

# Andrzej Szmyt

---

## Russia's Educational Policy Aimed at the Poles and the Polish Territories Annexed During the Reign of Tsar Alexander I

---

Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski 7/1, 11-28

---

2016

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

ANDRZEJ SZMYT

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

## **RUSSIA'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY AIMED AT THE POLES AND THE POLISH TERRITORIES ANNEXED DURING THE REIGN OF TSAR ALEXANDER I<sup>1</sup>**

**KEYWORDS:** Russia, tsar Alexander I, the Russian partition of Poland, the history of education, the Vilnius Scientific District, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski

**ABSTRACT:** The beginning of the 19th century in Russia marks the establishment of the modern system of education, to much extent based on the standards set by the National Commission of Education. Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, then a close associate of Alexander I, used the young tsar's enthusiasm for reforming the country, including the educational system. The already implemented reforms encompassed also the territories of the Russian partition. The unique feature of the Vilnius Scientific District created at that time was the possibility of teaching in the Polish language in all types of schools. It was the school superintendent Prince A. J. Czartoryski who deserved credit for that – due to his considerable influence upon the tsar's policy towards the Poles. After the change in the position of the superintendent (1824) and the death of Alexander I (1825), the authorities' policy on the Polish educational system became stricter, and after the fall of the November Uprising Polish educational institutions practically disappeared. The source base of the text is constituted by the archival materials stored in the State Historical Archives in Kiev and Vilnius as well as in the Library of The Vilnius University. Monographic studies of such authors as e.g. D. Beauvois, L. Janowski, M. Rolle and S. Truchim turned out helpful to this work.

Education was an important aspect of everyday life of Polish people in the period of the partitions. Above all, it was necessary to preserve national identity after the loss of independence. For this reason, the Polish community which came under foreign rule cared about the policy of the authorities in the field of education.

Immediately after the loss of independence and, at the same time, liquidation of the structures and achievements of the National Commission of Education, the situation of the Polish education in each partition was not good. In the

---

<sup>1</sup> The text was written as part of the implementation of the research project financed by the National Science Center based on a decision number DEC-2011/01/B/HS3/01955.

territory of a dissolved state a process which was one of the elements of repairing the Republic of Poland was interrupted. However, the repair was late and therefore ineffective. It is significant that the most favourable conditions for the restoration of the Polish education, and thus to maintain the Polish identity in captivity, appeared in the Russian Partition, in the so-called Taken Lands<sup>2</sup>. In comparison with other areas, these lands were admittedly inhabited by the smallest number of Poles, however, this fact did not prevent the development of the Polish education system to the extent which was not seen in other districts. Bearing in mind the objectives and policies of the partitioner towards the stolen lands and the public, it is interesting how it could happen. What is more, the first years of captivity did not suggest it. Polish lands after passing under the control of the three partitioning powers were in three different educational systems. In the early years after the liquidation of the state, the Polish education system was in the worst situation in the area occupied by Russia. The policy of Catherine II and Paul I was prejudiced against the work of the National Commission of Education and attempts were made to change the schools which as a result of partitioning were in the territory of the empire „na obraz i podobieństwo szkół rosyjskich, celem ścisłego złączenia zagarniętych ziem polskich z Rosją” (Truchim 1960, 19). However, the situation in the Russian Partition began to change in the early nineteenth century, i.e. when Alexander I became the ruler of the empire. Then in Russia appeared the most favourable conditions for the reconstruction of the Polish education system, and hopes for the new tsar were justified with both reformist aspirations of the young ruler and the fact that there were many Poles around him, including Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and Seweryn Potocki. They significantly influenced the decisions of the tsar regarding the state administration, particularly in the area of education. Not only did they care about their personal matters, but they also made efforts to preserve Polish culture in the territories seized by Russia and one way of implementing this idea was promoting education in the Polish language.

