

Orest Subtelny with Orest Dzulynsky et al. *Plast: Ukrainian Scouting, a Unique Story*. Plast Publishing, 2016. xx, 442 pp. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Glossary of Plast Terms. Sources and Further Reading. Index. \$35.00, cloth.

The last major project undertaken by distinguished York University historian Orest Subtelny prior to his death was a comprehensive history of Plast, the Ukrainian scouting association that was formally initiated in Western Ukraine in 1912. In the book under review, co-authors (Orest Dzulynsky, Tanya Dzulynsky, and Oksana Zakydalsky), a coordinating committee, contributors, and reviewers worked with Subtelny.

Subtelny begins by examining the genesis of the Plast organization in the western Ukrainian lands of Eastern Galicia, which were within the confines of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There, the organization adapted the tenets of Lord Robert Baden-Powell's scouting movement within a Ukrainian milieu. The term for the organization itself comes from the Kuban Cossacks, who called their military scouts "*plastuny*" (8). Subtelny positions the origins of Plast within the context of existing student societies and the popular Sokil and Sich physical-education movements, and he outlines its spread to Bukovyna, Volhynia, Transcarpathia, and, to a limited extent, central and eastern Ukraine. He describes the organization's tribulations through two world wars—how it suffered under changing and hostile occupational regimes before migrating to diasporas worldwide.

The golden age of the Plast organization occurred during the 1920s, at a time when western Ukrainian territories were incorporated into the interwar Polish state. During this period, the organization developed rapidly in both a quantitative sense and a qualitative sense. The basic features of the organization and its program were shaped. They became the foundations upon which generations of Ukrainian scouts would develop. This was followed by the repression of the organization as a perceived subversive movement hostile to the Polish state and the banning of it during the 1930s. The movement was greatly impeded by World War II but was reborn in the displaced persons (DP) camps of Western Europe. From there, it travelled with Ukrainians to their diasporas in the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, Argentina, Germany, and elsewhere around the globe (xix). It was in the diaspora that the movement was preserved prior to the eventual renewal of Plast within an independent Ukrainian state following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This volume is an encyclopedic official history of the Plast movement, and it reflects the largely diasporic nature of the organization. Following the creation stories and the description of Plast's golden era of the 1920s, one encounters a large block of information that emphasizes diaspora activity and the evolution of Plast governing bodies; more limited attention is given

to the struggling structures that were, and have been, re-emerging in the newly independent Ukrainian homeland. This is, perhaps, not surprising in light of the fact that the Ukrainian branch, after nearly twenty-five years of Ukraine's independence, in a country of over forty million citizens, had barely six thousand members (see 375). And, thus, we come to the underlying questions that are posed by, or stem from, this history. Does Ukrainian scouting have a strong future in the motherland? Will it be able to overcome the suffocating influence of decades of Soviet imperial rule to find a receptive audience in a country where Russian cultural influences continue to hold sway in significant sectors? In a secular and technological twenty-first century, will scouting take hold as a Ukrainian-wide youth movement, or will it be a marginal phenomenon, heavily influenced by the diaspora and rooted in its twentieth-century Galician antecedents? Can Plast rise above its tradition of ethnic scouting to become a national movement reflective of Ukraine's multi-ethnic composition, or will Polish, Russian, and other cultural communities create competing ethnically exclusive scouting enclaves in the same way that Ukrainians did throughout their diaspora?

Furthermore, can Plast find recognition of its history within a waning global scouting movement? Plast, throughout its existence, has struggled for recognition within national and international governing bodies. This struggle continues into the present in Ukraine. Competing scouting and youth associations, some with Russophile tendencies, vied for international recognition. This culminated in the creation in 2007 of the National Organization of Scouts of Ukraine, uniting Plast, Sich, and the Union of Pioneer Organizations in Kyiv within a non-ethnic and non-faith-based national umbrella association. The group met the requirements of the World Organization of the Scout Movement and in 2008 became a full member of this highest scouting body in the world (389).

This history focuses heavily on internal organizational structures and statistical data and does not delve deeply into contentious issues, such as the wartime activities of prominent ex-members. Footnotes are sparse, and there is only a general attribution of photograph sources, with no specific source credits under individual images. At the same time, the volume is richly illustrated with over two hundred photographs, maps, charts, tables, lists, and sidebars. Valuable additional sections of information include an epilogue covering the role of song within the organization, a bilingual glossary of Plast terminology, and a list of sources with a bibliography for further reading.

The contents of the book are at times uneven in approach and quality, reflecting the fact that the book was written by committee and includes contributions from numerous authors. In the end, this volume ably examines the history of a remarkable youth movement, whose century-old struggle against adversity continues into the present. Anyone with an interest in the

Ukrainian national movement of the twentieth century and/or the present-day efforts to re-establish a broadly representative scouting movement in Ukraine will find this volume a key reference work. What remains to be seen is whether this history is a preamble to a strong future or the postscript to a rich past.

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