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# Schools of the Commission of National Education's Polesian Department (1773—1794)

**Summary:** The extensive literature on the functioning of schools in the era of the Commission of National Education (KEN) has not addressed in full all the questions that we ask with regard to how the education reform was implemented in the specific departments of the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Current research aims at complementing crucial information in that respect. It also allows assessing the level and scope of enforcement of the Commission's Acts in the schools' practice.

**Keywords:** Commission of National Education, Polesian Department

The profound transformation of the education system in its organisation and teaching syllabus under the influence of the Enlightenment's philosophical currents and the then state's economic and political needs aimed at remodelling the mindset of the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth's society. The school was intended to shape the citizen, who was seen as a patriot who understood the need to reform the state. Therefore, the school constituted the core of the reform process that was meant to radiate onto the entire social life in the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

As Kalina Bartnicka notes, “the starting point was the situation at the time of establishing of the KEN in 1773, as well as a certain ideological concept”<sup>1</sup> which had to take account of the country's internal and external political situation. The fact that the Commission of National Education (KEN) was granted such a high status and appointed as the central body in charge of a new range of national competencies, i.e. the education system, was proof of how important the decisions were with regard to educating the young generation. The school's

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<sup>1</sup> K. Bartnicka, “Formowanie się wileńskiego uniwersyteckiego ośrodka badań przyrodniczych”, in *Wkład wileńskiego ośrodka naukowego w przyrodnicze poznanie kraju (1781—1842)*, ed. J. Babicz, W. Grębecka, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1988, 17.

educational and organisational concept was devised by the Commission's enlightened members and their associates who decisively made their point on raising a "new" generation of Poles.

The Commission's work involved a series of issues, such as creating the school administration, where the department was the principal entity; establishing the school network and its organisational tiers; devising new teaching syllabi and textbooks; stressing the importance of Christian and citizen-orientated upbringing and securing the role of the Polish language in the teaching process; appointing the teachers' supervision authority and defining its responsibilities; subjugating the monastic education system in terms of its organisation and syllabus; defining educational requirements for and competencies of teachers; embarking on projects for the parochial and women's education system; conducting reforms of the old universities (in Kraków and Vilnius) and converting them into Main Schools (the Crown's Main School and the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania); putting in order the finances of the entire education system. The scope of the Commission's responsibilities enumerated above is testament to the magnitude of work that had to be undertaken and completed within a relatively short period, e.g. given the opposition mounted by a significant part of the nobility against the reforms. The entire period of the school reform is characterised by the Commission's struggle to effectively implement the plans, secure the financial backing, win public support for the plans of the education reform and consistently put them into practice against the odds. As Kamilla Mrozowska indicated, the Commission's work was concentrated on "instilling in young people a new system of values"<sup>2</sup> and raising them with a view to implementing Christian tasks.

The school reform was a gigantic undertaking that required involving a number of people and launching works that would be conducted parallelly, in a synchronised manner, and precisely planned.

The Commission's intensive work resulted eventually in an administrative division of the First Commonwealth in 1783, according to which, after the schools' verification and correction, the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were to include four departments: the Lithuanian Department with its seat in Grodno, the Navahrudak Department, the Samogitian Department in Kražiai and the Polesian Department in Brest. These departments were entrusted to two Lithuanian commissioners: Ignacy Jakub Massalski and Joachim Chreptowicz<sup>3</sup>.

The Polesian Department included a department school in Brest and sub-department schools in Pinsk, Biała and Slonim. The latter school was closed

<sup>2</sup> K. Mrozowska, *By Polaków zrobić obywatelami*, Kraków, 1993, 1.

<sup>3</sup> I. Szybiak, "Sieć szkół średnich Komisji Edukacji Narodowej", in eadem, *Szkola, nauczyciel, wychowanie*, ed. J. Kamińska, A. Fijałkowski, Warsaw, 2016, 225.

down in 1783. The department also included two Piarist monastic schools in Liubeshiv and Dąbrowica and a Basilian monastic school in Zhyrovichy. This short list is proof that the department included a small group of schools, which was due to the schools' geographical location and the specific characteristics of this region in the geographical, natural and social sense<sup>4</sup>. The Polesia region covered the area of 48,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Marshes and swamplands covered as much as 56% of the region's area, which seriously limited the scope of settlements and township development. As a result, the schools were set up in the fringes of the department, close to the borders of the Navahrudak, Lithuanian, Volhynian and Mazovian (in the case of Brest and Biała) Departments.

The schools' relative proximity had its advantages. The efforts undertaken to secure high attendance among students could contribute to raising the school's didactic and educational levels. There were, however, also disadvantages. The school in Slonim was outrivalled by the Zhyrovichy school and was consequently closed down in 1783 due to the low number of students attending.

Analysing the literature on the KEN schools allows concluding that research interest of multiple authors has primarily concentrated on the Crown, with particular focus on the reform of the Kraków Academy, undertaken by Hugo Kollątaj<sup>5</sup>. In the case of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the issue of school functioning, e.g. the Vilnius Main School, was the subject of research

<sup>4</sup> The issues concerning Polesia's geographical characteristics are discussed by such authors as: T. Chrzanowski, *Kresy, czyli Obszary tęsknot*, Kraków, 2001; F.A. Ossendowski, *Polesie*, Poznań, 1934; *Polesie*, ed. L. Grodzicki, Warsaw, 1936; J. Mękarska, *Wędrówka po ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej*, London, 1966; K. Kontrym, *Podróż Kontryma, urzędnika banku polskiego, odbyta w roku 1829 po Polesiu*, ed. E. Raczyński, Poznań, 1839; W. Choroszewski, "Poszukiwania geologiczne dokonane w ostatnich latach na Polesiu", *yy Pamiętnik Fizyjograficzny* 1, 1881, 115—132; S. Krasucki, *Polesie*, Bydgoszcz, 1998; *Ekskursja z Pińska ponad Prypecią do Doroszewicz z powiatu Mozyrskiego z ogólną na Polesie uwagą pod względem przemysłu, a osobliwie handlowego w roku 1829*, Ossolineum, Manuscript Department, 5, 1, 5323; W. Mondalski, *Polesie. Zarys wiadomości ogólnych*, Brest-on-the-Bug, 1927; S. Wysłouch, *Dawne drogi Polesia. Ze studjów nad historją gospodarczą Polesia w XVI—XVIII w.*, Vilnius, 1937; Z. Gloger, *Geografia historyczna ziem dawnej Polski*, Kraków, 1903; A. Rehman, *Kotlina Prypeci i błota pińskie*, Warsaw, 1886; R. Horoszkiewicz, *Tradycje ziemi pińskiej*, Warsaw, 1935; *Przewodnik po Litwie i Białejrusi*, ed. N. Rouba, Vilnius, 1908.

