

The Impact of the Education Reforms Between 1773 and 1803 on the Preservation of Polish National Identity in the Eastern Borderlands of the Former Republic of Poland

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Jędrychowska, B (2020). The Impact of the Education Reforms Between 1773 and 1803 on the Preservation of Polish National Identity in the Eastern Borderlands of the Former Republic of Poland. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 12/1, 178–188.
<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2020-016>

The first Polish education reform, based on the “Acts of the Commission of National Education” formed in 1773, and the following one, pertaining to the Polish lands in the Russian partition of Poland, which were founded in the “Temporary regulations of public enlightenment”, confirmed by Tsar Alexander I in the form of the Act of May, 1803, were of particular significance for the formation and the functioning of Polish schooling and, as a result, for the formation of national and civic awareness of the Polish society. The reforms made it possible to survive the time of enslavement, particularly in the lands of the former Republic of Poland which were subject to Russian indoctrination, by educating Poles who, after the restoration of their independence, would build the Polish state together with its school system.

Key words: Polish education reforms; Commission of National Education; Vilnius Scholarly District; national identity; civic education

The celebration of the 100th anniversary of the restoration of Polish independence which took place in 2018 is an occasion to remind ourselves of the events and the factors which were significant in the restoration and the construction of the new Republic of Poland after over a century of enslavement. The first partition of Polish lands carried out by Prussia, Russia, and Austria took place in 1772, and the second one 21 years later. In 1795, when, as a result of the third partition, these powers have ultimately dismantled the Polish state, it has disappeared from the maps of Europe for 123 years. However, the Polish national identity and respect for the lost motherland allowed Poles to survive the difficult period of the erasing of their sense of statehood and belonging to the Polish nation. Thanks to the preservation of the language, the knowledge of their history and their Christian roots, the enslaved Poles were able to not only dream of free Poland, but also take up arms in their conviction about the necessity to fight

against their enslavement. The contribution of Polish families and schools, with their efforts to form patriotic attitudes in the young generations, was enormous. However, if it were not for the educational reforms initiated at the end of the First Republic of Poland, the chances of the restoration of independent Poland would have been much smaller.

The reform was based on the “Acts on the Commission of National Education” (Komisja Edukacji Narodowej – KEN), established in 1773,¹ and the subsequent reform, pertaining to the Polish lands within the Russian partition of Poland (the so-called Lands Taken Away), which was clarified by the “Temporary regulations of public enlightenment” confirmed by Tsar Alexander I in the form of the *Act of May*, 1803, held exceptional importance for the creation and the functioning of Polish schooling and, as a result, for the formation of Polish national identity and civic attitude. They made it possible to survive the time of enslavement, especially in the Eastern Borderlands of Poland, where Russian propaganda was strong, by educating Poles who, after the restoration of their independence, created the groundwork of the new state, along with the new schooling system.

The dictionary entries under the term „reform“ shows just how important these reforms were for Poles and for Poland in the times of the partitions. The 1912 *Dictionary of the Polish Language* by Jan Karłowicz defines reform as “[...] a reformation, betterment, introduction of improvements, reorganisation”.² What is provided as an example, after the 1807 *Dictionary* of Samuel Linde, are the words of the Józef Wybicki, visiting the Vilnius Academy, restored by KEN, included in his *Address to the Academics of Vilnius of 1777*: “Let not the ensuing Reform scare you with its ways of teaching”.³ It was also Linde who, when defining “reform” explained that it is “renewal with improvement” while pointing to the educational reform of the Piarists of 1740 as “the Great School Reform of Konarski”.⁴ For Poles of the times of the partitions reforms were, therefore, connected with educational reforms, synonymous with “introduction of improvements” and “renewal with improvement”. The 1981 *Dictionary of the Polish Language*, in turn, defined reform

¹ The main document constituting the legal basis of the works of the Commission of National Education was the constitution enacted by the parliament on October 14, 1773. The first legal issuing was the universal act of 24. 10. 1773, which declared the establishment of KEN and called for cooperation. The basis of the KEN programme were the Regulations of 1774 which were effectively the first Polish school law.

