

**STUDIA**

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**Performing of the Statutory Obligation of Historical Education by the Rzeszow Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation**

Assuming that historical education is one of the foundations of forming a modern democratic and pacifically oriented society<sup>1</sup>, an important, statutory regulated part in it is played by the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation<sup>2</sup>. The Institute's tasks are determined in detail in art. 53 of the Law on the Institute of National Remembrance (Law on INR). In the lights of this provision, the Institute is obliged to inform the society about the structures and methods of the activities of the institutions, within which the Nazi and Communist crimes

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<sup>1</sup> I. Chmura-Rutkowska, E. Głowacka-Sobiech, I. Skórzyńska, *Jakiej historii nam dzisiaj potrzeba?*, [in:] *Historia ludzi. Historia dla ludzi. Krytyczny wymiar edukacji historycznej*, ed. I. Chmura-Rutkowska, E. Głowacka-Sobiech, I. Skórzyńska, Kraków 2013, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The preamble of the Law of 18 December 1998 on the Institute of the National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation states that the main objectives of its creation were, among others: keeping in memory enormous victims, losses and damages experienced by the Polish nation during and after World War II, Polish patriotic tradition of struggling against the occupants, Nazism and Communism, as well as the actions undertaken for the sake of independent being of the Polish State in defence of freedom and human dignity.

were committed, as well as about the ways the state security authorities acted. The Institute also has a task to disseminate the results of its activity home and abroad, perform exhibitory work and formulate conclusions concerning historical education.

The paper aims at analyzing the way the statutory obligation of historical education is performed by the Rzeszow branch of the Institute of National Remembrance. Moreover, its aim is to present the methods and means of the historical education which are used by this branch in the context of the objectives put in front of this education by the reform of the program basics of school education in this field. Such subjects as 'History' or 'Knowledge on the Society' are supposed to teach critical thinking about the past and support the process of creating identity<sup>3</sup>. Education on the primary level aims at building civic attitude, as well as respect for national tradition and culture<sup>4</sup>.

At such subjects as 'History' and 'Knowledge on the Society' pupils of IV–VI forms of primary schools are supposed to perceive connections between the past and the future, be able to use basic historical definitions and identify causes and effects of the analyzed historical events on the fundamental level<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, the change of the program basics has resulted in the situation when high school historical education has become only supplementary, unless a pupil chooses humanity subjects as directional ones<sup>6</sup>. Yet, these classes are supposed to aim at awakening pupils' civic consciousness, identification with their natural tradition, history and legal order<sup>7</sup>.

Historical education is gaining exceptional importance in regard to the scientific opinion, that presently we are experiencing informational revolution. It is a process of social evolution taking place only in economically and technologically developed societies, being a result of the progress in the field of telecommunication, microelectronics and informatics<sup>8</sup>. This revolution is seen, among other things, in computerizing of many administration and

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<sup>3</sup> I. Chmura-Rutkowska, E. Głowacka-Sobiech, I. Skórzyńska, *Jakiej historii...*, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Część wstępna podstawy programowej dla szkoły podstawowej*, [in:] *Podstawa programowa z komentarzami*, tom 4, *Edukacja historyczna i obywatelska w szkole podstawowej, gimnazjum i liceum*, Dz.U. 2009, nr 4, poz. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Z. Marciniak, *O potrzebie reformy programowej kształcenia ogólnego*, [in:] *Podstawa programowa z komentarzami...*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> Z. Osiński, *Wyzwania dla edukacji historycznej w okresie formowania się społeczeństwa informacyjnego i gospodarki opartej na wiedzy*, „Kwartalnik Edukacyjny” 2/61 (2010), p. 1.

economical areas, as well as in the Internet progress and usage. This enables information dissemination and communication development on an enormous scale. Scientific and technological progress results in new business solutions, which evoke changes in human working and living styles<sup>9</sup>. The informational revolution results in the rise of a new type of economy, based on knowledge, as well as a new kind of global and information society<sup>10</sup>. It also causes replacement of the economy based on material and energy process, with production and services based on knowledge and information; change of permanent forms of employment into self-employment and task teams, education limited to school-time – into long-life self-education<sup>11</sup>. Information becomes the main market goods.