<sup>5</sup> For example: M. Chamcówna, *Uniwersytet Jagielloński w dobie Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Szkoła Główna Koronna w latach 1786—1795*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1959; M. Chamcówna, *Uniwersytet Jagielloński w dobie Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Szkoła Główna Koronna w okresie wizyty i rektoratu Hugona Kollątaja 1777—1786*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1957; H. Kollątaj, *Raporty o wizycie i reformie Akademii Krakowskiej*, ed. M. Chamcówna, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1967; H. Barycz, *Uniwersytet Jagielloński w życiu narodu polskiego*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1964.

conducted by such scholars as Józef Bieliński and Janina Kamińska<sup>6</sup>. The multiple authors writing on the history of the education system in the days of the KEN focused their attention on the work of the particular schools, primarily in the Crown, issues related to the syllabus and textbooks and the work of the Commission's outstanding collaborators. Among works presenting the operations of schools in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (parochial, sub-department, department and the Vilnius Main School) and their teachers, Irena Szybiak's two monographs deserve special mention<sup>7</sup>.

The minutes of KEN sessions of the years 1773—1785, edited by Mieczysława Mitera-Dobrowolska, and of the years 1786—1794, edited by Tadeusz Mizia, provide information on the Polesian Department<sup>8</sup>. Both collections of documents report in chronological order on the issues discussed and decisions made at the Commission's meetings, including issues concerning the Polesian Department. As Mitera-Dobrowolska and Mizia point out, they are not original reports but copies made by the copier who only partly discharged his duty. Therefore, in order to obtain a more complete picture of the Commission's work and of how particular schools and their teaching teams operated, it was necessary to complement the information contained in these authors' works. The research material was partly complemented by minutes of KEN sessions, collected by Teodor Wierzbowski, especially notebooks 37, 38 and 39<sup>9</sup>. For the purposes of the Polesian Department monograph, original handwritten materials from the Manuscript Department of the Vilnius University Library have been used as well. The scope of the Commission's work is well documented by general school inspectors' reports<sup>10</sup>, elected by the Commission first and the Main Schools later on (for the Crown — the Kraków School, for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania — the Lithuanian Main School). School inspectors made

<sup>6</sup> J. Bieliński, *Uniwersytet Wileński (1579—1831)*, 1—3, Kraków, 1899—1900; J. Kamińska, *Universitas Vilnensis. Akademia Wileńska i Szkoła Główna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1773—1792*, Pułtusk—Warsaw, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> I. Szybiak, *Szkolnictwo Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1973; I. Szybiak, *Nauczyciele szkół średnich Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1980.

<sup>8</sup> *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, ed. M. Mitera-Dobrowolska, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1973; *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, ed. T. Mizia, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1969.

<sup>9</sup> *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1777*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1910; *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1778—1780*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1913; *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1781—1785*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1915.

<sup>10</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim (1782—1792)*, ed. K. Bartnicka, I. Szybiak, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1974.

a significant contribution to the education system reforms, as they guarded the enforcement of all the provisions set out in the Acts. It was the school inspectors' team that rendered the ultimate shape of the reform by exercising control over, instructing and verifying the schools' work.

Following 1783, school visitations were conducted on a regular basis. The following people made visitations in the Polesian Department: Priests Franciszek Bienkowski, Dawid Pilchowski, Bernard Siruć, Ksawery Bohusz, Władysław Tautkiewicz, Jan Erdman, Wincenty Treffler (extraordinary school inspector), Michał Piotrowski and Antoni Obrąpalski. The visitations' agenda in particular schools was set out by the KEN in the form of instructions<sup>11</sup> that pointed to issues requiring particular attention, e.g. extending thanks to the schools' authorities and teachers or drawing the school inspectors' attention to specific issues concerning the school community. Instructions are testament to meticulous analysis of post-visitation reports by the KEN, which led them to formulating conclusions for subsequent visitations.

## Brest

A college run by the Jesuit Order had existed in Brest prior to 1773. The school had been amply equipped by Bazyli Kościuszko (1650) and the plot of land gifted by Jędrzej Gałęmski (1670) for the purpose of the college construction allowed for the development of education in town. Courses in philosophy and theology had been conducted at the richly equipped college since the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>.

Following the Jesuit Order suppression, the Commission took over the school. Initially, it was a province school, and next, following the state's administrative transformation, it was a department, six-class (seven-year) school employing six teachers, the rector (of the department) and the prefect.

The state of repair of the acquired buildings was appalling. In the opinion of the rector, Priest Ignacy Buchowiecki, the church and the school required profound remodelling. Issues of necessary repairs were recurrent in visitation reports of 1781—1791<sup>13</sup>. They caused the rector's concern but were never resolved apart from some ad hoc moves.

Through the years 1773—1795, the Brest department school employed 22 people: the rector, 18 teachers, the prefect, the school preacher and a *metr* German teacher. Amongst the teaching staff, the person of the school's rector

<sup>11</sup> *Instrukcje dla wizytatorów generalnych szkół Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1774—1794*, ed. K. Bartnicka, I. Szybiak, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1976.

<sup>12</sup> *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, 150.