² Karłowicz, J. – Kryński, A. – Niedźwiedzki, W. (1912). *Słownik języka polskiego [Dictionary of the Polish Language]*, vol. V. Warszawa: Kasa im. Mianowskiego.

³ The reforms of the Educational Commission, especially those pertaining to the creation of the state-controlled school system, were difficult to accept for the majority of the Polish society.

⁴ Linde, S. (1854). *Słownik języka polskiego [Dictionary of the Polish Language]*, vol. 3, Issue II. Lwów: Zakład Ossolińskich.

as “introduction of changes and improvements into a system”, without, however, “radical and qualitative reformation of the system”.⁵ Educational reforms were not mentioned as examples, probably because the reforms of KEN and the regulations from 1803 based on them, pertaining also to entire Russia, assumed radical and qualitative change of the system of education.

In spite of the importance of the issue of the first Polish educational reform of 1773, one had to wait 168 years of its first comprehensive scholarly discussion. In 1941 a French historian Ambrise Jobert published in Paris a trailblazing work based on extensive sources, titled *The Commission of National Education in Poland (1773–1794). Its Work of Civic Education*, evaluating the work of the Commission of Education. It was published in Polish 38 years later, translated and edited by prof. Mirosława Chamcówna.⁶ The publication still constitutes a basic compendium of knowledge about KEN. One had to wait even longer for an in-depth presentation of the importance of the 1803 *Temporary Regulations* to the Poles of the Russian partition. It was achieved by a French scholar, Daniel Beauvois, and his work titled *Polish Schooling in Russian and Lithuanian Lands from 1803 to 1832* was published in French in 1977, and in Polish 14 years later.⁷

A. Jobert pointed out that in spite of the Polish parliament’s ratification of the first partition of Poland in 1772, “a part of the society did not lose from their sight the problem of national education”.⁸ While the dissolution of Jesuit monasteries which took place in the following year⁹ paved the way for reforms of schooling and public education, the campaign to initiate it had begun in Poland many years earlier.¹⁰

During the first session of the Commission of Education on October 17, 1773, working in the atmosphere of the recent partition of a part of Poland, an address was made to the people of Poland, in which it was emphasised that education is “the exclusive condition of the happiness of the state [...]”, and in connection with this fact, “let us swiftly raise the fallen hopes of the Republic”.¹¹ Apart from the

⁵ *Słownik języka polskiego [Dictionary of the Polish Language]*. (1981). vol. III. Warszawa: PWN.

⁶ Jobert, A. (1979). *Komisja Edukacji narodowej w Polsce (1773–1794) [Commission of National Education in Poland]*. Wrocław: Ossolineum.

⁷ Beauvois, D. (1991). *Szkolnictwo polskie na ziemiach litewsko-ruskich 1803-1832 [Polish Schooling in Russian and Lithuanian Lands from 1803 to 1832]*, vols. 1–2. Rzym-Lublin: Fundacja Jana Pawła II – KUL.

⁸ Jobert, A. (1979). Op. cit. p. 9.

⁹ Brewe “Dominus ac Redemptor” of 21. 07. 1773.

¹⁰ One ought to mention here, among others, the reforms in Piarist schooling in Poland, carried out thanks to Stanisław Konarski in the 1850s, or the work of J. J. Rousseau, *Comments on the Polish System* of 1777 in which the author mentioned the Polish focus on the education of youth, which was to have a national character.

¹¹ Jobert, A. (1979). Op. cit. p. 22.

new organisation of schooling subordinate to education authorities (that is, the Commission of National Education) responsible before the parliament and the king, emphasis was placed on the education of people-citizens through moral training and knowledge of history and law.¹² The teachings were to be realised to a varying degree on all the levels of education, from parish schools to secondary schools (public and private), as well as universities (main schools).

