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## THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY OF TEACHERS' SEMINARS IN POLAND BETWEEN 1918–1937

It was assumed that the teachers' seminars would be temporary, and their task was to prepare teachers who would become qualified for general education relatively quickly. However, the existing reality turned out to be completely different. In fact, they became the basic form of education, as they existed almost throughout the entire interwar period (the last ones ceased to exist in 1937) and, what is most important, mainly teachers' seminars provided qualified teachers for general education (on the eve of the outbreak of the war, there was no feeling of understaffed institutions).

Teachers' seminars – apart from their main didactic goals which were aimed at educating teachers in terms of general education – played an important role in the preparation of activists and organizers of educational and cultural life. Their students were prepared for their future responsibilities and tasks throughout their entire education as part of the performances, shows and ceremonies organized at school. For rural young people and the youth coming from craftsman families (the students stemmed mainly from such background), participation in organized artistic life was often the first broader contact with culture<sup>1</sup>. They got to know the secrets of acting, they learned the basic activities necessary to organize performances. As publicly available event halls in small towns and settlements were scarce, the majority of artistic events, readings, meetings, and local and state celebrations were organized in the premises of the teachers' seminars. In this way, pedagogical schools became the main centers of local intellectual and cultural life. Teachers took the roles of amateurs of all cultural projects and activities, while students were the main artists. Thus, from the very beginning of their

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<sup>1</sup> J. Zięba, *Ruch teatralny na wsi 1918–1939 [Theatre movement in the countryside 1918–1939]*, Warszawa 1976.

education, they received practical lessons how to undertake organizational tasks in the future, developing educational life at the same time.

The participation of teachers' seminars in promoting mass culture was universal and widespread. The nature and size of the undertaken work depended on the initiative and creativity of the organizers of the events. Passions, hobbies, commitment and talents became visible meanwhile, and these features confirmed the position of the school and individual teachers in the environment. Taking account of the achievements, all units and teams of teachers deserved all due attention. However, some of them require special distinction.

In terms of the intellectual life in Zamość, Kazimierz Lewicki, the promoter and the first director of the State Male Teachers' Seminary, played an important role (at the same time he held the function of the director of the J. Zamoyski State Male Gymnasium). He completed thorough studies at the faculty of Polish philology at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv under the direction of such eminent professors as: Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Wilhelm Bruchnalski, Józef Kallenbach and Stanisław Lempicki<sup>2</sup>. As a consequence, he got thorough knowledge and developed various humanistic interests. During his pedagogical work in Zamość, he maintained constant scientific contacts with the institute in Lviv. On May 12, 1917, the meeting of the local intelligentsia with Prof. Antoni Cieszyński (who represented the University of Lviv) was held and as a result, the Faculty of General University and Technical University Lectures, Zamość Campus, was established. The curriculum was developed jointly by the professors of the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv and the high schools in Zamość. The subject matter thereof considered the needs and interests of the environment as well as local human resources. In January 1918, on the initiative of Kazimierz Lewicki, they set up the Youth Branch of General University Lectures where young people could suggest the topics, which were subsequently developed, implemented and delivered by the teachers from the local schools. As part thereof, the most outstanding scholars visited Zamość, i.a. Ludwik Jaxa Bykowski, Jan Czekanowski, Aleksander Czołowski, Stanisław Lempicki, Józef Skoczek, Ryszard Skulski and many others. With their assistance, the teachers from secondary schools implemented and promoted their scientific interests<sup>3</sup>.

Kazimierz Lewicki also belonged to the main organizers of the celebrations related to the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Szymon Szymonowic. The scientific congress commemorating this anniversary held in September 1929, also called the Festival of Polish Science, attracted the most prominent representatives of science, and became a significant event in the intellectual and cultural life of the country. Similar, but smaller, ceremonies were organized to commemorate

<sup>2</sup> B. Szyszka, *Kazimierz Lewicki (1882–1948)*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1986, No. 1, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, *Ze Lwowa [From Lviv]*, „Tygodnik Zamojski” 1988, No. 46; J. Doroszewski, *Zakłady kształcenia nauczycieli w województwie lubelskim w latach 1918–1939 [Teacher training centers in the Lubelskie Voivodeship between 1918–1939]*, Lublin 1999, p. 98.

the work and creation of Henryk Sienkiewicz, and the establishment of the Commission of National Education (Pol. Komisja Edukacji Narodowej)<sup>4</sup>. It should also be added that K. Lewicki was a well-known bibliophile. In 1925, he founded a bibliophilic association – the Club of Book Lovers which was highly recognized among professionals. In 1926 he also organized the School Club of Book Lovers, who presented their collections at countrywide conventions.

Michał Marian Pieszko also belonged to the recognized figures of the intellectual life in Zamość. He was associated professionally with the J. Zamoyski State Male Gymnasium, and due to his high qualifications, he was also employed at the State Female Teachers' Seminar. He completed thorough studies in history and geography at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv under the guidance of such professors as Eugeniusz Romer, Oswald Balcer and Władysław Semkowicz. He was a promising scientist (he was employed as an assistant). In 1917, he took up the position of a teacher in Zamość, a city to which he remained loyal until the end of his life<sup>5</sup>. Having an extremely colorful, active and vital personality and various interests, he participated in all aspects of the scientific and cultural life of the city, was the co-founder of the Zamość Region Museum, initiated the establishment of the branch of the Polish Sightseeing Society in Zamość, where he was president. He was one of the highly recognized promoters of science and culture. His numerous studies on historical and geographical subjects were mainly found in local publishing houses: "Kronika Powiatu Zamojskiego", "Ziemia Zamojska", "Słowo Zamojskie", and "Teka Zamojska". Emotionally attached to the region of Zamość, he dedicated several dozen works and a number of guides to Zamość and its surrounding areas<sup>6</sup>. He participated in many conferences and scientific meetings during which he presented his achievements and delivered lectures, he cooperated with the teaching community – during many conferences he promoted the principles of regionalism and became a real authority in this area.