<sup>13</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 288, 486, 488, 527.

deserves special mention, as he received a number of accolades from school inspectors for the way he discharged his duties. He was “diligent in his office, educating the more needy nobility youth at his own cost”<sup>14</sup>. His hard work, caring for the students and the teaching levels at the school were all emphasised. Other teachers, including Priests Antoni Obrąpalski, Joachim Kulesza, Andrzej Tukayło and Felicjan Dąbrowski, also received supreme evaluation. The latter teacher received particular distinction by school inspector Erdman for his ability to explain the assumptions of mathematics<sup>15</sup>. In 1791, the school inspector observed the students’ positive attitude to the teachers indicated in the report, Tukayło and Dąbrowski, who “had earned trust and utmost respect, common among all students”<sup>16</sup>. The teachers who were bonded with the Brest school for many years included Priest Michał Kulesza, a former Jesuit, and German *metr* teacher Placyd Winsch (Order of Saint Augustine). The teachers largely constituted a cohesive team, with the exception of Andrzej Onyszkiewicz, one of the first secular teachers in Lithuania, who was unable to adapt to the ways of collective life imposed by the Acts. In 1786, he left the academic estate and was soon dismissed by Rector Buchowiecki.

However, the majority of teachers remained in Brest for a short while. Looking at the routes of their educational work, it shows they worked for short periods at numerous schools of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Kaunas, Nyasvizh, Navahrudak, Grodno, Kretinga, Kražiai, Pinsk, Biała, Kobryn). In the case of the Brest department school, significant changes in the teaching staff were not rare. As the analysis of the Polesian Department’s monastic schools will demonstrate, the turnover of the teaching staff was definitely the biggest there. The question arises: what were the motifs for the teachers to decide to relocate in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania?

The Brest school’s students in their majority came from the Brest Province. There were also individual students from the areas of Płock, Vilnius, Sieradz and Poznań<sup>17</sup>. Over the years, the average number of students in Brest amounted to some 180<sup>18</sup>. The year 1783 was an exception when that number fell to 165<sup>19</sup>. Since 1788, the number of students had systematically been rising to reach 200 in 1792<sup>20</sup>. The school’s students consisted predominantly of Roman Catholics.

<sup>14</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> VUB, DC 76, 1.

<sup>16</sup> VUB, DC 83, 7.

<sup>17</sup> VUB, DC 86, 16, 17, 17a.

<sup>18</sup> *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, 102.

<sup>20</sup> VUB, DC 83, 7.

“Some candidates for Greek Catholic priests” could study there<sup>21</sup> as well. In 1782, a certificate of completion the Brest department school was presented by Justyn Budziłowicz, a priest of the parish of Murava (Polesia Deanery)<sup>22</sup>.

The boys were divided into classes. The numbers of boys in a class varied. For example, in 1783, Class 1 consisted of 90 students and Class 4 — of 10<sup>23</sup>. The students' ages also varied in different years of education. In 1782, the youngest students of Class 1 were aged 9—10<sup>24</sup>. The oldest student in that class was 20. The huge discrepancy of the students' ages and some level of educational competency in the case of the elder students faced teachers with serious methodological challenges.

The boys who stood out because of their educational accomplishments were mentioned in reports and would receive golden or silver *Diligentiae* Medals. For example, in 1787, three students of Classes 5—8 were awarded medals<sup>25</sup>.

The methodological and educational work of the Brest department school shows that the school complied with the provisions of the Acts of the Commission of National Education. The school implemented the curriculum it was assigned and successively introduced new textbooks.

The biggest difficulties in curriculum implementation arose from the fact schools had been nationalised through introduction of some content in Polish. Those objectives were fulfilled through humanist subjects — grammar, rhetoric and poetics. The teaching of Polish was given priority by the Commission. Proportions were aptly balanced between Polish and Latin by recommending applying a comparative method between both languages. That rule went on to be reflected in Kopczyński's textbooks (*Grammatyka dla szkół narodowych na klasę I, Przepisy do „Grammatyki”, Grammatyka dla szkół narodowych na kl. II, Grammatyka dla szkół narodowych na kl. III, Uktad gramatyki dla szkół narodowych z dzieła już skończonego wyciągniony*). In most schools, teachers found it hard to accept a Kopczyński textbook. That is why the Commission made sure that copies of the book were printed and delivered to schools, including the Brest school.

Rhetoric and poetry were taught on the basis of the textbooks by Dominic de Colonia (*De arte rhetorica*), Cipriano Soarez (*De arte rhetorica libri tres*), Joseph de Jouvancy (*Institutions poeticae*) or Horace (*De arte poetica*).

<sup>21</sup> D. Wereda, “Pochodzenie i wykształcenie duchowieństwa unickiej diecezji brzeskiej w XVIII wieku”, *Studia Podlaskie* 13, 2003, 124.

<sup>22</sup> D. Wereda, “Pochodzenie...”, 124.

<sup>23</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 102.

<sup>24</sup> VUB, DC 86, 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Learning and the Polish Academy of Sciences, 5: *Education Nationale*, 2220: *List of schools and students awarded medals*, 168.

Teachers' six-month and annual reports on syllabus implementation at the Brest school provide quite detailed information on the subjects studied and methods applied — translation of Latin poems (and vice versa) and exercises in “eloquent speaking”<sup>26</sup>, which familiarised students with the works of distinguished classics. Reading of Roman writers was considered less as a way of developing the practical knowledge of Latin. Owing to its unique educational qualities, Latin carried the educational values that the KEN desired. Educational objectives were also pursued on the basis of teaching morals, law, geography and history.

At the Brest department school, less attention was attached to the teaching of mathematics. But the teachers' special interest in natural history and agriculture is reflected in advanced teachings of these subjects<sup>27</sup>. They used the books by Krzysztof Kluk (*Botanika dla szkół narodowych*) and Columella (*De re rustica*). Perhaps the syllabus in nature teaching inspired a teacher to build a garden which was a place for student outings and observations.

The teaching of natural history was delivered in the same lessons along with the teaching of physics. The lessons also addressed the issues of staying healthy, first inventions, history of art and skills.

Teachers implemented presentation methods in the field of naturalist and mathematical subjects. For example, a mathematician organised for his students exercises in the field, involving map drawing<sup>28</sup>.

The methodological and educational work of the Brest department school shows that the school complied with the provisions of the Acts of the Commission of National Education. Teachers complied with the syllabus and used the books approved by the Commission. The KEN's guiding principle — civic education for the young generation — was reflected in the implementation of particular syllabus areas.

## Pinsk

Another school, in Pinsk (originally a department school, a sub-department school later on), had been founded in 1631 by the Jesuits. Like the Brest school, the Pinsk school also had been amply equipped, which allowed for its development. The school housed the faculties of philosophy and theology. In the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the school educated from 600 to 700 students. The college's graduates include such individuals as Bishop Adam Naruszewicz (poet and historian), Karol Wyrwicz (educationalist, geographer

<sup>26</sup> VUB, DC 86, 41.

