

## Education in Lower Silesia in the First Years after the End of the Second World War

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*The end of the Second World War initiated a new stage in the Polish history, as number of social, economic and political problems determined the educational issues in the country. After 1945 the political map of Poland also changed, as the pervious eastern outskirts of Polish territory had been incorporated to USSR, whereas the new, northern and southern lands, became the territories where the Polish societies were forced to make the effort to build up the social and cultural life from the scratch.*

*Establishing education in Lower Silesia concerned the social changes (the settlement), material resources of the schools and the qualifications of the teaching staff. These were, in turn, affected by the educational policy of the party, accomplished by the Ministry of Education, as well as by the local communities that, at the verge of 1947 and 1948, still had a significant influence on the works of “their school”.*

Key words: *settlement; public school; teacher*

The settlement action conducted immediately after the end of the war in the Western and Northern areas led in Lower Silesia to a massive flow of settlers coming from various parts of Poland and Europe, making up a specific cultural mosaic.<sup>1</sup> The aspects of settlement and establishing social and educational life was a subject of interest among many authors in the 1960s and 1970s. The settlers of one village frequently came from various regional groups,<sup>2</sup> and as it was stressed, the local community consisted of people „differing between each other taking into account the mentality, lifestyle, culture of management, linguistic forms or even life attitudes and cultural standards“.<sup>3</sup> The authors emphasized the fact that the settlement was accompanied by disintegration of former neighbouring bonds, as instead of settlement of coherent groups, the

<sup>1</sup> Ziółkowski, J. (1966): Zasiedlanie Ziemi Zachodnich. In: *Ziemia Zachodnie w granicach Macierzy. Drogi integracji*. Poznań, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Markiewicz, M. (1966): Przeobrażenia społeczne na Ziemiach Zachodnich. In *Ziemia Zachodnie w granicach Macierzy*, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Majka, J. (1971): Wpływ Kościoła na integrację kulturową na Ziemiach Zachodnich. In *Kościół na Ziemiach Zachodnich. Ćwierćwiecze polskiej organizacji kościelnej*. Ed. J. Śruciny, Wrocław, p. 141.

settlers were divided and spread all over the region. It often happened against their will, as it was sometimes hotly contested.<sup>4</sup> In the mentioned literature, it was stressed that antagonisms very often arose among the new settlers, particularly in case of repatriates from the Bug river area and autochthonic community that manifested tangible unwillingness to establish contacts with the settlers.<sup>5</sup> Organizational mistakes of the settling action, intensified by bureaucratic mistakes made by the administration towards the autochthons, made them prejudice towards the Polish statehood and nationhood,<sup>6</sup> resulting in their social isolation, or even making them „flee the country“.<sup>7</sup>

It is also stressed in the monographs from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that the natural process of creating the new community, also in Lower Silesia, was not only discouraged, but also slowed down and procrastinated.

The authors recall the ambience of that time, when the process of creating social bonds was interrupted by various prejudices and misunderstandings taking place in some communities, often leading to permanent conflicts, as well as stark antagonisms.<sup>8</sup> It was followed by the sense of compulsion, instability of the new life situation and insecurity of tomorrow. Quick adaptation was additionally disturbed by the fact that the new settlers did not enter an organized society, but a social emptiness.<sup>9</sup>

The other factor disabling stabilization was the territorial mobility of the Lower Silesia settlers, expressed in multiple change of the residing places, with tendency of inhabitation in the urban centres.<sup>10</sup> Settlers from central Poland were not always satisfied with the new circumstances, and as their living conditions deteriorated below the level from the previous place of residence, they would often decide to return to the previous region. Repatriates and re-emigrants were not that fortunate, as for them

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4 See: Kłapkowski, T. (1947): Tworzenie się więzi społecznej na Ziemiach odzyskanych. In *Problemy demograficzne, socjologiczne i kulturalne*. IV Sesja Rady Naukowej dla Zagadnień Ziem Odzyskanych, 18–21 XII 1946 r., z. 2. Kraków, p. 7.