The State Female Teachers' Seminar in Zamość noted significant achievements in terms of popularizing culture throughout the entire period discussed herein. The school had an orchestra, a vocal-instrumental band, and a choir who took part in all major local or state celebrations. A drama club that was founded and run by Halina Rogińska, an excellent Polish teacher, was part of the wide artistic activity conducted in this institution. Thanks to her passion and commitment, she was able to combine teaching skills with social work. Together with a team of female students, she prepared a number of performances and shows, using works by the greatest writers and poets, i.a. K. Brodziński, M. Konopnicka, A. Fredro, A. Mickiewicz and many others. The works were first presented at school and then in front of the local population of Zamość. She wrote several

<sup>4</sup> J. Feduszka, *Michał Marian Pieszko (1890–1969)*, Zamość 1990, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> B. Szyszka, *Szkolnictwo Zamościa w okresie międzywojennym [Education in Zamość in the interwar period]*, Warszawa 1987, p. 95.

smaller pieces, and the play entitled *Misterium Polskie (The Polish Mystery)*. This work was published in print and staged several times by the youth in the city theater "Oaza" (Oasis)<sup>7</sup>.

The State Teachers' Seminar in Koźmin conducted as well very diverse cultural activities. It was a small town with no institution the aim of which was to promote cultural life. The pedagogical school fulfilled these functions with very good results. They had a choir and a school orchestra, which represented a high artistic level. They performed with special programs for the whole society. Over time, the scope of its activities was broadened, and concerts with the participation of visiting artists, such as Feliks Nowowiejski permanently entered the program. The school theater also had its achievements. Its repertoire included ambitious, often classic positions. All performances took place in the university building. With time, this school became the main center of cultural life for the whole area<sup>8</sup>. The university played an important role in disseminating knowledge and science. The Scientific Club was established on the initiative of Edward Winkler, the director. It attracted and gathered all local intelligentsia, i.e. the employees of the county office (starostwo), doctors, priests and teachers from all schools (Koźmin was one of the significant school centers where, in addition to the university and public school, there was also the Municipal Gymnasium, the Horticultural School, and the Agricultural School of the Wielkopolska Chamber of Agriculture). On a monthly basis the club organized meetings during which lectures on scientific achievements in various fields were delivered. The members prepared their own papers, but sometimes they also invited speakers from Poznań. The people's university available to the public was also set up – the lectures were presented by local school teachers. The subjects of the meetings concerned the dissemination of professional knowledge, sometimes they were related to the history of Poland or the region (the scope of subjects was extremely important due to the long-term Germanization implemented in this area)<sup>9</sup>.

The State Male Teachers' Seminar in Rzeszów had great achievements in the dissemination of musical culture thanks to Ludwik Łaszewski, a music and singing teacher, who organized and continuously ran a school choir, which in its repertoire included patriotic and religious pieces by Polish and foreign composers. The performances took place during all major state and local celebrations (often together with the choir of the Private Female University in Rzeszów). L. Łaszewski also organized a small symphony orchestra which included in its

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 154; idem, *Nauczyciele w życiu umysłowym Zamościa w latach 1916–1939 [Teachers in the intellectual life of Zamość between 1916–1939]*, „Rocznik Zamojski”, Vol. 2, Zamość 1988, p. 121.

<sup>8</sup> E. Winkler, *Praca kulturalna dla okolicy [Cultural work for the area]*, in: *Z pracy państwowych seminariów nauczycielskich w Polsce [From the work of state teachers' seminars in Poland]*, ed. J. Borowa, W. Dzierzbicka, S. Lewandowska, Warszawa 1938, p. 142; *Seminaria nauczycielskie Poznańskiego Okręgu Szkolnego. Księga pamiątkowa [The teachers' seminars in the School District in Poznań. The commemorative book]*, ed. E. Eustachiewicz, Poznań 1936, p. 242.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



repertoire both classical music of such composers as: Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, as well as slightly lighter music, including operetta, of i.a. Lehar. The operetta performance of Wiesław Brodziński was highly recognized and appreciated. All groups took part in that performance, and solo parts were performed by musically talented students<sup>10</sup>.

In the State Female Teachers' Seminar in Kołomyja, great attention was paid to the dissemination of a living word and theatre performances. Young people systematically participated in performances of professional theaters, which came to this town from other cities, e.g. from Stanisławów. A school drama club was also very active. In 1925, under the direction of Helena Łozińska, it prepared the comedy by A. Fredro *Śluby Panieńskie (The Maiden Vows)*, which was staged twice (May 20–21, 1925) and viewed very positively. Later, there were performances delivered in nearby towns. During this trip to Zabłotów, they collected PLN 416 from admission tickets and allocated this sum to poorer students for summer camps. In December 1927, they prepared the farce by M. Gerson-Dąbrowska *Święć się święć wieku młody (Young age, stay blessed)* (directed by Franciszek Wiśmierski). In May 1928, they staged the comedy by Bałucki *Teatr amatorski (The Amateur Theater)*. Both performances met with great interest and enjoyed great popularity. During the performances delivered for the public which were not free of charge, they collected PLN 475,16. This amount supported the meal sponsorship programme at school and during the summer holidays<sup>11</sup>.