In the moral education of students, the emphasis was put on social and citizen virtues formed by religion (Christian teachings), natural law, economics, and politics. In the Christian teachings, it was advised that one ought to, among others, “[...] be able to present God as the Father of all, the most loving, of all men as His sons, and therefore our brothers, [...], to present the law of the Scriptures as the law of God’s love, of common love, aiming to make men happy, [...] to present virtue as the combination of eternal and earthly good [...]”.¹³ The teaching of natural law included “instruction in the duties and the responsibilities of men according to the natural order”. In the 1774 “Rules of the Commission of National Education for voivodship schools” there was an instruction on how to “conduct the teaching, arriving from the duty of one’s parents at the duties of the servants of the house in which [the students] reside”. It was pointed out that there was a necessity to convince students to carry out the assigned responsibilities because of their own good (their own interest), because everyone who does not know them “enacts bad laws and according to their own laws they are decadent”. It was claimed that the natural law would be understood when it is explained to young people “what property is, what freedom is, what security is [...]”, all of which ought to be guaranteed to all people.¹⁴

Economics included people’s duties to the family and to the economy. As in the case of natural law, advice was formulated in connection with “the proceedings in this teaching”. It was advised that the instruction begins in childhood, in order to point out as early as possible that “poverty is a certain and bitter result of neglected economy” which, in turn, results from flawed thinking that “the economy cannot be doing any better than it now is”. Teachers ought to warn that “one cannot live a joyful life, be entertained, and have inner peace without economy”. That is why students need to know “the land which feeds and bears them, the house in which they live, the bread which they eat”, while at the same time seeing the difference

¹² Przepis Komisji Edukacji Narodowej na szkoły wojewódzkie (1774) [Rules of the Commission of National Education for Voivodship Schools]. In *Ustawodawstwo szkolne za czasów Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Rozporządzenia, ustawy pedagogiczne i organizacyjne (1773–1793)* [Acts on schooling in the times of the Commission of National Education. Pedagogical and organisational decrees and acts]. J. Lewicki (Ed.). Kraków 1925: M. Arct in Warszawa. pp. 27–31, 37–40.

¹³ Ibidem, pp. 39–40.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 28–29.

between wastefulness and stinginess and greed, condemning usury and “obscure exploitation”, as well as being “trained for utmost order and punctuality”.¹⁵

In the case of instruction in politics teachers were expected to explain the laws and the duties of the members of all social classes, because “nearly all unlawfulness, errors, and disorder arise from ignorance of rights and obligations”. Based on the assumption that one of the fundamental duties of the highest authorities is to provide comprehensive national education, in which laws of good politics are included, it ought to be taught in the form of fundamental principles:

- the aim of the government is the happiness of all, which is accompanied by “public happiness”,
- citizens cannot enjoy “lawful happiness” without free and secure property,
- it is in the interest of the highest authorities to abide by, defend, and secure the rights of citizens,
- it is in the interest of citizens to abide by good laws and “pay just taxes”.¹⁶

The project which was of highest importance and precision in moral education was developed by the Piarist Antoni Popławski, a professor of the laws of nature at Collegium Nobilium.¹⁷ In the assumptions presented in the memorial “On the disposition and betterment of civic education” of 1775 a programme of moral education connected with other subjects, such as law (including natural law), political law, laws of nations, and the law of Poland was outlined. National education conducted in this way was to constitute a path to “being happy”,¹⁸ and its aim was to prepare and introduce future political and social reform.

In the education of citizens, particular emphasis was placed on history. The teaching was to appeal “to the heart” and lead “to the love of virtue, to following tradition, to abhorring unlawful deeds”. On the basis of historical events teachers were to instruct their students to tell greatness from vanity, courage from violence, politics from cunning, and not to provide examples which could lead to umbrage, because “such teaching will infect the heart, turn the mind of the young man to his own destruction, to the disadvantage of the society”. The instruction of the Commission emphasised that with lessons in the history of states “Polish history ought to be given the first place”, and then to move on to “history of the states which are connected to our state through neighbourhood, interests, and similarity of the system of the government”. The discussed events ought always to be

¹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 29–30.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 29–31.

¹⁷ Antoni Popławski (1739–1799), a Piarist, teacher at the Collegium Nobilium (1740–1832), a school established in Warsaw by the Piarist S.Konarski, dedicated to the sons of magnates and wealthy nobles, educated in a sense of civic responsibility for the country. The Collegium initiated the reform of Piarist schools, which inspired KEN.

