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## Secret Vocational Education in Poland: Organizational and Pedagogical Aspects (1939-1944)

### Abstract

The article is devoted to organizational and pedagogical aspects of secret vocational education during the Nazi occupation of Poland (1939-1944). It analyses the problems of vocational training in the context of the development of a network of secret education in the country during the whole period of occupation. Special attention is paid to the activity of secret educational organizations, coordinating and governing centers of Polish underground tutoring which carried out the organizational arrangements of professional tuition on the basis of officially functioning professional schools. The attention is focused on didactic aspects of secret vocational teaching, curricula, educational process.

**Keywords:** the Nazi occupation, secret vocational education, organizational and pedagogical principles, educational process, officially functioning professional institutions, professional schools of low and high levels, curricula, complete sets.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Polish education has a long history and often its development took place in complex political and socio-economic conditions caused by the national liberation struggle of Polish people. We consider the study and research of complex issues related to the establishment and development of secret vocational training during the Nazi occupation (1939-1944) of particular interest. Despite difficult conditions in occupied territories the members of educational secret organizations, teachers managed to organize underground preparation on the basis of officially functioning professional institutions. This has contributed greatly to the foundation basis of a qualitative post-war Polish vocational education.

It is worth while noting that the system of training young people in Poland in the interwar period passed a complicated way of its formation. Vocational training until the reform of Yanush Yendzheievych in 1932 did not have a clear structure and that reorganization compiled it to some extent (Ustawa Ust.Szk, 1933).

The events of World War II, namely the period of the Nazi occupation and the emergence of underground vocational education brought changes in the development and establishment of Polish professional education. According to our belief, the retrospective analysis of the investigated problem may show a valuable experience of secret vocational schools which functioned at that historical period and can be even used in modern modernization processes of vocational education.

Analysis of research and publications, historical and pedagogical aspects of secret professional schooling of investigated period, its organizational and pedagogical principles are reflected in the scientific heritage of Marian Walchak, Wladyslaw Gluchowski, Aniela Zavadzka, Janina Kazmirska, Lidia Kozakovna, Joseph Krasuski, Tadeush Yalmuzhna etc. The relevance of historical and pedagogical study of the problem of formation, organization of professional secret training in Poland during the occupation is undeniable.

According to archival sources and Polish historical and pedagogical concepts of terminology professional, vocational training are used in synonymous meanings.

The objective of the research is to explore organizational and pedagogical principles, stages of development of underground vocational education in Poland during the occupation (1939-1944) on the basis of a holistic comparative analysis of its genesis.

## MAIN PART

The period of the Nazi occupation of Polish people was one of the most dramatic periods of its history. The Nazis knew that it was difficult to turn into slaves freedom-loving people with a thousand-year history, so since the beginning of capture it was decided to expand an attack on Polish education, science and culture. Methods and means of destruction were quite varied and used within three main directions: the fight against science and education, the extermination of intellectuals, the elimination of any display of cultural life. All Polish educational institutions and facilities on lands which were included in the Reich were forbidden. However, on the territory of the General Governorship (further: GG) German administration permitted functioning of primary and vocational schools of low level.

We remind that German authorities initially banned all institutions of secondary and higher education, but gave a permission to continue functioning vocational schools. Dramatic changes in Polish professional schooling started in autumn of 1939. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of November Hans Frank issued a decree according to which vocational training institutions had to continue their activities, but the terms “gymnasium”, “lyceum” were strictly forbidden (Krasuski, 1989: 146-148). These were three and later two-year vocational schools of low level instead of pre-war four-year professional schools. Besides, such subjects as Economic Geography, Contemporary History of Poland, History of Poland were removed from the curricula. Instead of pre-war three-year professional schools the Germans allowed

biennial schools of high degree, but without many disciplines – Military Training, Basic Economics, Socio-Political System. Both types of schools eliminated from teaching process Physical Education, Polish and instead of them new disciplines were introduced such as Correspondence, Commercial Arithmetic, Basic Economic Knowledge, Hygiene, Organization of Trade Technology (Walczak, 1989: 284).