5 Majka, J.: Wpływ Kościoła na integrację kulturową..., p. 141.

6 See: Strzeszewski, C.: Najbardziej potrzebne czynniki etyczno-moralne ma Ziemiach Zachodnich. In *Kościół na Ziemiach Zachodnich...*, p. 91.

7 Dulczewski, Z. – Kwilecki, A. (1962): *Spoleczeństwo wielkopolskie a osadnictwo Ziem Zachodnich*. Poznań, p. 43.

8 Chmielewska, B. (1965): *Spoleczne przeobrażenia środowisk wiejskich na Ziemiach Zachodnich*. Poznań, p. 142.

9 Krucina, J. (1985): Wkład Kościoła w integrację Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych. *Colloquium Salutis*, t. 17, p. 39.

10 Łatuch, M. (1970): *Migracje wewnętrzne w Polsce na tle industrializacji (1950–1960)*. Wrocław, p. 94.

resettlement was limited to the area of Western and Northern Lands, with no possibility to return to their family homes.

For example, the chronicle of the Primary School in Podgórzana (Jelenia Góra district) there is a record describing the settlement action from the years 1945/1946 stating „people began peculiar migration in search for better living conditions. Children at schools came from various corners of Poland: „district of Poznań, Vilnius, Cracow, etc.”.<sup>11</sup> This movement concurrently made number of pupils at school constantly changed, what significantly hindered teachers' work.

It must be emphasized that the above-presented picture of Polish society on Western Lands, including Lower Silesia, in the context of literature from 1960s and 1970s is not thoroughly reliable, as relations among the settlers were emerging and growing, as proved and provided by the research carried out by historians and historians of education. The catholic church played in this regards particular role, as its activities were influenced by the socialistic system and the school.

Elżbieta Kaszuba points out that „the settlement in the new regions, including Śląsk, was taking place in few stages,<sup>12</sup> specifying the following phases: „the first stage was lasting approximately from the spring until the autumn of 1945, the second lasted from November 1945 until the end of 1946, outnumbering the previous one as for the dynamics and range of settlement, whereas this third stage of settlement and migration (1947) was in decrease and such condition remained in the following years“.<sup>13</sup> It is worth to emphasize that „the voivodship became then (between May and July) a place of compulsory settlement for 13 000 to 21 000 of Ukrainians relocated from belonging to Poland that time southern and eastern settlements within the action 'Wisła' (Operation Vistula). They were predominantly moved to Legnica, Lubin, Góra Śląska, Wołów, Oleśnica and Środa Śląska“.<sup>14</sup> The military settlement in Lower Silesia must also be taken into consideration, as for such group of demobilized soldiers (altogether 74 288 people) the cities of Żary, Żagań, Zgorzelec, Lubań, Lwówek were allocated, with the ex-soldiers making up nearly 60% of all the settlers. On the other hand, in the period between 1948 and 1950, the Greek immigrants – a group consisting of 6 000 political refugees – also found their shelter in Poland.

<sup>11</sup> *Kronika Szkoły Podstawowej w Podgórzaniu*, school year 1945/46.

<sup>12</sup> Kaszuba, E. (2002): *Dzieje Śląska po 1945 r.* In *Historia Śląska*. M. Czapliński, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs, R. Żerelik (Eds.). Wrocław, p. 445.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., p. 446.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., p. 446.

Contemporary analysis of the above-mentioned issues acquires new, deepened context in the light of the documents and recollections, as the school data is spread all over the archives of given towns, municipalities or even schools. Many of these documents, due to shift in their location between archives and schools got lost or were found on private premises, what significantly handicaps the research on the evolution of education in Lower Silesia after 1945. Moreover, the tackled social and educational aspects should be taken into account together, as they combine an inter-dependent cause-effect relation.