With regard to the Russian Partition the educational policy of the tsarist authorities should be presented in the context of the situation of Poles living in the lands seized by Russia in 1772. On the other hand, it is also important to draw attention to the attitude of the Polish society towards the new reality and the fact of how – if at all – it has taken efforts to preserve Polish culture in the Taken Lands. Poles demonstrated different attitudes towards the partitioner and their policy in relation to the Polish community and lands seized in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Actually, the term the T a k e n L a n d s became common only after 1815 in reference to the Lithuanian-Ruthenian lands, i.e. territory of the Russian Partition excluding the Kingdom of Poland. While Russians referred to that area as the T a k e n B a c k L a n d s.

subsequent partitions. Interestingly, education was an element of Russian foreign policy which was strongly influenced by Poles who can even be said to have built its foundations and shaped it in some ways, at least in the early years of the reign of Alexander I. Unfortunately, such a favourable situation became worse after the Napoleonic wars and the outbreak and fall of the November Uprising which were the reason it changed completely. The symptoms of negative changes in this regard were particularly visible when the office of superintendent in the Vilnius School District was taken by Nikolay Novosiltsev who was unfavourable to Poles and envious towards Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. Nevertheless, the prince was one of the men thanks to whom Novosiltsev found himself close to tsar Alexander I.

On the other hand, it is understandable that Poles, even though they could not specifically complain about the policy of Alexander I in the territory of the Taken Lands, at least regarding education, in the period of the Napoleonic wars, directed their hopes rather toward the French Emperor and the conflict between Napoleon and Alexander was perceived as a good opportunity to regain independence. Hence, there is no surprise about a quite different attitude of various Polish social classes towards Russia and clash of pro-Russian and pro-French orientation. Certainly, pro-French sympathy and significant contribution of Poles, including pupils and students of the Vilnius Scientific District, to the war with Russia, had a major impact on the policy of the occupying powers towards the lands taken away after the Congress of Vienna. It was particularly evident once Alexander moved back from internal politics and people unfavourable to Poles and envious of their influence at court became influential themselves. This could be seen primarily during the omnipotent rule of Aleksey Arakcheyev. Although it should be stressed that such a kind of “taming” of Poles continued, it moved mainly to the Kingdom of Poland and was manifested, for example, with the creation of the Imperial University of Warsaw.

During the reign of Alexander I the educational policy in relation to the Taken Lands can be divided into several clearly differentiated periods, i.e. the early years of the reign of Alexander (1801–1807), the period of the Napoleonic wars (1807–1813), the period after the Congress of Vienna (1815–1824) and finally taking the office of superintendent by Nikolay Novosiltsev (from 1824). However, during the Congress of Vienna the tsar was far from dealing with the educational policy. Previously, Michał Ambros distinguished here two periods separated by the year 1816. The first period was the time of developing the Polish educational system in the Taken Lands. At that time, the schools in this area were controlled by the first two presidents of Vilnius University (priest Jerome Stroynowski – 1803–1806 and Jan Śniadecki – 1807–1815), whilst the Ministry of Education was led by Piotr B. Zawadowski – 1802–1810 and Alexei Razumowsky – 1810–1816. They represented a rather „liberal” course in the

educational policy of the tsarist government, while „Uniwersytetowi Wileńskiemu pozostawiając względną swobodę w kierowaniu szkołami jemu podległymi” (Ambros 1939, 10). However, in the subsequent years (after 1816) when the presidents were Jan Lobenwain until 1817, Szymon Malewski – until 1823 and Józef Twardowski until 1825, and the ministers were Alexander N. Golitsyn (1817–1825) and Alexander S. Shishkov (appointed shortly before the death of Alexander I), there was „wyraźna reakcja rosyjska przeciw szkołom polskim” (Ambros 1939, 10).

On the other hand, Daniel Beauvois emphasized that during the reign of Alexander I the educational policy of Russia towards the Taken Lands „można śledzić bardzo łatwo poprzez postawy następujących po sobie ministrów, [zaś] zachowanie rektorów pouczy nas o warunkach »dialogu«, w których arbitrem będzie najczęściej kurator” (Beauvois I, 1991, 23–24; Beauvois 2010, 33).