Subsequently there was another reorganization of Polish professional education. Its initiator was again Hans Frank, who on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April in 1941 issued a new decree on vocational schooling in GG. The document substantiated theoretical bases of vocational education (Głuchowski, 1963: 395). A fundamental element of that decree was cancelling all previously existed statutes and regulations relevant to vocational education, namely the III<sup>rd</sup> (15-18), the V<sup>th</sup> (24-35) sections of School System Law adopted on March 11, 1932 (DzU 1932: 639 - 645); the Resolution of the Minister of National Education and Creeds adopted in November 21, 1933 about the organization of vocational schooling (DzUr 1933: poz. 202). The document had come into force since June 1, 1941 and all statute acts were to lose power until June 30, 1941 (Piotrowski, 1956: 382). The system of professional training as defined by the German administration since April 29, 1941 we have represented in Fig.1

As we can see, new regulations provided the division of vocational education into vocational and technical schools, compulsory vocational schools for young workers with gained education in the amount of 7 grades of primary school, pre-professional schools of low level (trade, craft, housing, women's crafts), professional schools of high level, teaching courses.

It is necessary to emphasize that German authorities approved most activities of vocational schools of low level, which taught various crafts. They were mandatory, three-year free educational establishments, where it was allowed to teach following subjects in Polish: Religion, Specialty Introduction, Professional Correspondence, Arithmetic, Practical Training (on machine) etc. In general, theoretical subjects allocated 8 hours per week.

Among the hierarchy of professional training it is worth noting compulsory vocational and technical schools for working youth who failed to get an education. Weekly workload of theoretical subjects constituted about 6-8 hours. At the end of schooling students had to pass a qualifying examination to acquire the level of "prentice" (junior specialist).

Let us analyze three-year pre-professional training activities of low level schools, which were planned for unemployed people and emerged instead of liquidated professional schools. Subjects which were compulsory in secondary schools were excluded from the curriculum and instead of them there were special disciplines introduced such as Physical Metallurgy, Electrical Engineering, Carpentry etc. In addition, there were introduced two-year professional schools of high level (level II) the entrance to which involved a complex exam and the age of admission was at least 18 (Król, 1979: 88-89).

Finally, note that among those types of vocational training institutions there were many courses which famous Polish researcher Marian Walchak called teaching. It should be emphasized that in most cases they were preliminary courses to enter professional schools of high degree. Typically, the preparation lasted two and later one year. We highlight that there was nothing said about guidance and methodological support of vocational education in the new curriculum. However, the Circular of October 1, 1941 indicated the prohibition of the usage of textbooks which were not recommended by the Primary School Council in Krakow. As we know, German authorities approved only one textbook on Commercial Arithmetic (Głuchowski, 1963: 417). However, in practice teachers used prewar textbooks and manuals whenever it was possible, at least those which related to professional disciplines. We highlight that since 1941, vocational schools had to use a periodical "Profession and Life", suggested by the German authorities.

Studying the historical and educational heritage of professional schooling in Poland during the Nazi occupation, we concluded that one of the main factors that led to the emergence of underground vocational education was a prohibition of lyceums and gymnasiums and the establishment of institutions of low rank; the removal of theoretical and practical disciplines from the curriculum relevant to a particular profession; an urgent need for training skilled workers for German warfare industry, providing students with the so called "legitimation" that guaranteed them protection from a forced removal to work in Reich. The distribution of a network of secret professional schooling became possible due to the mobilization of efforts of secret education organizers, teachers of vocational schools, students and parents. It is significant that allowed by the Germans vocational schools became institutions of secret education on the basis of which pre-war programs of vocational, secondary schools (lyceums, gymnasiums), higher educational institutions were implemented.