<sup>27</sup> VUB, DC 86, 33.

<sup>28</sup> VUB, DC 86, 28.



and historian) and Michał Butrymowicz (economic activist, deputy for the Four-Year Sejm<sup>29</sup>).

The Commission acquired the school in poor repair. Its walls were scratched, whereas the brick-built and wooden buildings were seriously dilapidated. Additional sums of money obtained from the Commission for repairs did not bring much improvement of its premises.

Initially, the so-called greater school was in operation, with six classes and six teachers. In 1783, it had five classes and five teachers<sup>30</sup>. A year later, the school was converted into a sub-department school with the prorektor and three teachers<sup>31</sup>. With the administrative issues being brought under the Commission's supervision, the school was incorporated into the Polesian Department in 1783<sup>32</sup>.

Like in Brest, the Pinsk school also employed teachers who tied their lives with that school for many years, such as the first prorektor, Priest Paweł Wiszniewski, who remained in his position until his death (1787). He performed his duties accurately despite his poor health and old age<sup>33</sup>. Former Jesuit Jakub Jaksa stepped in to succeed him and was at the same time appointed by the KEN as general school inspector. Former Jesuits Michał Borkowski and Antoni Chyczewski worked there for many years as well.

Chyczewski taught students both the theory and practice of geometry<sup>34</sup> and provided instruction in technical drawings. In the opinion of school inspector Bieńkowski, he deserved special recognition. In his six-month report submitted to the Commission of National Education in 1782, he indicated teaching mathematics on the basis of Simon L'Huilier's *Arytmetyka dla szkół narodowych* [*Arithmetics for national schools*]<sup>35</sup>. Teachers Jaksa, Borkowski, Chyczewski and Chodakiewicz were all mentioned in the *Instruction for the Board of the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania* of 1789, which instructed the school inspector to extend thanks to the said teachers for their diligent compliance of the Acts. Young Adam Szerpitt also earned recognition for his work. His name was mentioned in the *Instruction...* of 1790, which marked respect for his work. It also emphasised that Szerpitt had gained acknowledgment of his students on account of his extensive knowledge and the right attitude towards young people.

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<sup>29</sup> R. Horoszkiewicz, *Tradycje...*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 129.

<sup>31</sup> *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, 243.

<sup>32</sup> VUB, DC 74, 43.

<sup>33</sup> VUB, DC 75, 30.

<sup>34</sup> VUB, DC 75, 30.

<sup>35</sup> VUB, DC 86, 7.

In Pinsk, like in the Brest department school, considerable attention was paid to the teaching of law. A Class 6 teacher's report (1783) contains a list of the discussed topics, e.g. in the law of nature and common law<sup>36</sup>.

Unfortunately, it is only possible to enumerate those teachers at the Pinsk school who took up the job on a short-term basis. Nikodem Macewicz remained in Pinsk for one year. He had not earned respect among students and the other teachers owing to his mean behaviour<sup>37</sup>. Adam Drozdowski arrived in Pinsk from Yurovichy for one year but was accused of drunkenness and disregard for other teachers<sup>38</sup>. Józefat Lipiński filled the position of teacher of Class 2 and the speech class for two years (1788—1790).

School inspectors' reports indicate that books recommended by the Commission were used also at the Pinsk school (by Antoni Chyczewski or above-mentioned Jan Chodakiewicz, who used a grammar book by Kopczyński).

In accordance with the Commission's recommendation, physical education received considerable attention. The prorektor visited the students' private lodgings, urging students to care about order.

Over the years, the number of students fluctuated from 120 (1782) to 144 (1789)<sup>39</sup>.

It was pointed out in a report of 1787 that students are humble, diligent in their studies and sedate in their conduct. On the basis of the exam results of that same year, the school inspector formulated the following assessment: "those are the schools that no other could match during their entire journey"<sup>40</sup>. The reported progress was credited to the teachers: Chyczewski, Borkowski and Chodakiewicz<sup>41</sup>.

Like in Brest, discrepancies in the students' age in Pinsk were large as well. In 1787, the youngest student was 13, and Class 3 consisted of 25—26-year-old men<sup>42</sup>. That fact posed specific challenges to teachers of a methodological and educational nature.

The absolute majority of the students came from Pinsk and its environs. There were few who came from the Navahrudak area, Brest, Grodno County, Drohiczyń area, Ovruch or White Ruthenia. Problems in providing visiting boys accommodation at the dormitory and its dilapidated condition caused the interest in the Pinsk school in comparison to the other regions of Lithuania to be rather small.

<sup>36</sup> VUB, DC 74, 65.

<sup>37</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 505.

<sup>38</sup> I. Szybiak, *Nauczyciele...*, 110.

<sup>39</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 130; VUB, DC 74, 102, DC 82, 14.

<sup>40</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 303.

<sup>41</sup> VUB, DC 80, 11.

<sup>42</sup> VUB, DC 86, 88, 88a, 98a.

Progress in education was varied. Based on the reports, it is possible to indicate students who stood out and were awarded the *Diligentiae* Medal. The school community made sure that the medals would be awarded in a ceremonious manner. In 1784, the Pinsk school was visited by King Stanislaus II Augustus, who participated in the Holy Mass and listened to teachers' speeches delivered in Polish and Latin. Next, "students started speaking in different languages, in poetry and prose, like a certain Borowski and the two students bearing the name of Wołowicz, whom His Royal Highness in His sweet response urged to continue their education, awarded the rector, the prefect and the orators the golden and silver medal with the wording: *merentibus* or *diligentiae*"<sup>43</sup>.

Unsatisfactory student attendance was a serious problem for schools such as the one in Pinsk. Boys would leave the school routinely before the official completion of their education, after the summer holidays would come late to the school year opening and missed classes during their education, especially the optional lessons of German.

Teachers cared about the level of teaching by using books recommended by the Commission and introducing the syllabi designated for each class and subject. In the case of the humanities, he devised ways of teaching were based on memorising. Like in Brest, they also used presentation methods in nature classes, partly also in mathematics.