In order to explain the essence and nature of the Russian educational policy in the Taken Lands during the reign of Alexander I, it is necessary to go back to the years before and see the condition of the educational system in the Russian Empire, including the territories occupied by Russia even in the late eighteenth century. Though it is obvious that laying the foundations of the modern system of education and thus, the actual development of education in Russia and systemic policy of the authorities in this area, actually begins when Alexander ascends to the throne and when the young tsar and his entourage get gripped by a kind of „gorączka reformatorska” (Beauvois I, 1991, 20). It is clear that the educational policy of Russia at that time, not only in the Taken Lands but also in the whole Empire, was shaped largely by Poles and Polish models derived mainly from the achievements of the National Commission of Education. As for the lands annexed by Russia and Poles living there, the biggest influence on the shape of this policy during the reign of Alexander I had successive superintendents of the Vilnius Scientific (School) District – prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and Nikolay Novosiltsev. However, the former had a positive influence in this area, whilst the latter – decidedly negative one. Fortunately, he took his office in 1824 and for this reason his work as a superintendent was connected mainly with the reign of Nicholas I.

However, it should be kept in mind that Jerome Stroynowski, Jan Śniadecki and Tadeusz Czacki also played an important role in the Vilnius Board of Education. Of course, it referred to the initial period of the reign of Alexander I. The situation was less favourable after the wars against Napoleon and after the Congress of Vienna, although the educational policy of Russia towards the Taken Lands changed radically after the fall of the November Uprising, so it was during the reign of Nicholas I. It was then that the Vilnius School District was resolved and two new districts were created in its place – Białystok and Kiev.

As a result, all the Polish schools subject to the department in Vilnius, operating earlier in the Taken Lands, were closed.

However, the successive Ministers of Public Enlightenment did not contribute anything specific to the Russian educational policy as they were merely nonentities and blind followers of the ruler. With respect to the lands annexed by Russia and Poles living there, the only positive figure among the Ministers in the Department of Education was the first one of them – count Piotr Bazylewicz (Wasilewicz) Zawadowski. Anyway, weakness of individual ministers, as well as the whole Ministry of Public Education, suited the Poles living in the Taken Lands because in this way the University and most schools in the Vilnius Scientific District enjoyed a relative freedom of action (Beauvois I 1991, 24).

The desire to change the educational system in Russia was already expressed by empress Catherine II. Impressed by the banners of Enlightenment she intended to educate professionals as well as foster obedient citizens, without neglecting education of girls either. She wanted to unify education, covering various types and kinds of schools within one system. She was also interested in the administration of education, however, it was not soon that a central educational authority was founded in Russia. In the days of the reign of Catherine II, in 1782, the first plan of organizing schools in the entire Empire was developed, examined and approved. Under this plan the schools in Russia were divided into three levels: small two-grade schools, three-grade secondary schools and main schools. Over time, the system was implemented in the lands captured by Russia in the subsequent partitions, although initially, the Principal Board of Schools, which supervised and inspected all the community schools, did not control Polish schools that were included in the Empire after 1795. However, from the beginning of the year 1800 it was attempted to convert them to the Russian model as an element of close association of Poland and Russia (Truchim 1960, 8–19).

A number of projects and actions taken by Catherine in the field of education were rather of a propagandist nature, and it seems that the empress never honestly thought of enlightening her people. It should be noted here that in the territory annexed by Russia the Society of Jesus was free to operate since the papal bull of 1773 regarding the disbandment of the society was not valid in the Russian Empire. Russia and Prussia did not apply to this decision. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the order which ran more than a dozen schools at different levels in many locations captured by Russia in 1772 made advances to the imperial authorities (Wołoszyński 1984, 8–9). On the other hand, in the opinion of Catherine, the Jesuits were supposed to be a kind of a counterweight to the influence of the Polish National Commission of Education. In turn, Catherine's son Paul I actually was not interested in education and during his

reign this issue was almost completely neglected. He only paid attention to the matters of theological schools. Thus, he did not contribute anything new to the development of this area of public life in the Russian Empire, including the Taken Lands.

After the accession of the next tsar to the throne – Alexander I – the educational situation in the Empire changed radically. Anyway, in Russia the reign of a new ruler always involved new hopes and expectations. Alexander quickly got over a kind of a nightmare associated with an attack on his father and perhaps in defiance of the conspiracy he proceeded to the reorganization of the state. Thus, he started to implement his juvenile concepts of organizing the Empire, which he considered during frequent meetings with an old friend prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski residing in Saint Petersburg from May 1795<sup>3</sup>.