¹⁸ Jobert, A. (1979). Op. cit., p 28.

concluded with just praise or reprimand and portray the results of the events in the light of reward or punishment.¹⁹

However, because of the unsatisfactory development of studies on the history of Poland, the Commission would put greater stress on teaching law. It was assumed that lessons in law in public schools needed to be conducted mainly for practical reasons, because the knowledge of the law was crucial for everyone holding a public office or function, as well as in taking care of one's own interests. The Commission would also point out the necessity to know the law and one's political duties because of the formation of the sense of justice, which was essential to all the citizens "preparing to do their duty to the Motherland. [...] Such teaching of political law is best in warming all hearts to the love of the Motherland, preparing them to be effective in holding offices, to provide advice, to abide by civil acts, to obey the national authorities".²⁰

The education of citizens was intended to be supported by the introduction of the national language into the curriculum. The basics of teaching Polish were included in Onufry Kopczyński's *Grammar for National Schools*.²¹ In the "Rules" of 1774, there is a statement by Popławski on education in Polish, constituting a crucial element of the formation of the national identity of young people: "Henceforth students in schools are to speak the Polish tongue [...]. In the learning of grammar, the first efforts shall be put into the Polish tongue, [and only] then of Latin [...]". He would emphasise that "Polish students are to clearly read the pieces selected by the teacher aloud, the pieces written in the best Polish language [...]", so that "they could not only speak proper Polish language, but also so that they could speak wisely [...]".²² Popławski intended all course books to be in Polish.²³ At that time it was not fully feasible, even though thanks to the organised Society for Elementary Books a dozen books important to civic education were developed or translated.

In Józef Wibicki's *Address to the Academics of Vilnius* from June 1777, it is emphasised how great an importance was attached by university circles to the newly

¹⁹ Przepis Komisji Edukacji Narodowej na szkoły wojewódzkie (1774) Przepis Komisji Edukacji Narodowej na szkoły wojewódzkie (1774) [Rules of the Commission of National Education for Voivodship Schools]. Op. cit., pp. 31–32. Op. cit., pp. 37–38.

²⁰ Jobert, A. (1979). Op. cit., p. 163; Popławski, A. O rozporządzeniu i wydoskonaleniu edukacji obywatelskiej [On the disposition and betterment of civic education]. In Popławski, A. *Pisma pedagogiczne [Pedagogical Works]* (1957). S. Tync (Ed.). Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, pp. 35–36.

²¹ Kopczyński, O. (1778–1783). *Gramatyka dla szkół narodowych [Grammar for National Schools]*, vols. 1-3. Warszawa: Towarzystwo do Książ Elementarnych.

²² Przepis Komisji Edukacji Narodowej na szkoły wojewódzkie (1774) [Rules of the Commission of National Education for Voivodship Schools]. Op. cit., pp. 31–32.

²³ Popławski, A. (1957). Op. cit., p. 63.

introduced educational reform. This accomplished political activist, publicist, and poet made his audience understand that without them “the country would perish [...] and the memory of Poland would remain in writings only”. If they do not wish “misfortune upon their country, which can be brought about by your non-education [...], follow closely the principles put forth for your education!”. The professor warned, at the same time: “Let not the ensuing reform scare you with its ways of teaching”²⁴

The Commission of National Education was only active as an institution for 21 years, until 1794. However, its ideas, apart from modern education in the spirit of the enlightened West, were to survive. Taking into account the future and the good of the citizens the ideas consisted in shaping the national identity of Poles through their education – in reminding them to respect rights and to be responsible for the state and the nation. In the Lands Taken Away, which were eventually forced to become a part of the Russian Empire after the third partition, the schools would not cease to instruct young men in these ideas nearly until the end of the 1820s. They would become the last generation officially educated with the course books and curriculum of KEN. It was the achievement of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Count Seweryn Potocki, and Father Hieronim Strojnowski, who played a major role in the educational reforms in Russia and became members of the Russian Ministry of Public Enlightenment. The basis for the “Temporary regulations of public enlightenment” enacted in January 1803 by Alexander I was the project of the organisation of schools in the Empire drafted by Father Strojnowski,²⁵ based on the “Acts of the Commission of National Education for the academics” of 1783.²⁶ As a result of the efforts of Czartoryski the Vilnius Scholarly District (Wileński Okręg Naukowy – WON) was established in the lands of the former Republic of Poland, which constituted the westernmost governorate of the Empire, and Czartoryski was named its authority. In accordance with the tradition of KEN and new Russian regulations, all the schools in the district were supervised by the Imperial University in Vilnius.²⁷ The eventual confirmation of the “Temporary