Another effect of the informational revolution will be predicted disappearance of such professions in which an employee performs routine activities, because soon he will be replaced by the machines. The future will leave only such activities for a person, which request creativeness and non-routine actions, e.g. formation, educating people, device projection, as well as different kinds of services, like legal, healthcare, human resources management, entertainment and others<sup>12</sup>. Each of these activities demands a series of special skills from employees, such as: creativeness, innovativeness, effective self-education, efficient information gaining, un-assisted problems solution, team-work<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, educational systems, with historical education in it, ought to adapt to the requested changes in order to be able to transform the Polish society from the industrial into an information type. In connection with this, the educational system is supposed to equip a person with long-life self-educational skills. A young person ought to be taught such skills as creativeness, innovativeness and original problems solution. A new type of person must be able to efficiently look for and select necessary knowledge with the help of the computer technology. He has to be able not only to find the needed knowledge, but also to verify its correctness and reliability. A pupil has to be equipped with the skills of team-work, defining joint objectives, negotiating the ways of their achieving, responsibility for the promptness and quality of each team-mate's work. That is why, one should reach for the methods which develop these

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

kinds of skills most efficiently, i.e. problems solution united with discussions<sup>14</sup>, since it is proved that the activities based on information operating, especially its retrieval, association, transformation and arrangement, assist educational process better than traditional methods, particularly used during the lessons on history, such as: lecturing, talk, handbook reading, answering questions.

Taking into account such assumptions of society changes, being under the process before our eyes, the Rzeszow branch of the Institute of National Remembrance is also trying to support the system of historical education. Lack of the Polish State's historical policy, which would clearly determine the role of the state authorities in this field and which has not been elaborated hitherto, does not make performing this task easier. Clarifying the assumptions of such policy would let several objects, performing the tasks in the field of historical education, join their efforts. Lack of clarified objectives and precisely determined tasks cause the situation in which the Institute remains lonesome, although it is well known that certain tasks in this scope are performed by all levels of schools, the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, museums, higher educational establishments, self-government authorities of different levels and certain social organizations.

Keeping in mind the abovementioned changes taking place in the Polish society and the objectives determined by the Law on INR, which may be assumed to meet the requirements of the Polish historical policy, one might consider the educational offer made by the Rzeszow Institute's branch worth analyzing. The analysis aims at showing that, in spite of relatively modest financial and human resources means, the branch realizes its historical education tasks using modern and desirable methods in the lights of the mentioned assumptions.

The basic form of popularizing the newest research in the field of the Polish history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is exhibitions prepared by the branch. The number of such exhibitions presented so far is 40. Their topics concern the heroes of the 1939-1989 period in the area of the present Subcarpathian Province. Usually such exhibitions are accompanied by open talks and lectures. The expositions are organized both in the museum buildings, and in the open air. The second form of exposition is particularly effective, because it gives a possibility to reach not only people knowing the presented topic, but also gives casual people an

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 4.

opportunity to get acquainted with it. The exhibitions prepared by the Rzeszow branch employees can be divided into several topical groups: popularizing the structures and methods of the Security Department and Security Service; propagating knowledge on the Polish Nation's struggle with the Soviet and German occupants; informing on the Catholic Church's activities in the Polish People's Republic and, at last, presenting the history of the anticommunist opposition in Poland after 1956<sup>15</sup>. The latest exhibitions have been additionally enriched with the usage of different multimedia elements, such as: film materials, sound or even putting their whole content on the web-sites, like it was in case of the exhibitions titled 'The Grey Man's Scream. Ryszard Siwiec' or 'Silence before the Storm. The Last Summer of 1939'.