The State Male Teachers' Seminar in Ursynów also conducted a wide range of activities. First of all, they took advantage of the close proximity of the school from Warsaw, and organized collective trips to Warsaw theaters, exhibitions, museums, and philharmonics. Also their own artistic activities as part of school groups of a living word were not neglected. They preferred the creation of prominent authors. The first piece was the second part of *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)*, and then a Nativity play by Ewa Szelburg-Zarembina *Lulajże, Jezuniu* (directed by the author). With time, the work was improved and the repertoire was widened significantly. Subsequently, *Balladyna*, *Mazepa*, the fragments of *Kordian*, *Noc listopadowa (November Night)* and *Warszawianka* were prepared. Lighter pieces were also staged, including *Zagłoba swatem (Zagłoba, the matchmaker)*, *Werbel domowy (A home snare drum)*, and minor stagings such as *Dziad i baba (An old man and an old lady)*. As part of broadly run cultural activities, other forms of artistic life were not neglected as well. There was a choir that traditionally performed during all festivities. The school orchestra with its repertoire including the pieces of the most outstanding Polish composers (Moniuszko,

<sup>10</sup> *Sprawozdanie dyrektora Męskiego Seminarium Nauczycielskiego w Rzeszowie za rok szkolny 1925/26 [The report of the management of the Male Teachers' Seminar in Rzeszów for the 1925–1926 school year]*, Rzeszów 1926, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Kronika Państwowego Seminarium Nauczycielskiego Żeńskiego w Kołomyi za lata 1906 do 1932 [The Chronicle of the State Female Teachers' Seminar in Kołomyja for the years from 1906 to 1932]*, Kołomyja 1932, p. 72, 92, 94.

Paderewski, Wieniawski), and classical musicians (Beethoven, Czajkowski, Mozart, Strauss) enjoyed the greatest recognition – and hence, popularity. They also took care of promoting artistic creativity and bringing it closer to the audience. The showcases with reproductions of works by Polish artists (Grottger, Matejko, Chełmoński, Wyczółkowski, Gieryski, Fałat), sometimes also by foreign authors (Michelangelo, Rembrandt) were presented in the events halls<sup>12</sup>.

The State Male Teachers's University in Szczebrzeszyn after being moved from Zamość (in 1921), was located in a town far away from major cultural centers. Thus, from the very beginning, it played the leading culture-forming role in the entire region. The building of the university, due to completely objective reasons, became a place where all major meetings or cultural events were held (Szczebrzeszyn did not have any other major events hall). Therefore, all readings participated by local speakers (mainly teachers) were organized there. Sometimes visitors from Zamość took part in them, or they conducted classes for organizers of out-of-school education<sup>13</sup>. With time, this school became the main center promoting education among young people and adults in the entire environment.

Thanks to its widely conducted artistic operation, the Teachers' Seminar in Szczebrzeszyn played a prominent role in promoting cultural life. The school choir functioned all the time, which usually performed at all local celebrations. The real glory of the school and Szczebrzeszyn was the school orchestra (actually two orchestras – a symphonic orchestra and an orchestra formed from brass instruments). Its rich repertoire included classical music (Vincenzo Bellini, Michał Glinka, Karol Weber) and music by the Polish composers (Henryk Wieniawski, Stanisław Moniuszko). Thanks to the staged performances, the school was gaining popularity all over the area. It participated in almost all major celebrations and local events, was also invited to many other places, i.a. Zamość and Zwierzyniec<sup>14</sup>. The orchestra was systematically improving and expanding its activity. Its repertoire contained the pieces composed by its own students, i.e. Aleksander Bryk, a future well-known organizer of musical life, a conductor, a composer and a director of music schools<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> W. Tyrankiewicz, *Seminarium Nauczycielskie w Ursynowie w latach 1921–1939* [*The Teachers' Seminar in Ursynów between 1921–1939*], „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1964, No. 1, p. 101.

<sup>13</sup> L. Pawłowski, *Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie Męskie im. Zamojskich w Zamościu i Szczebrzeszynie (1916–1926)* [*The Zamojski State Male Teachers' Seminar in Zamość and Szczebrzeszyn (1916–1926)*], in: *Szkoły im. Zamojskich w Szczebrzeszynie (1811–1926)* [*The Zamojski Schools in Szczebrzeszyn (1811–1926)*], Szczebrzeszyn 1927, p. 203; J. Doroszewski, *Wybrane problemy z dziejów oświaty na Lubelszczyźnie w latach 1918–1939* [*Selected problems in the history of education in the region of Lublin between 1918–1939*], Lublin 2008, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> H. Kozioł, *Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie Męskie im. Zamojskich w latach 1927–1934* [*The Zamojski State Male Teachers' Seminar between 1927–1934*], in: *Zakłady kształcenia nauczycieli w Szczebrzeszynie i ich wychowankowie* [*Teacher training centers in Szczebrzeszyn and their students*], ed. S. Kosiński, Lublin 1975, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> T. Wach, *Aleksander Bryk (1905–1982)*, in: *Słownik Biograficzny miasta Lublina* [*The Biographical Dictionary of Lublin*], Vol. 1, Lublin 1993, p. 44.

The development of intellectual and cultural life of Szczepieszyn was associated with the activities of the university. The main role in this process was played by teachers who worked in this school for many years. Among a large group of pedagogues, and enthusiasts of educational work, Ludwik Pawłowski – a historian with clear scientific predispositions, an inspirator of creative pursuits in teaching, who preferred individual activity, earned special distinction. After the war, in accordance with his interests, he undertook a scientific activity and worked as a deputy professor at the Main School of Planning and Statistics (Pol. Szkoła Główna Planowania i Statystyki SGPiS). In turn, Benon Nitecki created and led the school orchestra. Zygmunt Klukowski, a doctor and the director of the local hospital, was an outstanding personality in the life of the university, Szczepieszyn and the entire region of Zamość. At the university he held the function of a doctor and gave lectures on the hygiene. As he emphasized at every opportunity, he was closely associated with this school, and dedicated a proper historical sketch to it<sup>16</sup>. Taking his profession and position into account, he enjoyed recognition and respect of the local environment. However, something completely different brought his real fame and popularity. He belonged to extremely active people, and participated in all social, scientific and cultural undertakings. He was interested in the history of the region, and several dissertations he had created relating to the social movements between 1861–1862 and 1906–1907 concentrated on this topic. He organized the Szymon Szymonowicz Scientific Congress in Zamość in 1929, and founded the museum and the library in Zamość. Interested in the history of medicine, he also participated in many scientific conferences. He was a respected speaker. This versatile activity was the subject of a number of biographical publications. During World War II, he was closely involved in the resistance movement, and while carefully observing the surrounding reality, documented it. After the end of war, he collected and published four volumes of accounts given by the participants of the struggles with the occupant under one title *Wydawnictwo materiałów do dziejów Zamojszczyzny w latach wojny* (*The publisher of materials for the history of the region of Zamość during the war*). He was the author of the excellent *Dziennik z lat okupacji Zamojszczyzny* (*A journal from the years of occupation of the region of Zamość*)<sup>17</sup> (reviewed extremely high by experts), which was awarded the first prize of the weekly magazine “Polityka”.