²⁴ Wybicki, J. (1929). „Mowa do Akademików Wileńskich” Wybickiego [Józefa], wizytatora Akademii Wileńskiej w 1777 roku. *Alma Mater Vilniensis* [“Address to the Academics of Vilnius” of Wybicki, a visitor to the Vilnius Academy], Issue 8. Wilno: Wydawnictwo Zrzeszenia Kół Naukowych Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego, pp.10–11.

²⁵ Father Hieronim Strojnowski (1752–1815) – a Piarist, Vilnius bishop, rector of the Vilnius Academy, member of KEN – developed in October 1802 an outline of the organisation of four levels of schooling in Russia titled “on the rules of public enlightenment in the Russian Empire”. The project was implemented.

²⁶ Truchim, J. (1960). *Współpraca polsko-rosyjska nad organizacją szkolnictwa rosyjskiego w początkach XIX wieku* [The Polish-Russian Cooperation in the Organisation of Russian Schooling in the beginning of the 19th century]. Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich we Wrocławiu.

²⁷ The Vilnius Scholarly District was one of the 6 scholarly districts in Russia supervised by universities and with governorate schools (gymnasiums), powiate and parish schools, with the gradual administrative dependence of the schools from the lower to the higher ones. The

regulations” by the Tsar on May 18, 1803 was a legal act of reinstating Polish schooling in the Lands Taken Away,²⁸ and consequently a Russian recognition of the Polish character of these lands.

“Temporary regulations” assumed the obligation of all books to be censored by universities. This included school course books. In the list of school subjects on the poviata level there were, among others, Russian (in WON Polish), geography, history, and “advice on the duties of men and citizens”, and in gymnasium there were also world history, introduction to political economics, as well as the instruction to “read and translate works serving to form hearts, providing a proper idea [...] of civic obligations”.²⁹ For the schooling in the Vilnius district, it provided an opportunity to realise curricula developed and introduced by the Commission of Education for over 20 years. However, quickly new Russian regulations³⁰ followed which called for the introduction of a “necessary change”. In spite of these tendencies, the Vilnius University decided that nothing ought to be changed as long as it was possible. Even the unambiguous decision of the Main School Authority (an advisory body to the Ministry of Public Enlightenment in Petersburg) of 1817 on the removal of political economics and the introduction of the necessity to present all school books to the ministry with a description of the proposed changes was ignored in Vilnius.³¹

University authorities and the teachers in Polish schools working as part of the structures of the Russian state must have been aware of the contents taught to students, which is proven by the school books used in the process of education. Among these books, on the list of those qualified to be removed or at least broadly altered would certainly be the *Grammar* by Onufry Kopczyński. However, the Vilnius editions of 1807 and 1815 were a complete reedition of the KEN original. These were published without any obstacles or alterations. The authors would use every opportunity to reinforce in the youth the idea of the Motherland, e.g., the word “motherland” was provided as an example in an exercise of declination, and in the chapter on parts of speech there was as an example a quote from Horace: “it is sweet to die for the fatherland”.³² In the course books there were terms from Polish history, such as: “A city – Warsaw”, “A river – Vistula”, “A country – Poland”.³³

District was divided between 8 governorates, and all the schools were supervised by the university in Vilnius.

²⁸ Beauvois, D. (1991). Op. cit., vol. 2. pp. 20–21.

²⁹ Kornilova, I. (1897). *Sbornik materialov dla istorii prosvieszczenia w Rosii*, vol. 2, Petersburg, pp. 189–247.

³⁰ Among others, the “Instruction for school auditors” of May 5, 1803, and the draft of the rulebook of 1809.

³¹ Beauvois, D. (1991). Op. cit., pp. 307–329.

³² Kopczyński, O. (1778–1783). Op. cit., pp. 9, 11.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 21–22.