## Biała

The sub-department school in Biała was another one operating in the Polesian Department. The school's history dated back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł donated the hospital building to be used as a school, soon to be known as the Academy. In 1633, Brest canon and official and Biała Priest Krzysztof Ciborowicz Wilski had raised the school's Radziwiłł fund and brought from Kraków teachers of grammar, rhetoric, poetics and philosophy. In that same year, the school was brought under the authority of the Kraków University as an academic colony. That might have been the reason why the Biała school found it hard to accept the organisational transformation and its subjection to the KEN. The resistance against the Commission's recommendations might have arisen from insufficient information regarding the Biała school's position in the new management system. Eventually, in 1781, as a result of the new administrative division, the former Biała colony was incorporated into the Polesian Department.

<sup>43</sup> J. Łukaszewicz, *Historia szkół w Koronie i w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim od najdawniejszych czasów aż do roku 1794*, 4, Poznań, 1851, 129.

The school's state of repair was not different from the situation of the Brest and Pinsk schools. Part of the wooden buildings were not even fit for renovation works. The buildings' bad condition had been a recurrent theme in the school inspectors' reports until 1791.

The school prorector, Mikołaj Dziedzicki, a graduate of the Kraków Academy, had the longest tenure among the teachers. He had arrived in Biała in 1761 and managed the school until 1794. Dziedzicki cared for the school's development and educating the students in the KEN spirit. He was in permanent contact with Marcin Poczobut, whom he informed of all matters pertaining to the school. His work was always rated highly by school inspectors and he was regarded as one deserving particular recognition as prorector<sup>44</sup>. Teachers Jacek Lekczyński and Józef Kalasanty Nartowski, a graduate of the Biała school, also worked at the Biała school for many years. Nartowski would receive high grades from school inspectors. In his educational work, he employed diverse methods involving disciplining the students and stimulating their ambitions. An interesting method that would encourage reflection by students involved sheets of paper with moral maxims that Nartowski would put up on walls, in the light of which the students would evaluate their own conduct and misdemeanours. Józef Konopka was another teacher of the Biała school who was employed there for many years and who was rated as a good teacher. In 1790, he left the school to become the school inspector's secretary and returned to Biała after one year. In 1809, he took up the position of rector (until 1816).

Józefat Preyss, graduate of the Białystok school, tied his educational career with the Biała school. In the years 1786—1790, he studied as a candidate to the academic estate at the Lithuanian Main School. In 1791, he continued his studies in Vilnius. In 1790, he took up his first job as a teacher in Biała and was the school's rector from 1814. He worked in Biała for 37 years (until his death).

Among the teachers neglectful of their didactic and educational work, visitation reports mention Bartłomiej Cyroński, who was not regarded highly either by the prorector or school inspectors. He was alleged to make factual mistakes in his lessons and have an arrogant attitude towards his students. The negative opinions about Cyroński led to his removal from school.

The fact that the Biała sub-department school was located in the proximity of a prince's castle made parents willingly send their sons to study there, perhaps expecting that the Radziwiłłs would help the boys with their future careers. It was observed that "the youth were attracted to study there because

<sup>44</sup> *Instrukcje...*, 82; *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 24, 173, 219, 249, 287, 304, 356; *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkół...*, 100, 159, 304, 407, 506, 536; I. Szybiak, *Nauczyciele...*, 110, 142; I. Szybiak, *Szkolnictwo...*, 196, 208, 211, 215.

of the presence of the magnate's court"<sup>45</sup>. It should be noted, however, that the school owed its popularity in particular to Prorektor Dziejicki, whose methodological talent, effective management and skills at maintaining contact with the parents and students raised the interest in the school even outside the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

In their reports, school inspectors would traditionally tick off students' educational progress and award the best ones with medals. The students with best accomplishments and the medal holders would participate in annual shows, which at the Biała school always took a very ceremonious form. For example, in 1782, the audience included the Lutsk canon, superiors of the local Basilian and Franciscan monasteries and the prelates residing at the local church.

Visiting students would stay at rented private lodgings which could be found quite easily in that thriving town. In their flats, the boys remained under the supervision of the house caretaker and superior appointed by the teachers. Students were not allowed to leave the lodging without the caretaker's consent. Going out to town would always be organised in a group under a teacher's supervision, and that fact would be recorded in a student's report.

The school inspectors' reports of 1783 and 1786 mention a poor students' dormitory in Biała for four poor nobility students which did not work due to the lack of finances<sup>46</sup>.

The KEN-recommended syllabus and textbooks were complied with at the Biała school. Efforts were also made to apply presentation methods, especially in botany and physics lessons. In botany lessons, the teacher would also conduct practical classes, such as recognition of herbs or planting plants in your own garden, while "presenting other plants in drawings along with practical tables, which they also explained the inside, as they explain geometrical rules"<sup>47</sup>. Under a teacher's supervision, students would prepare quite detailed maps and schemes on the basis of technical drawings made in the Biała area. They also carried out precise measurements of the school, the Radziwiłł's castle, the church, houses in town and suburban areas.

Students' participation in ceremonies and holidays played an important part in the educational process, such as annual exams and ceremonial shows, the form of which was regulated by the Acts. They were an opportunity of promoting the school and inviting distinguished guests from town and the larger area. The ceremony of awarding outstanding students with *Diligentiae* Medals took a very ceremonious form as well. The occasion to celebrate was the name-day of Princes Hieronim and Karol Radziwiłł and the castle owners' visit to

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<sup>45</sup> VUB, DC 76, 4.

<sup>46</sup> VUB, DC 76, 50.

<sup>47</sup> VUB, DC 87, 60.

Biała. Meetings were held with the department school teachers and students. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of King John III Sobieski's Victory at Vienna was a great occasion for both the Crown and Lithuania. The students' participation in the ceremony was an element of historical education aimed at shaping patriotic and civic attitudes. The ceremony at Biała on 26 July 1791, dedicated solely to the Constitution of 3 May, had a particularly ceremonious form.

The official start and end of the school year also took a ceremonious form, granting the title of Doctor of Laws to Priest Kazimierz Mojkowski (1783) and the title of Doctor of Philosophy to two Biała teachers — Józef Konopka and Józef Kalasanty Nartowski.