A completely unique role in the environment was played by the M. Brzezinski State Male Teachers' Seminar in Leśna Podlaska. The village was located several kilometers away from Biała Podlaska and all major cultural centers. Under such

<sup>16</sup> Z. Klukowski, *Szkoły im. Zamojskich w Szczepieszynie (1811–1926)* [*The Zamojski Schools in Szczepieszyn (1811–1926)*], in: *Szkoły im. Zamojskich w Szczepieszynie (1811–1926)* [*The Zamojski Schools in Szczepieszyn (1811–1926)*], Szczepieszyn 1927.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, *Dziennik z lat okupacji Zamojszczyzny (1939–1944)* [*A journal from the years of occupation of the region of Zamość (1939–1944)*], Lublin 1958, 1959.

conditions, the secondary school with a pedagogical profile was the main culture-creating center reaching far beyond the borders of its own town thanks to the teachers working at the university who were aware of the goals they were to meet. These tasks the school faced began to be implemented from the beginning of its existence by Adam Teofil Koziara. While performing the duties of headmaster (1921–1927), he gathered around himself a team of teachers from his own school and other enthusiasts of social work, including the teachers from the local primary school. His initiative was to establish the club of the Polish Educational Society (February 12, 1923), which took over the main role of the coordinator of all cultural and educational activities. In 1925, they organized the library and started conducting 6 courses (at various levels of education). With the help of local speakers, lectures promoting general and professional knowledge (for farmers) were held. They held artistic events and performances with seminar young people. Some of them were paid, however, the ticket prices were always relatively small (symbolic) and thus, they were available to almost everyone. Small incomes generated in this way were spent on its further operation<sup>18</sup>.

The Teachers' Seminar in Leśna Podlaska recorded its greatest artistic achievements during the work of Bronisław Nycz, a Polish teacher (1928–1932), and a student of Juliusz Osterwa. He collaborated with Jędrzej Cierniak, a renowned organizer of cultural life and an expert on folklore (he admired the artistic part of the Slavic harvest festival called Dozhinki he had prepared in Spała). Being impressed by their performance, he became an enthusiast of amateur theater<sup>19</sup>. Upon arriving in Leśna Podlaska, he began his work by preparing a few less major stagings, during which he got familiar with the performance capabilities of his students. With time, he created more and more spectacular performances, and moved to entire theatre performances, which eventually became a continuous phenomenon. With his assistance regarding theatre production, editing, and direction, "school theater", as it was called, staged such plays as: *Damy i huzary* (*Ladies and Husars*) and *Zemsta* (*Vengeance*) by A. Fredro, and *Wicek i Wacek* (*Wicek and Wacek*) by S. Przybyszewski. In the meantime, they prepared the staging of the poetic works by A. Mickiewicz, including some selected parts of *Pan Tadeusz* (*Sir Thaddeus*). However, an open-air performance entitled *Odprawa posłów greckich* (*The Dismissal of the Greek Envoys*) by J. Kochanowski, presented in the scenery of the school park was the most impressive<sup>20</sup>. All performances were popular with the local community and always appreciated. The whole population from the

<sup>18</sup> J. Stemler, *Polska Macierz Szkolna. Szkic historyczno-sprawozdawczy z 20-lecia działalności 1905–1925* [*The Polish Educational Society. A historical and reporting outline from the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of operation 1905–1925*], Warszawa 1926, p. 180.

<sup>19</sup> Z. Kwieciński, *Lubelski Związek Teatrów i Chórów Ludowych* [*The Lublin Association of Theatres and Folk Choirs*], „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1967, No. 1, p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> J. Sroka, *Leśniacy. Zakład kształcenia nauczycieli w Leśnej Podlaskiej* [*Leśniacy. The Teacher training centers in Leśna Podlaska*], Biała Podlaska 1990, p. 187; S. Reymont, *Bronisław Lubicz-Nycz (1906–1981)*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1983, No. 2, p. 192.

settlement (both adults and schoolchildren as well as non-school kids), and people from villages located nearby watched them. Those performances were always longed for in the whole area. Waław Kowalski, a future famous and prominent actor, appeared on the school theatre stage in Leśna Podlaska and performed for the entire period of his education. Such films as: *Sami swoi*, *Kochaj albo rzuć* (*Love or dump*), *Nie ma mocnych* (*Take it easy*) or TV series *Dom* (*Home*) brought him fame. However, the aforementioned B. Nycz did not limit his activities only to work with the seminary youth and cooperated with other organizations disseminating culture, as the Lublin Association of Theatres and Folk Choirs, where he got an inspiration to organize the “theatre cloakroom”, i.e. a storage of costumes, clothes and props for performances. Amateur artistic groups operating in the area could take advantage of it<sup>21</sup>.

All teachers' seminars played a significant, and mostly leading role in the promotion of regionalism (in various forms). In the widest scope, it developed in Pomerania, and regarded the preservation and dissemination of the language, customs and old Kashubian rituals. As a result, original initiatives were born which revealed a large format of individuality. Thanks to such activities, particular schools scored their due positions and enjoyed great recognition, whereas their organizers who fell into the category of the local elite, were extremely popular in the environment.