Changes in the functioning system of the Russian Empire which took place from the early years of the reign of Alexander I, including education, originated in the age – or rather in the thought – of Enlightenment. It was also the case with the Polish lands occupied by Russia in the subsequent partitions. These so-called Taken Lands were in fact part of the Empire which was “infected” with the new ideology the most. The traditions of the Poniatowski’s era and the Polish National Commission of Education, although suppressed after the fall of the Kościuszko Uprising and elimination of the Polish state, were still alive among enlightened members of the Polish society who found themselves in a new geopolitical environment. Part of the former elite also made themselves comfortable in the tsar court in St. Petersburg, and apart from taking care of their private matters, most often related to their assets, they surprisingly took the opportunity and had influence on the “new fatherland”, at least when it comes to the introduction of progressive thought and condition of the educational system. Moreover, in the early years of the reign of Alexander I, a strong interest in Polish culture could be noted among Russians and „informacje o ożywionym ruchu oświatowo-naukowym w zachodnich prowincjach Cesarstwa zamieszczał od początku swego istnienia oficjalny organ Ministerstwa Oświaty” (Wołoszyński 1984, 23). Anyway, it was prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski who took care of it as he was an example of a Pole having strong influence on the tsar’s policy, and in the area of education he even shaped it and influenced the decisions of the young ruler. Thanks to him and his close relations with Alexander, and not as a result of excessive loyalty and submission of Poles to a foreign ruler, it was possible to shape Russia’s educational policy, including the Taken Lands, in such a way that education in the Russian Partition was at the highest level

---

<sup>3</sup> Sending Adam’s brothers, Jerzy Czartoryski and Konstanty Kazimierz Czartoryski, to the tsar’s court was one of the conditions in prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski’s endeavours to recover the dynasty properties sequestered by Catherine II.

among all the partitions, not to mention the other part of the Russian Empire. It's fair to say that such a level was not acquired later either in the Duchy of Warsaw nor in Congress Poland.

First of all, Czartoryski was one of the four closest and trusted people of the tsar and he joined the Unofficial Committee, called a Secret Committee, which advised Alexander I on almost every matter in the Empire. One of the first decisions of the young tsar and his associates was the establishment of ministries, including the Ministry of Public Enlightenment. The first meeting of the Committee on educational issues in Russia took place on 23 December 1801. The members of the Unofficial Committee turned the attention to the diversity of education in the Russian state and lack of any order. At the next meeting on 10 February 1802 prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski outlined a project of organizing the highest authorities of the state administration.

Najwyższa władza administracyjna spoczywać miała w ręku szeregu ministerstw, przy czym na pierwsze miejsce zostało przez Czartoryskiego wysunięte Ministerstwo Oświecenia Publicznego. Tak car, jak i członkowie Nieoficjalnego Komitetu zgodzili się bez zastrzeżeń z projektem Czartoryskiego, uzupełniając go uwagami zmierzającymi do ustalenia zasady pewnej jednolitości ideologicznej członków gabinetu (Truchim 1960, 33).

As a result the Unofficial Committee issued on 8 September 1802 a tsar's manifesto on the formation of ministries, including the mentioned Ministry of Public Enlightenment. The scope of responsibilities of the department was very wide.

Minister Oświecenia Publicznego, wychowania młodzieży i rozpowszechniania nauki ma w swoim bezpośrednim zarządzie główną administrację szkół wraz ze wszystkimi podległymi jej działami, Akademię Nauk, uniwersytety i wszystkie inne szkoły z wyjątkiem szkół przekazanych opiece miłościwej naszej rodzicielki cesarzowej Marii Teodorównie i znajdujących się według oddzielnego zarządzenia naszego w zarządzie innych osób i miejsc, prywatne i państwowe drukarnie, spośród tych ostatnich wyłączając drukarnie pozostające do bezpośredniego użytku władzy, cenzurę, wydawnictwa codzienne i periodyczne, biblioteki publiczne, gabinety przyrodnicze, muzea i wszelkie urządzenia służące do rozpowszechniania nauki” (Рождественский 1902, 36; Truchim 1960, 35–36).

The Ministry of Public Enlightenment was also obliged to submit to the Council of Ministers applications for approval regarding establishing new schools and workplaces for these schools. It had to announce the amounts of collected donations for creating new scientific facilities. Besides, the Ministry was obliged to present a yearly report on their activities and submit it to the governing senate which after examining it during a meeting of a special



committee, presented it together with their comments in front of the general assembly which, in turn, after providing the final remarks, sent it to the tsar. The Senate's task was to examine whether the activity of the Ministry during the reporting period was in compliance with the law and purposeful and whether the report reflected the facts faithfully.