It is worth while remarking that in the first period of occupation professional schooling issues were in the focus of Secret Government. Thus, coordination, training and educational activity of underground vocational institutions became possible thanks to Inter-organizational Coordinating Commission of Teaching Organizations and Unions (further: ICC), "fives of directors", Professional School Teachers Association (further: PSTA), the Secret Organization of Teachers (further: SOT), the Department of Education and Culture of the Delegation of Government (further: DEaC).

We remind that, ICC originated in December 8, 1939 and its purpose was to conduct educational policies aimed at fighting the invaders, to organize a secret education on the bases of primary, vocational establishments, allowed by the Germans, to form underground complete sets of secondary and higher education. However, soon its activity was limited to Warsaw and Warsaw Province due to the emergence of DEaC in 1941, which became the central coordinating managing body of secret education. Later on, DEaC created the Department of Vocational Training, which took care of secret teaching regulations at this level.

In its turn, the Secret Organization of Teachers, as an effective guidance body of underground education issued an appeal in 1942, which ran about the program bases policy of secret vocational schooling, namely, the creation of secret complete sets based on legally existed professional schools, teaching disciplines forbidden by Germans, the usage of pre-war curricula, ensuring the highest number of students of secondary education (AZG ZNP, sygn. 24: t. 33).

We put forward a suggestion to analyze the forms of secret education in the handling of which a special role was played by the Organization of Directors of secondary, public and private schools. Their goal was to create underground complete sets, to conduct control over them, to follow the rules of conspiracy. That initiative was put forward by their so-called “directorial fives” which coordinated secret educational establishments, conducted consultations at subordinated to them schools. The main tasks which faced the “directorial fives” at the level of vocational education were to involve teaching staff to use pre-war curricula, to allow some schools to issue certificates of the complete or incomplete secondary education. We may illustrate the activity of one “directorial five” in Warsaw (1940-1941), after the executive leadership of professional educational institutions had received official training programs from the German administration. The above mentioned association included Adam Bedynski (the representative of industrial vocational school of level II), Wincenty Chervinski (the representative of industrial vocational schools of level I), Maria Bratkowska (the representative of female vocational schools), Szczepan Bonkovski (the representative of trade vocational schools), Leonia Strzelchaykova (the representative of vocational training (Walczak, 1989: 285).

According to the results of research of Marian Walchak, Janina Kazmirska, Jozef Krasuski, the following forms of secret training in professional schools in the period of occupation are distinguished: the first form provided training on the basis of educational institutions allowed by occupation authorities at formal or additional classes, the second form, less common, included the functioning of secret complete sets organized at legally existed educational institutions or at private apartments (Walczak, 1993: 89; Kazmierska, 1980: 186; Krasuski, 1977: 157). Lecture material was written in two versions. The first – according to official vocational school program, and the second was implemented in accordance with the requirements of the pre-war training programs and taught secretly.

We offer to consider an educational process which took place secretly at some vocational schools. One of the first institutions which started its conspiratorial activities was Mechanical school, I in Warsaw. Classes were divided into two groups, in one group lessons were held in accordance with the official curriculum, in another there were taught prohibited by Germans disciplines. Subsequently, groups changed their roles, but in the case of inspection they conducted teaching normally.

One of officially functioning professional schools which joined the network of conspiratorial vocational secondary education was a two-year City Female Trade

School in Warsaw. Secret learning was held in accordance with the program of a four-year Trade Gymnasium (Program nauki, 1935: 6). Therefore, there was a problem of keeping students at school not for 2 years according to the official curricula, but for 4 years to those who entered the first class, and 3 years for those who joined the second class. Germans prohibited such disciplines at that school, such as, Polish, History of Poland, Geography, Chemistry, Mathematics and which were taught secretly while studying official subjects, such as Commercial Arithmetic, Commercial Correspondence, Technique of Advertising etc.