In this respect, the State Male Teachers' Seminar in Kościerzyna deserves attention. This institution gathered very valuable teaching staff – with various interests and hobbies, but at the same time deeply involved in social work. Without doubt, one of such individualities was thoroughly educated Rev. Dr. Leon Hejka, a longtime prefect at this school with humanistic interests (he published a lot of articles in various magazines) who established a genuine link with this region. He was the co-author of the monograph of his school<sup>22</sup> and wrote a dramatic work for amateur groups<sup>23</sup>. He was awarded the Golden Cross of Merit for his activities for the benefit of the environment<sup>24</sup>. Other teachers from this school also played a significant role in promoting local culture. In 1932, a literary club under the supervision of Franciszek Grzebień prepared and presented a ritual Kashubian evening, which was later repeated in adjacent Lipusz. This school constantly developed

<sup>21</sup> *Sprawozdanie Lubelskiego Związku Teatrów i Chórów Ludowych za czas od 15 XII 1929 r. do dnia 31 V 1932 r.* [The Report of the Lublin Association of Theaters and Folk Choirs from 15.12.1929 to 31.05.1932], Lublin 1932, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> F. Żurek, L. Hejka, *Zarys dziejów działalności Państwowego Seminarium Nauczycielskiego Męskiego w Kościerzynie* [An outline of the history of operation of the State Male Teachers' Seminar in Kościerzyna], Poznań 1935.

<sup>23</sup> L. Hejka, *Katilina. Szolobulka w trzech aktach z prologiem i epilogiem* [Katilina. A play szolobulka in three acts with a prologue and an epilogue], Kartuzy 1937.

<sup>24</sup> K. Trzebiatowski, *Szkolnictwo w województwie pomorskim w latach 1920–1939* [Education in the Pomeranian Voivodeship between 1920–1939], Wrocław 1986, p. 168–169; F. Żurek, L. Hejka, *Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie Męskie w Kościerzynie* [The State Male Teachers' Seminar in Kościerzyna], in: *Seminaria Poznańskiego Okręgu Szkolnego...*, p. 211–212.



its cultural life. A number of ceremonies and academies with Kashubian music, customs and rituals were organized. Each year, they staged plays that were a part of dramatic creation, including the second and the third part of *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)*, *Pan Geldhab (Mr. Geldhab)* and *Powrót posła (The Return of the Deputy)*<sup>25</sup>.

Similar activities were conducted by the State Female Teachers' Seminar in Wejherowo. Stanisława Wędrychowska and Stanisława Panek, teachers, wrote the stage work entitled *Swaty kaszubskie (Kashubian matchmakers)*, and Zbigniew Madejski collected Kashubian dances and created music for them. In this way, they composed and created the entire performance, which gained great popularity and recognition. Due to the high artistic level, it was very popular in the whole region – it was presented in many places in Pomerania, as well as in Gdańsk. A high level was also represented by the school choir, the repertoire of which, along with the works by famous composers, also included Kashubian songs and chants<sup>26</sup>.

A completely different form of preserving the regional culture was initiated by a teaching group from the State Male Teachers' Seminar in Tuchola. Upon the mutual decision taken in 1929, the Regional Museum of the Tuchola Forests was established at the local branch of the Polish Sightseeing Society (the teachers from this school took up the position of president and the board members). The teachers and students from the university were responsible for collecting exhibits. Within a few years, they collected many objects of material heritage that had come from excavations, which turned out to be so rich that only a part of them was preserved in their own exposition, and a significant number thereof was transferred to the museums in Poznań and Toruń. They collected many historical documents (mainly related to the process of Germanization conducted in this area), as well as elements of equipment and weapons belonging to the insurgents. The geological, geographic and natural department contained many peculiarities of flora and fauna, fossils, collections of photographs, postcards, and drawings. The ethnographic department was also equally rich, and comprised various old daily objects and agricultural tools. In addition, equipment and tools made today by rural manufacturers (with original folk motifs) were exhibited. In the absence of adequate rooms in the city, the museum was housed in the university building<sup>27</sup>.

A similar museum was also organized by the State Male Teachers' Seminar in Mława. Its establishment was initiated in the 1924–1925 school year and many valuable items were collected within a few years. The most impressive was the department with old ceramics and flint tools. It also contained amber, bronze and silver ornaments from excavations, as well as clay and bone toys. There was also a wide-range ethnographic department containing both old and modern objects (parts of folk costumes, cut-outs, the nativity scenes, holy objects) – characteristic

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> *Seminaria Poznańskiego Okręgu Szkolnego...*, p. 531.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 605.

tools and objects produced in the countryside (painted boxes, everyday objects). After some time, the collections were so large that they occupied part of the university rooms. Subsequently they taken over by the city which arranged a permanent exhibition available to the public<sup>28</sup>.

The same work on collecting items from excavations and those objects that were the evidence of the culture of this region in the past was also conducted at the State Male Teachers' Seminar in Siennica. Some of its most valuable exhibits were moved to the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw<sup>29</sup>.

The seminars for national minorities with a foreign language of instruction offered very interesting educational and cultural activities. As part thereof, they tried to emphasize their national identity, preserve their own language, and popularize their native culture. The State Teachers' Seminar with the Ukrainian language of instruction in Lviv, developed the entire formula of presenting its achievements to the public. Special literary and musical evenings focusing on historical events or related to the activities of outstanding representatives of culture, including Taras Shevchenko, Lesi Ukrainka, were prepared in a traditional and systematic manner. Their program consisted of literary and musical works (Ukrainian folk songs were sung, and poems of the above mentioned poets were recited). The first performance took place in front of the seminar students, and later the entire program was repeated for the invited guests in the hall of the Music Society<sup>30</sup>. At the same time, they conducted a broad range of activities in a school theatre club which staged the most popular and widely acclaimed works. In its most favorable period, i.e. in the first half of 1924, three premiere editions were held: *Natałka-Poltawka* by Kotlarewski, *Werchowyni* by Korzeniowski, and *Sokołyki* by Cegliński<sup>31</sup>. In other years, the number of premieres slightly decreased, but these performances belonged always to very important artistic events in the city.