### Settlement

„The districts of Lubań, Lwówek, Zgorzelec and Jelenia Góra were allocated to the military settlers and demobilized soldiers“ as written in the Parish chronicle in Wojciechów. The same happened in the village of Pasiecznik<sup>15</sup> in Lwówek district, however the military settlers were not the only category of the village dwellers, as they were accompanied by repatriates from the East (previous voivodship of Tarnopol, Lwów, Stanisławów, Vilnius, Polesie, Nowogródek and Volhynia), central Poland (former Lublin, Rzeszów, Kielce, Cracow, Łódź, and Warszawa voivodship), as well as families from the district of Poznań, two re-emigrants from Romania and one from Austria. In this diverse society many conflict were possible, as reflected in the passage from the chronicle of Wojciechów parish „the main factor causing prejudices was the diversity of cultures and customs in the village“, but as the author stresses, „beyond any doubt, it may be stated that it did not evolve into something radical“.

In the village of Łazy (Milicz district) as much as 40% of the dwellers came from the area of Częstochowa, with rest from the vicinity of Poznań and Sieradz. There were all villagers and their work on farms was also the basic source of income in the new pace of residence. Conflicts between the inhabitants were rare and if happened, mainly concerned the allocation of goods or agricultural machinery. In such cases the Local Council Committee was in charge of the arbitration. The settlement action finished in March 1948 with simultaneous termination of relocating the Germans.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The name before the war was a Spiller (the player), from 1945 Zimna Woda, and from 1953 Pasiecznik.

<sup>16</sup> Sprawy osiedleńcze 1948–1951. Sprawozdanie za miesiąc kwiecień 1948–1951. Akta gminy Krośnice, Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu.

In the Oleśnica district, in the village Wielkie Celniki (in 1947 the place was renamed Solniki Wielkie)<sup>17</sup> repatriates from Lwów and Tarnopol district found their new homes, similarly as the settlers from the central Poland and those, relocated within the Operation Vistula. Altogether they made up 42 families, i.e. 166 people.<sup>18</sup> Re-emigrants, i.e. two families from France and one from Czechoslovakia were in minority, whereas at the same time there were 86 people of German origin remaining concurrently in the village. The majority of the dwellers were farmers – 92 persons, but there was also a dressmaker, a gravedigger, and a builder. At the end of 1945, Celniki Wielkie reached the population of 4 121 inhabitants.

Danielowice is a village located within Oława region of that time (Domaniów district). The first settlers came there in the second half of the 1945, relocated in the houses abandoned by the German families. Initially, there were three families from former Lwów voivodship, apart from those relocated as a result of Operation Vistula in a palace from a 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> Poles coming from the east as well as from central Poland also lived in the villages nearby, with the eastern repatriates taking over individual farms, and central Polish ex-inhabitants employed at the state-owned farms. At the beginning, the settler groups remained isolated, but with the time passing by, they established bonds between each other, as common misfortune fate and difficult material situation made them search for mutual help. Cooperation was set up as the acclimatization followed, subsequently leading to the establishment of numerous local committees consisting of the village dwellers. They participated for instance in the allocation of donations from the UNRA to the poorest neighbours, also setting up mutual aid fund, or arranging the school facilities. All the activities contributed to the mutual process of getting to know and understanding each other.

In Świdnica district, the settlement action was of slower pace than in Świdnica city itself, due to severe damages after the war and lack of communication routes or train connections. The new inhabitants mostly came from Kraków, Rzeszów and Kielce voivodship, or they were the re-emigrants from France, Belgium, Germany or Yugoslavia, constituting just a minor group of 1 658 people. However, the first settlers were the military

<sup>17</sup> Wydział Powiatowy w Oleśnicy, woj. wrocławskie do wszystkich Gmin w powiecie, Nazwy miejscowości na obszarze Ziemi Odzyskanych Oleśnica 5. 05. 1947 r., Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, Akta gminy Solniki Wielkie, sygn. 1, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> The list of All the resellers within Operaton Vistula livinig in the Solniki village (in Polish). Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu.