The first Minister of Public Enlightenment was the aforementioned count Piotr Bazylewicz Zawadowski, a son of Cossack from Ukraine (from the Starodubski district in the Chernigov Governorate), who at the time when Catherine II ruled played an important role in organizing the system of education. He attended the Jesuit College in Orsha and then he studied at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. While in the Polish school in Orsha and the Kyivan Academy he mastered the Polish language and Latin. He also liked to show off his knowledge of Polish in his correspondence with Polish aristocracy and reciting Jan Kochanowski's works. So it is no wonder he was always sympathetic towards Poles and he clearly respected prince A. J. Czartoryski and at the same time he was exceptionally polite to him. In spite of the negative attitude towards new ideas he supported the prince's projects not causing any difficulties during their implementation (Studnicki 1906, 26; Przybylski 2003, 18; Truchim 1960, 38). Undoubtedly, this fact had a significant impact on the success of many projects related to the Polish education in the Taken Lands and developed during his rule. Due to his age and the proverbial laziness he was a harmless official of the Imperial bureaucratic apparatus. Mostly, people at Vilnius University were happy with this fact. As it was pointed out by D. Beauvois – „mierność swoją minister odkupuje szczerą troską o polską kulturę” (Beauvois I, 1991, 24). Hence, the departure of Zawadowski in 1810 was accompanied by widespread resentment and the successive ministers were not so favourable towards Poles and Polish education.

Along with the establishment of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment the so-called School Committee was created, which at the beginning of 1803 was transformed into an advisory body of the Minister under the name of the General Board of Schools. The members of the Committee were as follows: the minister as the chairman, deputy minister – Mikhail Muravyov, undercover advisers – prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and count Seweryn Potocki, major-general Theodor Klinger, academics and privy counsellors – Stefan Rumowski, Nikolay Ozereckovsky, Nikolay Fuss, Nikolay Novosiltsev and count Pavel Stroganov. Moreover, the following educational activists from the period of the Catherine's II reign joined the School Committee: Theodor Jankowitsch de Miriewo, Peter Pastuchov and Peter Svistunov. The head of the office was Basil Karazin (Рождественский 1902, 39–40; Truchim 1960, 36).

According to the recommendation of Alexander I the main objective of the School Committee was to develop a draft law on the system and functioning

of education and then, after approval by the tsar, its implementation. In addition, the members of the Committee were supposed to supervise all the schools in the Russian Empire. All draft bills and regulations relating to education were to be submitted, examined and passed during the meetings of the Committee and then they were to be approved by the Minister of Public Enlightenment. However, in the so-called essential matters they had to be presented for approval by the ruler. In the decree setting out the scope of work of the Committee a special emphasis was put on the establishment and organization of universities which were also supposed to supervise „nad wszystkimi innymi szkołami i służyć pomocą członkom Komisji w zarządzaniu szkołami ich rejonów” (Truchim 1960, 42).

It was at the first meeting of the School Committee on 13 September 1802 when Nikolay Fuss and Nikolay Ozereckovsky were instructed to prepare an organization plan for academic schools, whilst Theodor Klinger was supposed to take care of the plan for lower level schools. During one of the meetings of the Committee academic Fuss, carrying out his tasks, presented a draft of organizing the so-called scientific districts which were supposed to be the basis of the organizational structure of the system of education in Russia. He suggested the division of the territory of the Russian Empire into six large regions where universities should be established, namely: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkiv, Kazan, Vilnius and Tartu. As a result, these cities were to be the capitals of the districts. However, although Ozereckovsky agreed with general principles of Fuss's project, he suggested some other cities for the seat of the universities. He accepted Moscow and Tartu as the universities were already there, and the other capitals of the districts proposed by him were Voronezh, Veliky Ustyug, Kazan and Kharkiv. Yet, different locations were proposed by Jankowitsch de Miriewo who suggested the universities should be established in St. Petersburg, Kazan and Kiev, apart from the existing or being organized universities in Moscow, Vilnius and Tartu. At the Committee meeting on 27 September 1802 Nikolay Fuss presented a draft of total organization of Russian system of education. He supported the concept to divide the country into six school administration districts. In each district one university should be established. However, in the governorate cities middle schools were expected to be opened, whilst in the district cities – district schools and church schools in the countryside. In his view rural schools were to be supervised by district schools, district schools by middle schools, and middle schools by universities (Truchim 1960, 43–44). So it was the essence of the structure of the system of education and educational policy of Russia during the reign of Alexander I. It was later reflected in the annual reports submitted to the Ministry by the universities (including BUWil, 2, KC232; KC 237; KC506; AHL, 567, 2, 219; 282–283).