At the State Teachers' Seminar with the German language of instruction in Łódź, the choir and the orchestra recorded the greatest artistic achievements. Thanks to the high level of performance represented by them, they were almost systematically invited to participate in many state and regional academies and ceremonies. They performed i.a. in the Popular Theater and the Łódź Philharmonic<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> J. Ostrowski, *Muzeum regionalne [The regional museum]*, in: *Z pracy państwowych seminariów nauczycielskich...*, p. 154.

<sup>29</sup> J. Pierzan, *Dorobek regionalny [Regional achievements]*, in: *Z pracy państwowych seminariów nauczycielskich...*, p. 157.

<sup>30</sup> Centralnyj Derżawnnyj Istorycznyj Archiw Ukrainy u Lwovi (hereinafter called: CDIAUL), team 179, department 3, Vol. 1175, card 125.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., card 126a.

<sup>32</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (hereinafter called: APŁ), Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie z niemieckim językiem nauczania w Łodzi (The State Teachers' Seminar with the German language of instruction in Łódź), 3, p. 6.

A completely original and extremely valuable cultural activity was born at the State Male Seminary in Chełm, as upon the initiative of Kazimierz Andrzej Jaworski, a Polish teacher, the teaching staff was taxed in the amount of PLN 5–10 to issue a literary magazine “Kamen”. The initiator thereof was responsible for the literary part of the magazine (he became the editor as well), Zenon Waśniewski, a drawing teacher at this university, supervised the graphics. In the autumn of 1933, the first edition of the quarterly journal was issued. The same editorial team published “Kamen” without any interruptions until the outbreak of the war. It was pretty unusual, as literary journals usually were established as quickly as they went bankrupt. The circulation of “Kamen” amounted to 300 copies which was not insignificant and low if we consider the fact that the poetry collections were published at that time in several hundred copies. Within a short time, “Kamen” gained a very high position among all literary magazines in Poland. From a quarterly journal, it was transformed into a monthly magazine, and such most prominent contemporary authors as: Franciszek Arnsztajnowa, Tadeusz Bocheński, Józef Czechowicz, Czesław Miłosz, Julian Przyboś, Julian Tuwim, Bruno Schultz and many others included their articles therein<sup>33</sup>.

K.A. Jaworski was a very vital person with broad interests, and was extremely distinguished for culture. His activities were highly assessed among the environmental creators and animators of cultural life. The Lublin Association of Cultural Work each year awarded its prize to people who were especially meritorious in the development of science, culture and creation. Its first winner was Julian Krzyżanowski, a professor at the University of Warsaw in 1935 (the prize for his lifetime literary research). In 1936, K.A. Jaworski received the prize. In the justification it was emphasized: *for his original literary work, for particularly valuable translations from the foreign literature, mainly Slavic literature, and for the complete skills and dedication of editing and publishing a monthly literary journal “Kamen” in Chełm*<sup>34</sup>.

The examples of cultural work conducted by teachers and young teachers' seminars mentioned above constitute only a small but the most typical and characteristic fragment thereof. In order to fully demonstrate the above phenomenon, it would be advisable to mention examples and sizes of actions undertaken by all schools, which is not possible for obvious reasons. However, it needs to be underlined that every school conducted such activities, usually a wide range of activities. In some cases, it was documented or disseminated in a proper manner, in the vast majority however, it was a normal day-to-day reality, which was not given special attention or publicity. Hence, making a distinction or attempting

<sup>33</sup> A. L. Gzella, *Jaworski Kazimierz Andrzej (1897–1973)*, in: *Słownik Biograficzny m. Lublina [The biographical dictionary of Lublin]*, Vol. 1, Lublin 1993, p. 123; L. I. Okoń, *Portret Kazimierza Andrzeja Jaworskiego. Życie i twórczość [The portrait of Kazimierz Andrzej Jaworski. His life and creation]*, Chełm 1983, p. 5, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

to introduce certain evaluative assessments relating to the magnitude of the achievements of individual people or schools would be doomed to failure. The absence of measurable criteria when formulating evaluations would only lead to unjustifiable limitations of the achievements of some institutions or the distinction of others.

Regardless of their cultural activity, teachers' seminars played a leading role in the preparation of qualified staff for educational work among adults (within broadly understood out-of-school education). Each student during the course of study (most often final-year students, and thus, immediately before graduating from school and taking their first professional job), was obliged to participate in a specially organized course (usually a fourteen-day course) on out-of-school education. As part of it, students learned about the theoretical and practical rules of day-room's life, organizing and running libraries, choirs and folk theaters<sup>35</sup>. Some schools broadened this course by introducing further activities. At the State Male Teachers' Seminar in Sosnowiec, they organized three-day cooperative courses to prepare future activists in agricultural clubs, and courses regarding military preparation. In consultation with the fire service authorities, the school set up a fire brigade department where young people were prepared (theoretically and practically) to perform the functions of fire instructors in the future<sup>36</sup>.

An interesting and original activity in terms of dissemination of knowledge was taken by the State Male Teachers' Seminar in Kielce. A. Bancer, a teacher from this school, selected a group of speakers out of the final-year students who, in reply to the invitation from such organizations as the Polish Educational Society, the Union of Rural Youth "Wici" and the Union of Rural Youth "Siew" travelled and delivered popular speeches on topics related to various fields of science. The program of these lectures was often enriched with artistic performances of smaller seminar groups (occasional recitations of selected poems, short humorous plays, performances of music bands). Such educational and cultural meetings were usually very popular, especially among young adults. Only in the first half-year of 1928, they organized 14 meetings, and the number of students amounted to approximately 1,150 people (half-and-half adults and teenagers)<sup>37</sup>.