In similar way the majority of vocational secondary schools performed in many provinces of occupied country. In most cases these were one or two-year schools. We would like to single out City Trade Schools in Lodz District, which occupied a proper place in the network of secret professional institutions, particularly in Lowicz, Piotrkow-Trybunalski, Skierniewice etc. Secret training in these institutions we have reflected in Table 1.

**Tab. 1.** Secret training in Trade schools, Lodz District (1941-1942)

Name of Institution	Secret training curriculum	Permitted disciplines	Prohibited disciplines
City Trade School (Lowicz)	III-IV forms of Trade gymnasium	Commercial Arithmetic, Commercial Correspondence	Polish, Mathematics
City Trade School (Peterkuv- Trybunalski)	I-IV forms of Trade gymnasium, I form of trade lyceum	Technique of Advertising, Merchandizing	History, Geography, Physical Training, Religion
City Trade School (Skierniewice)	I-IV forms of Trade gymnasium	Fundamentals of Economics, Hygiene, Organization and Technique of Trade	Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, History of Poland, Polish

**Source:** T. Jałmużna, *Tajne nauczanie na ziemi łódzkiej: 1939-1945*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Łódź 1977, s.192 - 193.

Merchant Male Gymnasium in Krakow also adhered to the underground training during the Nazi occupation, but in the status of trade school. The Germans removed from the curriculum such subjects as Military Training, Physical Training (Bodily Exercises), not only in the above location, but in all vocational institutions of that type. Teaching of those disciplines within the secret tutoring was practically impossible, notwithstanding the importance of physical training for young people. Note the fact, that students were able to use Polish textbooks in other subjects, including disciplines in specialty (Kozakówna, 1971: 108).

It is worth mentioning that Charles Sitarts contributed to the development of underground professional training. He organized a secret automotive school "Iskra" in May, 1942 in Warsaw. That foundation was to train specialists in driving vehicles, namely, motorcycles, cars, motor boats, trains etc. With the growing popularity of the institution within underground network, a significant number of young people entered it to gain a specialty of mechanic, electrician. School consisted of 22 training places where classes were conducted, among the most

important was Handicraft Establishment (Khmilna Street). The course was related to the structure, maintenance, operation of internal combustion engines. Generally over 500 people left that automotive school (Czerwiński, 1967: 234-235).

Our exploration is complicated by the lack of statistical data of people trained at secret establishments in occupied Poland. The main reason is the principles of conspiracy in the underground, which demanded minimal written documentation. However, the results of the research of a well-known Polish scientist Janina Kazmirska, based on the Acts of the Verification Commission in Warsaw School District run that there were about 1,480 graduates of secret professional lyceums, and 315 – graduates of secret professional gymnasiums (Kazmirska, 1980: 187). In Lodz District 23 students of City Trade Schools received certificates of complete high school (gymnasium), and 116 students earned high school certificates at Trade School in Skierniewice (Walczak, 1989: 291); 27 students left Trade School in Siedlce and received certificates of completion of four years Merchant High Gymnasium named after Aniela Zawadzka (Zawadska, 1986: 114).

We draw attention to positive dynamics of secret polish youth vocational training which was observed in the investigating period. According to the data of Central Bureau of the Archive of Polish Teachers Union in Warsaw, the dynamic of professional schooling was as follows (see Table 2).

**Tab. 2.** Dynamics of Development of Secret Professional Secondary Education in the Territory of GG (1939-1945)

School year	1939-1940	1940-1941	1941-1942	1942-1943	1943-1944	1944-1945
Teachers	94	226	347	433	420	123
Students	1126	2504	3381	4020	3327	967
School leavers	127	206	614	966	1025	121

**Source:** AZG ZNP, Szkolnictwo polskie jawne i tajne w okresie wojny i okupacji, sygn. 24/25, ankietę szkół zawodowych, ank.7.