The minds of the students were to be moved by a collection of texts of a professor of Polish and Latin literature, a Piarist Paweł Chrzanowski. His *A Selection of Genres of Free Speech with Proper Comments*, discussing types of speeches (political, parliamentary, judiciary, religious), introduced students to the history of Poland and shaped patriotic and civic attitudes. Particular emotions must have been aroused by the quoted speech of Aleksander Linowski: “I shall call this nation a one close to happiness, which, desiring to be free, begins by casting away the most abhorrent yoke”.³⁴

What had a particularly powerful impact on youth was history, especially Polish national history, which was attributed great importance in the lands of the Russian partition. For a long time the course book used in history lessons in the Vilnius Scholarly District was the *History of Polish Princes and Kings* by the Piarist Tadeusz Waga of 1770, which was introduced for the first time in KEN schools. The course book ranging from “Lech – the founder of Poland” to Stanisław August constituted a pretext to discuss the history of the Motherland. However, the one book that students would find the most interesting was the publication discussing the leaders and the events of historical Poland *Songs of History* by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, published in 1816. This cycle of poetic works, preceded by *Bogurodzica* [Mother of God], and supplemented by the “elegy” *The Funeral of Prince Józef Poniatowski* included 32 songs and was a textbook of patriotism. The third edition of the history course book by Józef Miklaszewski was published in Vilnius in 1823, when the position of the school subject was under particular threat. It included a powerful patriotic message. The date, May 3 (1820), written under the author’s introduction, carried a clear message and left no doubts as to the character of the entire book.³⁵

The 1819 *A Pilgrim in Dobromil* by Izabella Czartoryska was the first course book in Polish history intended for common people, and it enjoyed particular popularity among students.³⁶ These were stories of Polish saints, kings, and princes, told by a soldier Chwalibóg, probably a Kościuszko insurgent, who paid

³⁴ A speech of the member of parliament from the krakowskie voivodship on the 14. 04. 1791. In Chrzanowski, P. (1816). *Wybór różnych gatunków mowy wolnej ze stosownymi uwagami* [A Selection of Genres of Free Speech with Proper Comments]. Warszawa: Zawadzki i Węcki. pp. 120–121.

³⁵ The date clearly brought to mind the Constitution of May 3, enacted in 1791 by the 4-Year Parliament under the name of the Government Act; it was the first constitution in Europe and the second in the world. It was the intention of its authors that the text be a basis for further political, social, and economic change; the constitution was dissolved in 1792 as a result of the Bardo Confederation and the defeat in the war against Russia.

³⁶ Czartoryska, I. (1819). *Pielgrzym w Dobromilu, czyli nauki wiejskie z dodatkiem powieści i 40 obrazkami* [A pilgrim in Dobromil, or, countryside teachings with the addition of a story and 40 pictures], Warszawa: Zawadzki i Węcki.

particular attention to “Poles’ courage and their love of the motherland”. The book played a role in awakening and preserving the national identity of the rural population. It would also generate interest of the young people receiving education on levels higher than elementary because of the clear patriotic message. A tale in which the pilgrim teaches children to pray for the motherland may serve as an example: “God of limitless good! who does not cast away honest and humble supplications, do not abandon Poles and Poland. [...] Bless our motherland, let it be happy”. The text was concluded by advice for parish priests to “conclude all masses and gatherings with a prayer for the motherland”.³⁷

The subject of law was of particular significance to the youth of secondary schools in the Vilnius Scholarly District. It was believed to be “the most original heritage of the Commission of National Education”.³⁸ It was treated as formative for the patriotic spirit, morality, and economy, and it was taught in the oldest grades. The curriculum of the subject was included in the course book *Instruction in the Natural, Political, and Economic Law of Nations* by Hieronim Strojnowski, with its publication commissioned by KEN in 1785. That which young people could not say out loud, they would find in the course book, discuss in class, and in their homework. From the chapter on natural law they would learn that it is the work of God, which is why all people have the right to unbreachable personal property and natural freedom, and, as a result, the right to defend themselves “against the violence of others” who would “take away, breach, or limit their private property or natural freedom”.³⁹ The part devoted to political law was a lecture on the mutual obligations between the nation and its government. In the lectures on the law of nations, the notions of independence, nation, freedom, and justice were introduced. In the introduction students would learn that “[...] every nation is self-governing and independent from other nations [...]. All nations are equal in their measure”.⁴⁰ Students would acquire knowledge of “natural rights” pertaining to their nation: “the right of other nations not to take away or breach its property, not to limit its freedom”; “the right of every nation to justly defend itself against

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 174–175.