Teachers' seminars also played an extremely important role in the dissemination of physical culture and sport, and not only at school. Pedagogical schools belonged to institutions in which physical education (physical exercises) acquired

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<sup>35</sup> W. Mazur, *Na posterunku [Watching over]*, in: *Z pracy państwowych seminariów nauczycielskich...*, p. 51; J. Doroszewski, *Praca oświatowa i kulturalna na Lubelszczyźnie w latach II Rzeczypospolitej [Educational and cultural work in the region of Lublin in the Second Republic of Poland]*, Lublin 1995, p. 65.

<sup>36</sup> W. Mazur, *Na posterunku [Watching over]*, in: *Z pracy państwowych seminariów nauczycielskich...*, p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach (hereinafter called: APK), Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie Męskie w Kielcach (The State Male Teachers' Seminar in Kielce), 1, card 99a.

the status of a subject that was equal with others<sup>38</sup>. Taking account of the relatively good equipment (only some schools did not have a gymnasium) and construction of outdoor sports facilities thanks to their own funds (the institutions were motivated thanks to specially provided circulars)<sup>39</sup>, their facilities were relatively good. Moreover, they selected the teaching staff very carefully and really paid much attention to that (people with the highest possible pedagogical and specialist qualifications were employed). As a result of the educational tasks conducted so far, the institutions created a number of possibilities of taking part in the sports life of the entire student community. The last element seemed particularly important due to the social origin of the listeners, who, in an overwhelming majority, were recruited from peasant and craft environments, where they did not have any contact with physical culture for objective reasons. The process of studying at the pedagogical school created such opportunities which, one must admit, were fully utilized. The wide program of sports activities was developed primarily as part of compulsory lessons. Sometimes, an attempt was made to expand them and include additional forms. The State Male Teachers' Seminar in Kielce during the winter holidays in 1932 organized sports day camps. At the city stadium, a skating rink, a ski run, and a tobogganing track were arranged, where young people could practice winter sports under the supervision of teachers<sup>40</sup>.

Teachers' seminars developed mass sport and shaped the concept of a sporting spectacle as a new social phenomenon. This element clearly manifested itself in small towns and larger settlements.

On June 15, 1924, in Lublin, on the initiative of Jan Piechota (a PE teacher at the State Male Teachers' Seminar), the first public gymnastic show took place with the participation of listeners from two teachers' seminars (male and female). It gained a lot of interest from other students from Lublin schools as well as adult audiences<sup>41</sup>. An extremely positive side of this new form of presentation was an evidence that its continuation was necessary. From that moment, large-scale shows, and later competitions were included as part of general practice in both seminars. Other high schools in Lublin, which organized similar competitions, also began to take advantage of their experiences. Thus, teachers' training centers became the precursors of practicing sport at school, and sports competition between young people from various institutions that had been previously unknown. Both teachers' seminars in Lublin conducted such activities systematically – the next competitions took place already in the 1925–1926 school year, which were

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<sup>38</sup> J. Kulpa, *Nauczyciele szkół powszechnych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939 [Teachers from public schools in Poland between 1918–1939]*, Wrocław 1969, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybes Archyvas Vilnius (hereinafter called: LCVAV), team 221, department 1, unit 9, p. 181.

<sup>40</sup> APK (Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach), Seminarium Nauczycielskie Męskie w Kielcach (The Male Teachers' Seminar in Kielce), 1, p. 169a.

<sup>41</sup> J. Doroszewski, *Zakłady kształcenia nauczycieli w województwie lubelskim w latach 1918–1939 [Teacher training centers in the Lubelskie Voivodship between 1918–1939]*, Lublin 1999, p. 121.



also very favorably assessed<sup>42</sup>. With time, each of the schools mentioned above improved and expanded forms of popularizing physical culture. In 1928, at the State Female Teachers' Seminary, the school sport day was organized for the first time – a day of large-scale competitions and games with the participation of various groups and grades, which developed a completely unknown phenomenon – an atmosphere of competition which spread to all participants and viewers of this mass sports event. Both students and teachers lived and breathed it<sup>43</sup>.

The concept of “a sports festival” (also called a school sports day) was shaped in the activities of seminars in the late 1920's. With time, it entered the tradition of many schools (usually they took place in the spring), which was confirmed by a number of reports and other documentation from particular schools. In addition to the already mentioned institutions, the following institutions recorded them as well, i.a. the J. Śniadecki State Male Teachers Seminar in Tarnów<sup>44</sup> and the State Female Teachers' Seminar in Kołomyja<sup>45</sup>. Most schools did not have similar documentation (or it was destroyed), but undoubtedly these institutions also conducted such activities. Its purpose was always to develop sports interests and mass physical culture among the broad school community, and to disseminate this phenomenon in the environment.

In the development of sport in small settlements or towns, teachers' seminars played a fundamental role. These towns usually did not have any traditions and experiences in this area, and the concept of sports events as a large-scale social phenomenon was not present in their social awareness and did not function. As a result of the activities undertaken in these towns, a base of sports facilities was created (usually from scratch) – playgrounds/pitches and other equipment were built, thanks to which sport developed among the whole local youth, including out-of-school young people.

The development of sports life in Szczepieszyń (Zamość County) was related to the activities conducted by Józef Maż, a PE teacher at the local male seminar. He was an important figure, distinguished by high qualifications and great passion, and had wide professional experience and a constant willingness to act (he constantly took up new initiatives). When he was employed at the seminar (in January 1925), within a month he organized the School Sports Club “Junak”, which was joined by all listeners. This was an unprecedented event, because in

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<sup>42</sup> F. Zalewska, *Wychowanie fizyczne [Physical education]*, in: *Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie Żeńskie im. G. Piramowicza w Lublinie 1916–1936 [The G. Piramowicz State Female Teachers' Seminar in Lublin 1916–1936]*, Lublin 1938, p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> *Sprawozdanie dyrektora Państwowego Seminarium Nauczycielskiego Męskiego im. J. Śniadeckiego w Tarnowie za rok szkolny 1925–1926 [The report of the management of the J. Śniadecki State Male Teachers' Seminar in Tarnów for the 1925–1926 school year]*, Tarnów 1926, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> *Sprawozdanie dyrektora Państwowego Seminarium Nauczycielskiego Żeńskiego w Kołomyi za rok szkolny 1930–1931 [The report of the management of the Female Teachers' Seminar in Kołomyja for the 1930–1931 school year]*, Kołomyja 1931, p. 8; *Kronika Państwowego Seminarium Nauczycielskiego Żeńskiego w Kołomyi...*, p. 94, 96.