<sup>19</sup> A register from Danielowice village from 1945 (in Polish).

settlers, as well as the ex-prisoners of the liberated concentration camps, for instance from the nearby Gross-Rosen extermination camp, or those returning from forced labour in Germany.

This short and superficial image of the first settlers of selected districts and towns of Lower Silesia indicates the diverse background of the newcomers, who were setting up their family and neighbourhood life, in the new place of living, frequently a random one.

The school was a unique place of integration for the local people, particularly due to the common fact that only by efforts made altogether it was possible to clean up the space, fix tools, or provide to the teaching rooms own hand-made equipment.

In October of 1945 there were 514 public schools established with 54 705 pupils enrolled.<sup>20</sup>

### School space resources

The first public school in Strzegom was set up as early as in July of 1945, located at the Market Square number 1, in the building of the municipality office of that time, in one of the rooms on the third floor. At the end of the year, the school changed its location, moving to Stalin street 1 (Aleja Wojska Polskiego nowadays), having 22 pupils in 6 units.

In Lubawka (Jelenia Góra district) classes for pupils were inaugurated on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1945 in the building of a former German school.<sup>21</sup>

A formerly German building was also used for such purpose in Lutynia (Środa district), with the official inauguration taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> September, the same year. The teaching took place in two buildings located 200 meters distance from each other. The first building, where classes were taking place for the next 6 years, had been built by the Germans in 1937, whereas the second, built in 1908, was given to the school authorities in the school year 1951/52. The conditions for teaching in the latter were dreadful – small rooms were heated by iron stove, whereas in the day centre room of 35 sq meters there was a tile stove. Temperature in winter did not rise above 10 degrees and children were learning with their coats on.<sup>22</sup> Official inauguration of the school year in this public school of Środa Śląska district took place on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1945. In Solniki Wielkie (Oleśnica district) a 4-grade school was set up in

<sup>20</sup> See: Smotański, A. (1970): *Szkolnictwo podstawowe na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1944–1965*. Wrocław.

<sup>21</sup> *Monografia historyczna miasta Lubawka* (1991). Ed. A. Grzelak, Lubawka, p. 87.

<sup>22</sup> *Kronika Szkoły Podstawowej w Lutyni od 1949 r.* (chronicle in Polish).

October 1945, making use of one room on the ground floor, as the floors were in a terrible condition after the “Red Army stationed there”.<sup>23</sup>

In Pasiecznik the public school was one of the first institutions to be set up in the village, beginning its function on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1945, and as it was captured in the memories, “the inauguration itself was quite ordinary, without fanfares, but on that day the biggest classroom in school was fully packed with small kids, as well as with those slightly older, including teenagers. The pupils came from Pasiecznik, Pokrzywnik, Maciejowiec and Janice. Apart from the first grade, there were two shortened classes for the older ones that already had some grasp of general knowledge”.<sup>24</sup> The first initiator of the school was Stanisław Drozdowski, pre-war teacher, AK soldier, whose son was also a soldier and got a farm in the village.<sup>25</sup> Establishing this school was inspired by this pre-war teacher, with general support from all the villagers and the priest.<sup>26</sup> The first day was remembered by one of the oldest villagers as follows: “before the official beginning of the school year, there was a meeting of all the parents having children aged over 7, when they were all enrolled in the classes. The enrollment took place on the basis of the birth certificates, evacuation cards, or parents’ written statements. On the first day, the children began the learning process, with each pupil having own notebook, a pencil and a rubber”.<sup>27</sup>

The first public school in Ibramowice (Świdnica district) was located in an old building of formerly evangelic, well-equipped school. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1946 the official inauguration began the teaching process addressed to 40 pupils. It was proceeded by a mass service in the church of Domanice, what was recorded in the school chronicle as follows: “six wagons left Ibramowice with the villagers and their school children. After they returned, the teacher, J. Trzepla, gave this school a patron’s name of Stanisław Wyspiański, whereas the priest, B. Balicki, blessed the building and two Polish flags were placed at the front door.”<sup>28</sup>

Recalling the course of establishing selected schools in Lower Silesia, it must be remembered that it was common for the local community to get engaged in the maintenance and construction works in order to prepare the school classrooms properly. The already existing post-German building were used, as well as former public offices buildings, but also some residences or palaces.