The school's many years of didactic and educational work ended on 17 July 1795 with the prorektor's death. It may be that his work was continued by the teachers remaining at the school and the new generation of school graduates.

### Slonim

The short period in which the school operated in Slonim (until 1783) does not allow full presentation of the quality of education or the teachers. A Jesuit college had existed in town since 1717. In 1773, the school was converted into a smaller county school with three classes. Initially, the school had been incorporated in the Navahrudak Department. As the new administrative order began to settle, the school was eventually included in the Polesian Department. The Slonim school did not educate many students. In 1783, there were 60 students. Maintaining that school burdened the Commission's budget which was seeking perfect financial solutions. The decision was taken in 1783, "despite the protests by the local nobles, to close down the school. The problem remained, however, of how to utilise the buildings; namely, how to dispose of them by auction or sale<sup>48</sup>. Bringing into effect the Commission's decision was not easy. The buildings state of repair was disastrous, and selling them could not give the Commission huge returns. A decision was taken also regarding the teachers. During his last visitation, Pilchowski delivered the Commission's decision about keeping in the academic estate Priests Ignacy Szukiewicz and Ignacy Bronic<sup>49</sup>. After the school was closed down, some teachers took up pedagogical work in various other townships of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (e.g. in Kaunas and Khalopyenichy); others, such as trainee priest Stanisław Szteyn, gave up further pedagogical work. School inspectors rated highly Prorektor Maciej Szystowski. They also wrote positive opinions about Ignacy Szukiewicz.

<sup>48</sup> VUB, DC 74, 3; *Instrukcje...*, 34.

<sup>49</sup> VUB, DC 63, 7.

In creating the school structure, the Commission of National Education brought monastic schools under its authority. The territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania included four Piarist schools and one Basilian school<sup>50</sup>.

In 1774, the Commission commenced talks with representatives of two teaching orders, i.e. the Piarists and Basilians, who had great educational accomplishments. Regulating all matters with these congregations in the field of organisation and the curriculum guaranteed their support in the reform work.

### Dubrovysia and Liubeshiv

Two Piarist schools operated in the Polesian Department, in Dubrovysia and Liubeshiv. The Dubrovysia college, funded by Karol Dolski, was founded in 1684<sup>51</sup>. During the Commission's operation, that sub-department school was visited twice by Bieńkowski (1782 and 1785), Pilchowski (1783 and 1786) and Erdman (1787 and 1789). Other visitations were conducted by Tautkiewicz (1784), Jaxa (1788) and Lang (1791)<sup>52</sup>. All the reports communicated that the provisions of the Commission's Acts were complied with at the Dubrovysia school using the recommended books.

In the case of the Dubrovysia school, school inspectors reported on the teachers deserving good evaluations and praise, such as the prefect and speech teacher Filip Neuriusz Bonarski and *metr* teacher of German Jan Lechmani. The reports also recorded significant progress made by the students of Bonarski, who "took up some mathematics lessons as an introduction to physics which he has not taught"<sup>53</sup>. Substitutions in mathematics lessons were caused by teachers' poor qualifications in that subject, so "in more complex issues, the teachers were replaced by Bonarski, which helped the students a lot"<sup>54</sup>. That is why school inspectors gave negative evaluations about two teachers in Dubrovysia, Rafał Daniłowicz and Jan Jaczynicz, who were not qualified to teach mathematics. The Dubrovysia school stood out due to its inventions and experiments which were recorded in a special book. The extensive records from 1784 and 1785 are indicative of intensive research that was carried out, involving observations and experiments (physical and chemical). Certainly, students must have engaged in those works, getting an opportunity of expanding their knowledge and interests.

<sup>50</sup> I. Szybiak, *Nauczyciele...*, 75.

<sup>51</sup> S. Biegański, *Szkoły pijarskie w Polsce*, Lviv, 1898, 5.

<sup>52</sup> H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie generalni Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Monografia z dziejów administracji szkolnej Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Lublin, 1957, 346.

<sup>53</sup> VUB, DC 74, 98—99.

<sup>54</sup> VUB, DC 74, 98—99.

The school implemented the curriculum according to the Commission's Acts; held annual exams and public shows; carried out visits to the students' private lodgings and took care of the boys' health. Pursuant to the Commission's recommendations, the school held holy masses, confessions, retreat and annual memorial days. Reports included multiple positive evaluations of teachers.

### Liubeshiv

Another Piarist college existed in Liubeshiv. The school was founded in 1693. At the same time, Grand Marshal of Lithuania Jan Karol Dolski created a fund to maintain 12 poor boys. In 1763, Prince Czetwertyński's fund was created to maintain one *convictus* inhabitant. In 1768, Ludwik Kurzeniecki created another fund for five poor students. That way, three dormitories were established for poor youths in the Liubeshiv school.

Pursuant to the KEN provisions, a three class sub-department school employed three teachers. School visitation reports provided some information on teachers and their involvement in the educational work. Positive evaluations were made about Liubeshiv Prorektor Antoni Mikucki and speech teacher Ludwik Francosson. Reports emphasised their involvement in work with young people, which allowed students to succeed in their study<sup>55</sup>. According to the 1783 visitation, positive evaluation was also made of Priest Serafinowicz, the Zhyrovichy Basilian school rector, and "all professors who are fit and diligent teachers"<sup>56</sup>. A negative evaluation was made with regard to the mathematics instructor in Liubeshiv, Priest Pius Podolec, whose students made mediocre progress. The school inspector did not deny that teacher his diligence but emphasised his lacking practical competencies.

Both of the Piarist schools in Dubrovytsia and Liubeshiv fulfilled the Commission's recommendations and implemented the provisions of the Acts. Visitation reports indicate frequent changes of teachers. Efforts were made to replace mediocre teachers, unqualified for educational work with students.