While performing the statutory tasks in the field of historical education, the branch directs its offer both to teachers and pupils. It is connected with the necessity of organizing topical methodical seminars and scientific conferences. They aim at supporting didactical processes by providing the newest findings in the field of modern history, while for pupils, besides traditional lectures and topical workshops, there are organized meetings with the history witnesses. These events still appear to be of great interest for the youth. They are a series of a cyclic events identified by a common title 'Face to Face with a History Witness'. Within this cycle, meetings with Siberians, Home Army soldiers and Solidarity's activists are organized. The meetings' objective is to enable the children and youth a contact with the authentic participants of the historical events and using the experience given by the so-called 'spoken history' for the historical education. Meeting the expectations of the young people and their parents, the branch took up preparing an offer of classes provided during the breaks in a school year. They are identified by a common title 'Vacations with the INR' and 'Holidays with the INR'. These classes enable to use different medium forms: open talks, lectures, lessons with historical games or classical film presentations preceded by short introductions.

Organizing field games is also an attractive form for children and youth. Visiting the center of Rzeszow with the excursion 'Following the Traces of Communist Crimes' is still strongly enjoyed. Contests and educational rides are addressed to the same group of recipients. The organized contests have been topically connected both with the local and national history. A part of them

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<sup>15</sup> See more: *Informator 2000–2010. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Oddział w Rzeszowie, Rzeszów 2010*, p. 51–52.

have been organized once, while some contests have had several editions and are still greatly enjoyed by the young people. Particularly worth underlining is the fact, that a contest called 'Guardsmen's Rally', co-organized yearly since 2006 by the branch together with the Society of Jaroslaw Amateurs, has been held in many editions. The leading topic of the contest is changed every year. The best works of the contest's first edition have been published in a book under the title 'Let Me Tell You about Free Poland ...'. A plastic contest for the youngest pupils called 'Paint the Grandparents' History' has also been edited seven times. Each year it is dedicated to a different leading topic, too.

Historical rides are a special form of historical education closely connected with the physical effort. During them the youth does not only get to know the local history, because every time it is held in the important for the local historical events area, but such rides are also joined with orientation marches, meetings with the history witnesses by the born-fire and knowledge contests. The Rzeszow branch has organized so far, such rides as: a ride on the routes of the 'Warta' Grouping at the Dynow Foothills, a ride 'Traces of the September Campaign at Roztocze', or a ride 'On the Routes of the Home Army in the Storm Action'.

The Rzeszow branch of the INR also organizes events which serve educational goals and are directed to all who are interested in them, without any age limits. Organized cyclically film presentations called 'Film Tuesdays in the INR Movies' are of that kind. The branch also organizes film shows which are not of the cyclic character. They are always open, free of charge and that is why encourage to participate in them. They are organized not only in Rzeszow, but also in other towns of the region, such as: Sanok, Krosno, Stalowa Wola.

Thanks to the inspiration of the branch's employees, there has been written a script and performed a theatre play 'He Must not Be Forgotten. Work of Art about Łukasz Ciepliński'. The script has been written and directed by Sławomir Gaudyn and the main part has been played by Paweł Gładysz. The performance has been seen by the youth of the Subcarpathian region, but has also been strongly enjoyed by the adults who could watch it at the scene of the Theatre named after Wanda Siemaszkowa in Rzeszów. The performance has also been extremely warmly received in London.

Educational objectives are also achieved by organizing historical reconstructions. One of the first such kind of events was a staging of an attempt to rescue prisoners from the Rzeszow castle, co-organized by the branch. The

show was organized on 65 anniversary of this occasion, i.e. in October 2007. Another historical reconstruction which has presented a historical theatre show "To the Unhuman Land" and has been organized in cooperation with the Przemysl Association of Historical Reconstructions X D.O.K. from Przemysl and the Cultural Centre in Przemysl has called out vast social reaction. This performance has recreated the dramatic events of the first wave of the Polish deportations to the USSR in February 1940.