<sup>23</sup> *Kronika szkoły w Solnikach Wielkich z lat 1945–1948* (chronicle in Polish).

<sup>24</sup> Based on the interview with Danuta R. from February 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Based on the interview with Stanisław P. and Jan N. from January 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Jan N.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Jan N.

<sup>28</sup> *Kronika szkoły podstawowej w Imbramowicach 1945–1975* (chronicle in Polish).

The school became one of the first institutions operating in the local community, and was inspired by the initiative of the inhabitants and the teachers.

Another problem for the emerging post-war education in Poland was to provide appropriate teaching staff.<sup>29</sup>

Insufficiency in this regard was caused by many reasons, such as:

- “extermination and oppressions of the teachers under German occupation,
- repressions, including deportation of Polish teaching staff to the far corners of USSR,
- 5-year break in systematic education of teachers caused by the war and occupation,
- difficult financial situation of the teachers and disinclination of the youth to take up studies in the institutions of education teachers,
- natural decline in the number of teaching staff due to difficult hygienic and sanitary as well as social conditions during the war,
- objections among those teachers, who had been residing in the western countries, to return to the country that was subject to soviet influences,
- strong will of the education circles to get rid of those teachers, who had collaborated with the German occupant”.<sup>30</sup>

The above-recalled causes of insufficiency in teaching staff led to a situation when education institutions employed persons with no appropriate qualifications. Some of them worked temporarily, others were delegated to participate in some short-term vocational trainings (even just a few-week courses), that obviously were not sufficient to prepare a candidate, as far as pedagogical and psychological knowledge and practice were concerned.

Similar problems with the staff were reported in Lower Silesia.

In the Oława district, public schools employed mainly pre-war teachers having pedagogical background, as those were the graduates of seminars for teachers, who had began their professional work before 1939. They would often come to Lower Silesia with the new settlers, as they were also originating from the same area as the others.

The school inspector of Złotoryja district, Jan Stępień, recalled his first days at school as follows: “some headmasters and teachers organized schools better, some worse, but almost in all cases we may say that their attitudes were full of sense of civic obligation and they fulfilled their duties

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<sup>29</sup> See: Chmielewski, W. (2007): *Edukacja nauczycieli po II wojnie światowej*. Warszawa.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., pp. 27–28.



concerning school as a tool of polonization of the settled area”.<sup>31</sup> Józef Trzepla – a qualified teacher coming Kalisz, arrived in Ibramowice in November 1945, and quickly established good relations with the village and borough leader of Domanice, as well as with the school inspector in Świdnica, all in order to open a new school in the village. He began enrolment at the end of 1945, embracing children from Ibramowice and the nearby villages of Buków, Osławnica and Marcinowiczki. He also activated local community to participate in the school building renovation and equipping it with didactic tools, simultaneously supervising activities for the sake of setting up classroom units. The school inspector from Świdnica additionally assigned to the new unit a woman from Domanice, Kazimiera Przystał, that “had no qualifications, but was nice to the children, hard-working, diligent and protective”.<sup>32</sup>

The first headmaster and teacher of Pasieczniki was Stanisław Drozdowski, who had a long-standing pedagogical practice in education gained long before the Second World War. “He was a truly devoted and professional teacher that became the heart and soul of the newly established school, where he faced problems unknown from the previous experience, as the lack of notebooks, school equipment, chalk, books and textbooks was particularly affecting”.<sup>33</sup>

As he recalls, the ceremony of opening the new school was a perfect opportunity to unite the local community. The events were often participated by the local authorities, with poem declamations or singing patriotic songs making “the atmosphere of comfort and mobilization, contributing to the mutual process of getting to know each other and establishing social bonds between settled Polish newcomers, coming from not only various parts of Poland or Europe, but also from all over the world”.<sup>34</sup>