the current school practice, such clubs did not function at all. Already in 1925, with the involvement of young people, a small pitch, a running track and other track-and-field facilities were built, and a fully professional club was created with the following sections: team games, track-and-field, skating, cycling, tobogganing, and shooting. They initiated the first sports competition with the participation of viewers from the local inhabitants. After they reached an appropriate level of sport, they established cooperation with the State Male Seminary in Chełm, where a similar School Sports Club "Zdrowie" had been established in the meantime, and inter-school competitions of both institutions were organized. Team games enjoyed the greatest popularity and interest of the spectators, and each meeting was a big event in the life of the town and its adjacent villages. It always achieved the status of a spectacle, which was accompanied by the atmosphere of a great sports event. These competitions entered the life of both schools, and were held twice a year (in the autumn and in the spring). They were preceded by planned and long preparations which took place in the atmosphere of general engagement and commitment (some people were preparing for the competition and others were organizing and leading the event). The day of the competition was an event that the entire town community lived and breathed with<sup>46</sup>. A similar atmosphere was when the competitions took place in Chełm.

Sports life in small Leśna Podlaska developed in a very similar way, which was connected with the activities of Wincent Banaszkiewicz, a teacher of the local State Male Teachers' Seminar who created an atmosphere of mutual work and active participation in physical culture among the seminar young people. With this combined effort, an entire complex of sports fields and equipment was built. They established sports sections and clubs (track-and-field, football, volleyball, basketball, chess, table tennis, and winter sports), and got in touch with various sports organizations and clubs from the nearest neighbourhood. They hosted competitions with the participation of teams from other cities, and as part of rematches, school teams participated in many away events. Due to the relatively high level of sport, school teams were invited to take part in competitions held in Biała Podlaska, Siedlce, Brześć nad Bugiem, and competitions with military teams. Athletes also competed in general runs in Warsaw, i.a. with the participation of Janusz Kusociński, a famous Olympian, and scored good results and took decent places<sup>47</sup>. The seminar in Leśna Podlaska played a huge role in shaping the issue of understanding, mutual kindness, healthy competition, and general interest in sport among the local community. All competitions were always held with the participation of large numbers of people, and promoted sports spectacles and

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<sup>46</sup> L. Pawłowski, *Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie Męskie...*, p. 230; H. Koziol, *Państwowe Seminarium Nauczycielskie Męskie...*, p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> J. Sroka, *Leśniacy. Zakład kształcenia nauczycieli... [Leśniacy. The Teacher training centers...]*, p. 189.

broadly defined physical culture as an element of youth and adult life in an excellent manner.

Pedagogical schools, thanks to the conducted activities, also played a significant role in promoting large-scale sport in bigger cities. Two teachers' seminars in Krosno (male and female) organized on May 14–15, 1930 a big school sport festival at the municipal stadium for the entire county. Various organizations and local authorities assisted in its preparation. District Governor (Poviat Staroste) took patronage over the entire undertaking and during the opening ceremony, delivered a proper speech. The two-day competition (team games, track-and-field, and shooting) took place with the participation of a large number of spectators – both adults and young people from all secondary schools in the city, and attracted great interest<sup>48</sup>. Also, the (Polish and Jewish) teachers' seminars in Vilnius organized the volleyball and basketball school championships on May 16–27, 1928. At that time, games were held on all fields belonging to these schools. Promoted in a proper way, this acclaimed event that was accepted by the entire local community, attracted a large number of adults, and, above all, school students<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> CDIAUL, team 179, department 3, Vol. 122, card 122.

<sup>49</sup> LCVAV, team 121, department 1, unit 9, p. 139.

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***The educational and cultural activity of teachers' seminars in Poland between 1918–1937***

**Summary**

Teachers' seminars were schools which prepared teachers for general elementary education. They fulfilled this task very well. During the time of their existence, i.e. between 1918–1937, they systematically provided graduates. In the 1930's, the general education already enjoyed fully qualified teaching staff. The teachers' seminars, aside from basic didactic tasks, fulfilled very important functions in respect of cultural development of their listeners. At that time, every seminar student during the entire studying period at school, obligatorily participated (at his/her own discretion) in chosen cultural classes. These were i.a. theatrical, drama and dancing clubs, choir, orchestra and others. Within these classes, they used to prepare various plays, shows, theatrical plays, displays and public performances. Firstly, they were presented for all the students on the premises of their own school, and later they were repeated during public shows for the local society. It must be stressed that all such public performances always enjoyed very high popularity and general appreciation of local society, and were always a significant event in a daily life.

Graduates of teachers' seminars, already as qualified teachers were engaged in pedagogical work primarily in the country (Poland was mainly an agricultural country). They were not mostly limited only to didactic work with children but they also were developing wide activities among young people, who had already graduated from school (in respect of the so-called extracurricular education among adults). Having gained certain experience and knowledge at the seminar, they used to organise all the cultural life together with these young adults. Therefore, they used to run various artistic clubs, organise shows and parties, stage plays, performances, national and regional ceremonies. The amateur theatre enjoyed the highest popularity and theatrical plays were part of events that were talked about for a long time, always in a flattering manner. The majority of cultural events took place in the autumn and in the winter when the extent of field-works decreased. There is no doubt that the entire amateur cultural movement in the country was developing thanks to the activity and commitment of the teachers – students from the teachers' seminars.

**Keywords:** teacher, student, youth, cultural life, artistic group, party/event, show/display, performance/play, theatre.