion for us?”

“Yes, Piotr. To finish with, I’d like you to ask yourselves a question: How do you measure the success of a Scout association? By its educational proposal? By the quality of its programme? By the effectiveness of its adult leader training scheme? By the effectiveness of its structures or of its communication system? No, all these aspects are just the means to an end. The quality of an association is measured by the results it achieves. And how do you measure those results? By how much its membership increases? That’s an important criterion, but it’s not precise enough. Membership can fluctuate according to socio-economic and cultural conditions over which the association has no direct influence. No, the main criterion by which you can judge the quality of a Scout association is, in my opinion, the number of young people who leave the Rover section with the motivation and skills to take on responsibilities in society and contribute to its development.

When we think about the quality of our programme, we often spend too much time looking at the number of young people who join the Movement, whereas instead we should be paying attention to how many leave the Rover section with the desire and the ability to play an active role in the development of society.

The mission of Scouting is, after all, to contribute towards building a better world by developing autonomous, supportive and responsible individuals who are capable of contributing effectively to the development of society.

That’s why the senior age section plays a major role in our Movement. Since it’s at the end of the Scout programme, it’s up to the Rover section

to ensure that the youngsters who are going to leave the Movement have the motivation and skills to be active, responsible and efficient citizens. To do so, it has to offer Scout activities which open up areas of responsibility and action in the community for young people. It has to encourage them to explore the society around them at local, national and international level in order to gain a better understanding of how it works, as well as of its weaknesses, shortcomings and needs in terms of human development. This section has to support them in developing and implementing projects which will help them discover how to contribute to the development of society. In this way, it has to help young people discover their vocation, in other words the personal role that they can play in developing society and, on that basis, develop a personal plan of action.

The Rover sections of some Scout associations used to have — and some still do have — a progress stage called ‘the Departure’.

It’s a ceremony that marks the moment when a young man or woman announces that he or she has completed the Scout programme. The Rovers have to explain what they’ve acquired from Scouting in terms of attitudes, behaviour, knowledge, skills and motivation. They also have to present their plan for getting involved in adult society — that’s to say, what professional, social or civic commitment they intend to make to contribute towards developing society — to their fellow Rovers, friends and families. In return, the community promises to help them implement their plan.

Nowadays, this departure ceremony needs to be re-introduced in all national Scout organisations. It’s by identifying and evaluating Rovers’ individual action plans that we can measure the impact of Scouting and its contribution towards a better world.

The whole Scout progressive scheme should be geared towards the ‘Departure’, which is the ultimate goal. That’s why you should specify the end of the Scout programme, the age at which it ends, and determine the attitudes, skills and knowledge that a young person should have acquired by then. That has to be the ultimate goal and the focal point of your progressive scheme.

A strong, dynamic and enterprising senior age section is vital to your association's progress, because, through its achievements and projects, it allows you to present Scouting's goals to young people, leaders, parents, the public and the authorities, showing them what Scouting is able to do and how it actually contributes to the development of your country through education.

The test of success in education is not what a boy knows after examination on leaving school, but what he is doing ten years later. wrote B.-P. in one of his anecdotal 'shaving paper notes' published in Headquarters Gazette, way back in August 1922. In Scouting today, we should be applying the same test to our educational system for young people.

Thank you."

Jane's presentation received a long round of applause. Piotr thanked her and invited her to follow him for the inauguration of the association's new headquarters. As the room started to empty, Jane was joined by Eva, Vladimir, Olga and Stefan, who patted her on the back.



The whole assembly gathered again at the association's new headquarters, where the Rovers were showing people the different rooms and the sparse but functioning equipment.

Olga had organised a big picnic in the grounds, and the leaders separated into small groups for a packed lunch, making the most of the still timid sunshine.

Vladimir offered fruit juice and white wine to his friends and Jane, who had sat down around a table outside, under the canopy of the house.

"To the future of the association!" toasted Piotr, raising his glass.

"To the future youth programme!" Vladimir added.

They clinked glasses, and Eva turned to Jane:

“Jane, I really liked your presentation. It clarifies all our work and opens up some exciting prospects for us. We’re very grateful to you for spending a couple of days with us to run the seminar for the pilot groups. It will enable us to organise the work ahead properly. But we’ll also find the time to show you our secret place.”

“You’ve got a secret place?” Jane asked with an air of surprise.

“Yes, and it’s a desert island at that”, Vladimir confirmed.

“A desert island?”

“We call it the Green Island”, Olga added, “and we’re going to organise a national camp for all our pilot groups there next year to test out the new programme.”

“So it won’t stay deserted for much longer.”

“In actual fact”, Stefan went on, “we populated it with our desires and dreams when we first started on our work. You really have to be with us when our dreams are fulfilled at the national camp.”

“Is that an invitation?”

“You bet!” Eva and Vladimir replied at the same time, as they all raised their glasses, laughing ecstatically.

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The Green Island

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Ένας Κόσμος Μια Υπόσχεση

○ Lume ○ Promisiune

세계는 하나 우리의 약속도 하나

Isang Mundo Isang Pangako