However, the positive atmosphere was soon spoiled by the political and administrative authorities, as “the party and state authority of People’s Republic of Poland controlled the social life, imposing by administrative measures the binding interpretation of the reality around, restricting at the same time the possibility to speak one’s mind in public, or to manifest the confession. Particular attention was drawn to the school propaganda, that was to create a “new man” manifesting scientific point

<sup>31</sup> Styś, K. (1970): *Rozwój szkolnictwa podstawowego w powiecie złotoryjskim w latach 1945–1965*. Lublin, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> *Kronika Szkoły Podstawowej w Imbramowicach 1945–1975* (chronicle in Polish).

<sup>33</sup> Co nam zostało z tamtych lat? czyli 50-lecie Szkoły Podstawowej w Pasieczniku. *Sami Swoi*, Miesięcznik lokalny Lubomierza 1996, nr 39, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Styś, K.: *Rozwój szkolnictwa podstawowego...*, op. cit., p. 12.

of view concurrently applying “socialistic morality” in his/her conduct”.<sup>35</sup> The school became a subject to supervision and “harsh punitive and retaliate measures, forcing to follow and serve the imposed ideology”.<sup>36</sup>

The teacher was to become the direct executor of such tasks, also being a subject to control and determined ideological training. Teachers unwilling to surrender to the pressure of the party apparatus were expelled from the school and out of the profession. Along with him/her, his/her documents confirming the employment would also disappear. In such mysterious way some documents from 1952/1953 concerning the teacher Stefan Modelski (a historian) vanished from the grammar school in Lwówek Śląski, when he got into conflict with the authorities, as he refused to teach the mendacious version of the history. He was immediately dismissed, deprived of any sources of income, and the traces of his existence and work there (from 1<sup>st</sup> September 1950)<sup>37</sup> remained solely on the protocols of the teaching staff committees and photos taken in the classroom during lessons.

The initiator of a veterinary clinic and agricultural school in Bierutów (launched on 1<sup>th</sup> September 1946), Jerzy Szmurło, was working as a headmaster of this school until 1949, then in October of that year he was arrested, charged with the propaganda against People’s Republic of Poland and financial embezzlement at school, and finally – collaboration with the Germans during the Second World War. After 6 months of custody in the Security Office in Oleśnica, a show trial took place. Nevertheless, it must be stated, that a positive opinion of the suspect given by the villagers of Buków remained in the files.<sup>38</sup> However, despite the fact that nothing was proved to J. Szmurło concerning the charges, he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment, concurrently being deprived of his previously granted land property.<sup>39</sup>

Similar actions of the authorities were aimed at some active members of the Polish Scout Associations. For instance, in September 1948, as a result of pressure from the local authorities of Bolesławiec, the pack leader Hubert Bonin, resigned from managing the local team. Depriving

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<sup>35</sup> Kryńska, E. J. – Mauersberg, S. (2003): *Indoktrynacja młodzieży szkolnej w Polsce w latach 1945–1956*. Białystok, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Theiss, W. (1996): *Zniewolone dzieciństwo*. Warszawa 1996, p. 128.

<sup>37</sup> Certificate of employment dated October 1950, private collection (in Polish).

<sup>38</sup> Copy of a letter at the author’s.

<sup>39</sup> His brother Witold died in Katyń. See: Lista *ofiar i zaginionych jeńców obozów Kozielsk, Staszaków, Starobielsk*. Ed. Szcześniak, A. L. (1989). Warszawa, p. 161. Jerzy’s son was denied access to university and was sent to the compulsory military service in a penal colony, where he worked in a coal mine.

him of this activity was caused by the fact that during the Second World War he actively participated in the sabotage operations of the conspiracy scout's organization.

The above-recalled short, individual stories of various persons indicate the trends in the staff policy in education after 1945. Unfortunately, those most active, best educated, having significant experience in didactic and social work were often cut off from the young society, whereas the others decided to resign from this profession.