³⁸ Beauvois, D. (1991). p. 350.

³⁹ Strojnowski, H. (1785). *Nauka prawa przyrodzonego, politycznego, ekonomiki politycznej i prawa narodów przez X. Hieronima Strojnowskiego, s.p. teologii i obojga praw doktora, publicznego profesora prawa natury i politycznego w szkole Głównej W.X.Litt. dla pożytku uczniów i słuchaczy do druku podana [...]* [*Instruction in natural and political law, political economy and the law of nations by Father Hieronim Strojnowski, doctor of holy theology and both the laws, a public professor of the law of nature and political law of the Main School of the Princedom of Lithuania, presented for the benefit of students and listeners*]. Wilno: Drukarnia Królewska przy Akademii, pp. 23–55.

⁴⁰ Ibidem. §3: *O udzielnosci i niepodleglosci narodow* [*On the self-governance and independence of nations*], pp. 240–241.

the violence of other nations”⁴¹ The last paragraph *On the law of war* constituted not merely a confrontation with reality, but it had also enormous impact on the minds and the attitudes of young people: “A nation involved in a just war [...] can justly use force and weaponry to defeat armed and belligerent foes”⁴²

In the Polish lands of the Russian partition, the schools would form and educate young people on the basis of the discussed principles and values until the 1820s. The tradition of the Commission of National Education preserved in the Vilnius Scholarly District not only served to graft the ideas of freedom and motherland into the minds of students, but it would also instruct them how to fight and die for their country.

The contents transferred in the officially accepted curricula and course books in 1803 faced no obstacles in reaching the still Polish schools in the Russian partition until July 1823. As a result of the events of May 3 in the Vilnius Gymnasium the investigatory commission of Nikolai Novosiltsov focused on the curriculum.⁴³ The high government official was already aware of the significant and dangerous role which political teachings played in Polish schools: “These teachings, common in all the schools, form an army of unlawful men [...], and since they are obligatory, their ideas permeate all minds [...]”⁴⁴

It was the onset of the repressions against the youth and the authorities of the Vilnius schools, as well as a pretext to deal with the curricula and course book which had until that point successfully resisted the interference of the Russian authorities. Patriotic, national, and civic contents became the target of an attack. They were ultimately eliminated,⁴⁵ and the Vilnius Scholarly District was dissolved in 1832. Nevertheless, the education reforms of 1773 and 1803 made a significant impact on the minds of young students, as was proven by the November Uprising and the subsequent struggles for Polish freedom.

⁴¹ Ibidem. §5: *O przyrodzonych należytościach i powinnościach między narodami zachodzących [On the natural rights and obligations between nations]*, pp. 244.

⁴² Ibidem. §20: *O prawie wojny [On the law of war]*, pp. 335–337.

⁴³ On May 3, 1823, in the 5th grade of the Vilnius Gymnasium, on a classroom blackboard it was written “Vivat the Constitution of May 3 – Oh, how sweet its memory for us, its Compatriots, yet there is no one to fight for it”. In the following week one could see similar writings on walls in the vicinity of the school and in the city, including: “Long live the Constitution of May 3! Death to despots! God, let it be so”. Lithuanian National Historical Archive in Vilnius [LVIA], f. 567, ap. 2, b. 1327, k. 9–11, 60–63, 77.

⁴⁴ Beauvois, D. (1991). *Op. cit.*, t. II, p. 356.

⁴⁵ In spite of previous instructions it was only then that the rector of the Imperial University in Vilnius Jan Twardowski would inform Novosiltsov in his reports in July and August, 1823 of the prepared changes in curricula and the elimination of political teachings in schools: LVIA, 567, ap. 2, b. 1332, k. 113, 132, 142–144v.