The circle of the organisers of monastic schools pursuant to the Commission's Acts came to include the Basilians. The cooperation between the Basilians and the Commission had multiple positive aspects for both parties. The Basilians were the only order in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to be capable of implementing the Commission's educational plans in that nationally and religiously diverse region. Their work ensured that the existing school network could be maintained. For their part, the Basilians expected

<sup>55</sup> VUB, DC 80, 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów szkól...*, 129.



certain material benefits. Owing to its own financial problems, however, the Commission could not finance the operations of the Basilian schools. Until the days of the Commission, the Basilian schools' curriculum had encompassed education in five classes. Once completed, they were followed by philosophy or theology study programmes. The philosophy programme consisted of logic, physics and metaphysics. There was almost no instruction in mathematics or nature, and the "prevalent Latin was inculcated from the old-fashioned grammar books by Álvares or Donatus"<sup>57</sup>. On the other hand, the teaching of Polish and Ruthenian was attractive to students. The teachers studied in Rome at the Greek College and at Jesuit colleges. The KEN's draft Universal (1781) formulated an obligation for prospective "professors to be sent to the Main School for at least three years with a view of obtaining professional qualification"<sup>58</sup>. After four years of educational work, the teacher could be admitted to the academic estate with all the privileges.

### Zhyrovichy

The Polesian Department was also home to the operations of the Basilian school in Zhyrovichy, which had been established in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (1703, 1705 or 1710). After 1773, the school was converted into a county school at first and a smaller sub-department school with five classes later on. School inspectors' reports indicate that the teaching staff kept changing continually. A lot of teachers received positive evaluations from school inspectors. The positive evaluation of the Basilian teachers was made once again in 1786, even though the teaching staff had been changed completely. The visitation report of 1786 puts special stress on the merits of Priest Superior Antonowicz for his compliance with the KEN's Acts. He deserved his high grade owing to his involvement in maintaining 14 destitute children and to his care for ill students, for whom he ordered prescribing medications from the monastery's chemist's. Multiple high grades were given to Priests Fortunat Gintowtt, the Zhyrovichy school's mathematics teacher, and Jan Strumiłło, professor of law. The report mentioned a positive opinion about Prefect Stefanowski, who "was an effective manager, of a benign, calm and humble character"<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> M. Piłtyczak-Majerowicz, *Bazylianie w Koronie i na Litwie. Szkoły i książki w działalności zakonu*, Warsaw—Wrocław, 1986, 37.

<sup>58</sup> A. Meissner, "Szkoły zakonne wobec Komisji Edukacji Narodowej", in *W kręgu wielkiej reformy. Sesja naukowa w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim w dwusetną rocznicę powstania Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, ed. K. Mrozowska, R. Dutkowska, Warsaw—Kraków, 1977, 241—254.

<sup>59</sup> *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów z r. 1786*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1914, 547; VUB, DC 83, 25.

Some reservations were expressed regarding two young teachers (Priests Innocenty Smogorzewski and Bazyli Dessarz), who had not gained sufficient teaching experience yet. The 1791 report suggested that Class 1 teacher Ignacy Drozdowicz and Class 2 teacher Justyn Zdanowicz be replaced due to “their instructions [that] were inaccurate, especially explanations were peculiar”<sup>60</sup>.

That short analysis of the teaching teams in particular schools indicates the school inspectors, rector and prorectors’ care for teachers’ high educational and moral competencies. Those teachers who were unable to fulfil their obligations were removed from their positions and would often abandon the teaching profession as a result of negative evaluations.

The Polesian Department included the following schools: a department school in Brest, sub-department schools in Pinsk, Biała and Slonim (until 1783) and monastic schools — Piarist in Dubrovytsia and Liubeshiv, Basilian in Zhyrovichy. The creation of the administrative units did not determine the above-mentioned schools’ ultimate location within that structure. For example, the Slonim school had initially been incorporated in the Navahrudak Department. Not all of the schools were entered in the KEN’s lists, e.g. the schools in Biała and Zhyrovichy.

All of the post-visitation reports provide information about the poor repair of school buildings, most of which were fitting for refurbishment or even demolition. Likewise, negative comments were made about the lack of study aids and depleted school libraries.

Positive opinions were made in reports about the teaching staff, emphasising their agreement with and entire subjugation to the Commission’s detailed provisions regarding the internal life of the academic congregations.

It should be emphasised in the analysis of the syllabus enforcement and the use of KEN-recommended textbooks that the schools of the Polesian Department complied with all recommendations in this respect. Both school inspectors participating in lessons in person and teacher reports on syllabus realisation confirm the care that teachers attached to the implementation of the new syllabus. The expression of this attitude is reflected in the textbooks that were widely used in the Polesian Department’s schools. The critical element of the enforcement of the Commission’s recommendations involved implementation of new ideas, modernising of the textbooks and applying of presentation methods.

In Lithuania, the regulations of 1777 contained in *Rozporządzenie nauk, Układ nauk na szkoły powiatowe* and *Układ nauk i porządku między niemi w szkołach wojewódzkich*<sup>61</sup>, which brought into effect the new syllabi, were first

<sup>60</sup> VUB, DC 83, 25.

<sup>61</sup> *Ustawodawstwo szkolne za czasów Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Rozporządzenia, ustawy pedagogiczne i organizacyjne (1773—1793)*, ed. J. Lewicki, Kraków, 1925, 32.

implemented in the schools in Chreptowicz's department. Of particular interest are those records made by school inspectors that referred to the nationalising of the school by introduction of the teaching of ideas in Polish. This objective was pursued through humanistic subjects — grammar, rhetoric and poetics. Students were given an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Polish scientific terminology in lessons of natural history and physics. The well-prepared syllabi exposed the educational side of the ideas taught to students. Translation of classical authors, rhetoric, history, law or geography not only contained a set of information but were also meant to shape the young person in the moral respect, in particular with regard to the patriotic and civic-oriented upbringing.

The Commission undertook to secure the priority for the teaching in Polish. The right balance had to be aptly struck between the learning of Polish and Latin, with the comparative method in both languages being recommended. This was the method applied in the textbooks written by Onufry Kopczyński. However, the teaching community of the Polesian Department's schools strongly resisted using these books. The printing of the books on the KEN's order and shipment of the copies to the schools was a consistent measure that led to the acceptance of the books by the schools which used them to realise the recommended syllabus in Brest, Pinsk and Biała. The skill of expression and poetics were taught using textbooks by de Colonia (*De arte rhetorica*), Soarez (*De arte rhetorica libri tres*) and de Jouveny (*Institutions poeticae*).