Consequently, according to the documents, we can conclude that quantitative vocational training institutions of Polish youth grow up to 1943. As we see from the table 2, in 1942-1943 more than 4 thousand students gained secondary specialized education secretly, representing 5% of the total number of students who were trained in underground secondary institutions, 5.7% – of the total number of students educated in pre-war trade gymnasiums and lyceums in 1937-1938.

The contribution of vocational schooling in secret training at the higher level was extremely essential. Some professional schools of high level, mainly in Warsaw, Krakow, were known to carry out an underground preparation for entry into higher education institutions, to create complete sets, which implemented curricula of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> courses of higher education institutions. The emphasis made, that the main personnel consisted of dismissed from the universities lecturers and professors.

According to the analysis of research materials, the accumulation of secret complete sets on the basis of professional high level schools was due to devoting work of teachers from Warsaw Polytechnic University liquidated by Germans, located in the building of the same institution. It is worth while mentioning Public Building School (underground education was headed by Prof. Edward Varkhalovski, Warsaw Polytechnic University), National School of Telecommunications and Electrical Engineering (underground education was headed by Professor Prof. Roman Trechtsinski, Warsaw Polytechnic University), Molding State School (underground education was headed by Professor Prof. Kazymir Gerdziyevski, Warsaw Polytechnic University). These were two-year institutions and teaching was carried out at high methodical and scientific level, mainly by professors of Warsaw Polytechnic University, but also by professors of the Polytechnic University of Lviv, the University of Warsaw and the Academy of Arts. Some of them simultaneously worked at the State High Technical School, which began to function officially on April 20, 1942 and taught such subjects as Construction Business Basis, Construction Machinery, Technical Chemistry (Walczak, 1989: 298).

We cannot eliminate such an outstanding polish scientist and active contributor in secret education as Stephan Bryla, who served as Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of secret Warsaw Polytechnic University during the German occupation. Since the functioning of the State High Technical School he organized an underground architecture teaching there. Secret teaching was the cause of arrest of a well-known activist. He was arrested on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November in 1943 together with his family and killed during Action B by the Germans in Warsaw on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, 1943.

In Krakow it became possible to provide students of the Academy of Mining Industry with higher education at the existing State High Mining and Metallurgy School. The former rector of the Academy of Mining Industry, Valerii Gotel became the Director of School, who closely cooperated with Stephan Charnetski, Izydor Stella-Savitski, Adam Liutkevich, Marian Mensovich etc. Lecturers along with the official plan implemented secret training at the higher level (AZG ZNP, sygn. 24/103: 82).

Among medical educational institutions our attention is drawn to Yan Zaorski Professional School that prepared sanitary and service personnel and provided secret training in the field of medicine. It should be noted that the school was located in one of the buildings of the University of Warsaw and lecturers had an access to some laboratories. There was realized the first two years training program of medical universities there (Zaorski, 1946: 1145-1146).

Note that the German administration officially allowed various kinds of courses which served as the foundation of secret professional education. Thus, we mention the functioning of Technical Drawings Courses of Zenon Yahodzinski in Warsaw, where it was managed to organize secret complete sets of Warsaw Polytechnic University throughout the whole period of occupation. They realized the curriculum of the first year of studies, mainly, architectural and mechanical di-

rections, later electrical engineering. According to the research of Annetta Ignatowich there were about 800 students at those courses in 1944 (Ignatowicz, 2009: 87).

## CONCLUSION

Thus, we have briefly analyzed organizational and pedagogical principles of secret vocational education in occupied Poland in 1939-1944. Professional teaching played an essential role in the establishment and development of a network of secret education around the whole country. An important fact is that in many secret educational establishments of this type, including gymnasiums and lyceums, pre-war training programs were implemented, taught disciplines prohibited by German invaders. The most common forms of professional training were secret teaching in the classroom according to official workload of this or that school, work in secret complete sets which occurred rarely. Organizers of underground professional schooling were actively engaged in coordinating activities in that field, teachers showed true courage and dedication, realizing that the effectiveness and results of Polish vocational education was sure to effect the economic development of society after the war.

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