A special part in popularizing of the modern history is played by comics published by the Rzeszow branch of the INR. Hitherto, there have been published the following titles: 'Against the Hope. A Story about Łukasz Ciepliński ps. Pług', 'To Free Prisoners', 'The Dark and Silent from 'Ospa" and 'September of Colonel Maczek'. The comics have appeared to be an extremely effective way of historical education, because through comic strip they give a possibility to deliver the basic information about important heroes and events from the Polish history.

The educational offer of the INR is supplemented by CD and DVD which serve to develop creativeness, generate gathering experience and enable to get the necessary knowledge and skills. Such kind of multimedia discs are also emitted by the Rzeszow branch of the Institute of National Remembrance. Hitherto, it has emitted such discs as: 'Scream of the Grey Man' about Ryszard Siwiec, a multimedia exhibition "Silence before the Storm..."

The newest historical findings are also popularized by the albums published by the branch. An album about the Poles who saved the Jews and the album about the Polish Armed Forces in the West in drawings by Antoni Wasilewski have been especially interesting for the public.

Another, undoubtedly unusual event, prepared by the branch as a form of popularizing history, was a concert 'Rebellion of the Enslaved Mind' organized in order to celebrate an anniversary of introducing martial law in Poland. The concert was held on 13 December 2007 in Rzeszow at the scene of the students' club 'Under the Palm'. It was co-organized by the Concert Hall named after A. Malawski in Rzeszow and the Rzeszow branch of the Solidarity Trade Union. Such ensembles as '4 Murmurs' and 'TSA' took part in it. The concert was accompanied by an exhibition 'Jarocin in the Camera of the Security Service', a multimedia performance and a leaflet action informing about the introducing and proceeding of the martial law in the Rzeszow area.

Of course, traditional forms of popularizing history are also used by the branch, such as: open lectures, conferences, seminars and scientific symposia. Every year the branch organizes at least one national conference and from two to six smaller symposia and scientific seminars. A cycle titled 'Modern History Academy', organized since 2011 by the INR together with the Subcarpathian Teachers' Centre and the Regional Association of Historical Remembrance 'Trace', occupies a special place in popularizing the newest findings of the Polish history of XX century. It aims at organizing a cycle of lectures joined with the workshops, popularizing practical usage of the newest state of research in the field of the Polish history. The cycle is directed to the teachers, lecturers and students of history.

At last, publications edited by the Rzeszow branch of the INR ought to be considered a basic form of presenting and popularizing the newest discoveries in the field of history of Poland and the region. A periodic under the title 'Repression Apparatus in the People's Poland during 1944-1989', published since 2004, occupies a special place in this scope. The journal is of a national dimension. Moreover, the employees and authors co-operating with the branch publish books edited in the central series of the INR, such as 'Monographs', 'Studies and Materials', and first and foremost the branch publish books in the local series of the INR.

Therefore, while performing the tasks in the field of historical education, the branch of the Institute of National Remembrance in Rzeszow uses different methods and educational means. This variety is to serve reaching the assumed educational goal which is popularizing the newest achievements in the field of the Polish history of XX century. Using various instruments aims at increasing the interest in the modern history, since the objective to be achieved is to reach such effects and gather such skills, which are desirable in the information society. The educational activities also serve awakening a series of special skills among the young people, such as: creativeness, innovativeness, effective self-education, efficient information gaining, independent problem solution and team-work. The used means are supposed to also arouse a conviction that historical knowledge is the key to understand the contemporary world.

**Abstract:** If we assume that historical education is one of the foundations of moulding a modern democratic and pacifically oriented society, one would admit that it plays an important part in the process. One of the statutory tasks of the Institute of the National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation is historical education. While performing this task, Rzeszow branch of the Institute uses such innovative methods as: contests, comics, workshops, field games having the elements of historical knowledge, etc. The aim of the historical education realized by the INR is first and foremost popularizing the newest findings of the Polish history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and awakening such desirable skills as creativeness and innovativeness among the young people.

**Keywords:** historical education, popularizing, comics, workshops

## Literature

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