Morality was taught based on Antoni Popławski's textbooks, of which first shipments were made to schools in the late 1770s. The contents of morality classes included legal aspects, which in turn drew from the classes of history and geography. Classes of history and geography involved the use of the following books: Dominik Szybiński's *Krótką wiadomość o znakomitszych w świecie monarchiach*, Teodor Waga's *Historia książąt i królów polskich*, Jan Albertrandi's *Dzieje Królestwa Polskiego*, Jan Bielski's *Widok Królestwa Polskiego* and Karol Wyrwicz's *Geografia czasów teraźniejszych*. The books of Simon L'Huillier, Krzysztof Kluk, Michał Hube and Columella were widely used in the teaching of mathematics and science. For the study of law, teachers tended to use the book by Gottfried Lengnich *Ius publicum regni Poloniae*.

School teachers of the Polesian Department attempted to apply demonstrative methods in the teaching process. It was not an easy task, however, considering that school facilities were scarce. Science courses afforded the greatest opportunities in this respect. Teachers would organise their classes in fields, conduct observations in gardens or get students to carry out simple tasks on their own, involving growing or cultivating plants.

The students' community comprised predominantly sons of the nobility. Sons of burghers and peasants studied at the school in Biała as well. Candi-

dates to the schools of the Polesian Department originated mainly from the nearby area. There were few who came from the Vilnius, Poznań, Navahrudak or Warmia Provinces.

In terms of age, students varied greatly. In some cases, one class would comprise both 8- to 9-year-old children and 20-odd-year-old men. Large numbers of students were a characteristic feature of junior classes. In the course of advancement to higher classes, the number of students would decrease significantly. The low attendance in the higher classes was due to parents or guardians who would often find that one- or two-year education of their children as sufficient. Such an attitude often led students to refuse to buy textbooks, predicting that they would not stay at school for long. The lack of textbooks was then reflected in poor progress in education and forced students to copy fragments of the textbooks by hand.

Some students rented private lodgings. Poor boys had their maintenance guaranteed, which followed from the provisions set down for this purpose by the school funders. However, histories of the foundations established with some schools of the Polesian Department prove that a lot of them were incapable of fulfilling these provisions due to poor finances. For example, school inspectors' reports of 1783 and 1786 mention a poor students' dormitory in Biała for four poor nobility students which did not work due to the lack of finances<sup>62</sup>. This situation was caused by the fact that no interest had been paid for 10 years from the landed properties set up by the Riaucour foundation. Despite the school prorektor' determined efforts, the 1789 report still noted that the "interest on the sum of 10,000 zloty was not paid"<sup>63</sup>.

A fund intended to maintain and educate 12 poor boys was also set up in Liubeshiv (the Piarist school) by Jan Karol Dolski. Another fund was created by Ludwik Kurzeniecki to maintain five poor nobility students and yet another by Prince Czetwertyński for one student. This way, three dormitories were established for poor youths in the Liubeshiv school. The boys who received maintenance could use convenient rooms located in the church's outbuilding and were provided with books, writing paper and other things necessary for studying, as well as firewood, lighting, food and clothes. The Liubeshiv foundations mentioned above made education possible for 18 boys from poor families.

The parochial education system constituted a separate problem in the years of the KEN. Multiple statements by writers, politicians and Commission members were testament to the fact they saw the issue of education through the prism of the good of the state and the people.

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<sup>62</sup> VUB, DC 76, 50.

<sup>63</sup> VUB, DC 82, 6.

However, organising the parochial education system encountered difficulties. At first, there was no interest in this respect on the part of the nobility who could have endorsed any such initiatives, also in the material sense. According to the Commission's plans, the schools were supposed to receive visitations and be supervised by sub-department school prorectors or department schools rectors, who did not fully discharge their obligations. They explained they had no time for that, and many visitation reports lacked the information about the townships in which schools were situated, about the teachers or the number of students. The exception was the department of Massalski, who personally engaged in the creation of the parochial education system by revising the appropriate regulations and setting up these schools through the lower tiers of the Catholic Church's hierarchy.

If any parochial schools were created, the number of students studying there was small and unstable over the years. The situation picked up slightly with the Four-Year Sejm passing the Acts on Civilian—Military Commissions (17 November 1789 for Lithuania), which acquired the obligations to set up and maintain these schools in agreement with the KEN. Based on the registry of the parochial schools prepared by Priest Kurczewski and Wierzbowski, we may conclude that the condition of the parochial education system successively developed following 1794<sup>64</sup>.

The operations of schools in the Polesian Department should be evaluated positively. A specific hierarchy of the education system (based on departments and sub-departments) was set up relatively quickly, and teachers, in their predominant majority former Jesuits, fully discharged the KEN's recommendations regarding the syllabus and the books. They made efforts to introduce demonstrative methods, which was not easy given the lack of proper study rooms or teaching aids and the poorly stocked libraries. They were also considerate of their students, their educational progress and health, and were respected by them. It was the teachers, on whom the effective realisation of the Acts depended with regard to didactics and education. School inspectors' reports confirm teachers' involvement in the schools operations.

The majority of students were disciplined, although there were disciplinary problems concerning school principals. Unfortunately, material aid for poor boys was insufficient due to the lack of financial resources which dwindled because certain contracts were not fulfilled.

A serious issue which was never solved by the Commission was the disastrous condition of school buildings and out-buildings. They required immedi-

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<sup>64</sup> J. Kurczewski, "Wiadomości o szkołach parafjalnych w djecezji wileńskiej", *Rocznik Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie* 2, 1908, 17—64; T. Wierzbowski, *Szkoły parafjalne w Polsce i na Litwie za czasów Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794*, Kraków, 1921.

ate general repair; in some cases, new premises had to be erected. Insufficient financial resources at the Commission's disposal were the key hurdle in these cases as well.

The Polesian Department's schools actively participated in the KEN reforms by complying with all the provisions set out in the Acts. If there were any issues that required complementing or verifying, which school inspectors pointed to, they were sorted the following year.

The difficult tasks of organising "new" education in the Commonwealth which the Commission of National Education undertook were carried out in arduous political conditions, with significant resistance of the nobility. Despite the hurdles, the objectives were pursued consistently. Consequently, they were firmly rooted in the awareness of the society that was slowly beginning to appreciate the change in education was necessary. The question of what influence the Commission had on the shaping of the successive generations of Polish people should be sought at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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