It should be noted that in the course of determining the scope of the activity of the School Committee Polish influences were clear. It is primarily about the

concept of organizing the system of education in the Empire assuming the subordination of all the schools in a given district to the universities and a pyramidal hierarchy of the school administration authorities. Since this type of organization of the school administration and the system of dependence existed before only in Poland, and Nikolay Fuss had to get familiar with this type of organization in the territories occupied by Russia during individual partitions, it can be stated with certainty that the model for his project originated in the Polish experience.

At the School Committee meeting on 4 October 1802 another project of organization of the system of education in Russia was presented. This time it was a detailed project by prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski entitled *On the Rules for Public Enlightenment in the Russian Empire*. In the concept presented prince Czartoryski also suggested a four-level school organization which assumed the division into parish, district, governorate schools and universities,

ze stopniową zależnością administracyjną szkół stopnia niższego od szkół stopni wyższych. Proponował przy tym powołanie w państwie rosyjskim do życia [...] sześciu uniwersytetów: w Moskwie, Petersburgu, Kazaniu, Dorpacie, Wilnie i Charkowie, które z kolei podlegały by Komisji Szkolnej, te zaś ministrowi Oświecenia Publicznego (Truchim 1960, 43).

It is interesting how Czartoryski, who on 8 September became a member of the School Committee, could present such a detailed project so quickly, especially as he had not worked on educational matters so far. Most likely, the real author of the project was a future first president of new Vilnius University, Jerome Stroynowski. This one as well as other projects developed by Stroynowski were probably just signed by the prince who presented them at the Committee meetings. There, he was supported by another Pole in the General Board of Schools – Seweryn Potocki. *The Rules for Public Enlightenment in the Russian Empire* prepared by Stroynowski were so precise and concisely put together that they were approved by the members of the Committee and in fact they became the cornerstone of the law on the organization of the system of education in Russia. Preparing the final version of the above mentioned project prince Czartoryski received many valuable comments from his father Adam Kazimierz.

At the Committee meeting on 4 October 1802 minister Zawadowski asked Czartoryski and Potocki to address also the organizational matters of Vilnius University, and specially pay attention to the regulations of the National Commission of Education concerning the assets of the University and its subordinate schools. Whilst, secretary Karazin was instructed by the School Committee to develop a general project of organizing middle schools.

As a result of intensive work of the members of the Committee, in early January 1803 the final draft bill on the system of education in Russia was ready, and on 24 January 1803 it was approved by the tsar as *Temporary Provisions of Public Enlightenment*. Since the Act provided for the existence of six universities in Russia and as a result, in the field of the school administration, the whole area of the state was divided into six so-called departments (districts). As soon as on 25 January 1803 the tsar appointed superintendents of these districts. According to the adopted concept and hierarchy of dependency (supervision) in the Russian Empire the superintendents, first of all, were expected to manage, control and make decisions on behalf of the Minister of Public Enlightenment and he, in turn, acted on behalf of the ruler. The superintendent of the Moscow District was Mikhail Muravyov, Vilnius District – Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Tartu District – Theodor Klinger, Kharkiv District – Seweryn Potocki, Petersburg District – Nikolay Novosiltsev, and the Kazan District – first, Manteuffel and from 20 June Stefan Rumowski (including BUWil, 2, 645, 127–137; LPAH, 567, 2, 32; Рождественский 1902, 44; Truchim 1960, 47–48). For Poles the most important one of the superintendents, the most famous one and the one that influenced the Russian educational policy the most and contributed to the development of the Polish education in the Taken Lands was prince A. J. Czartoryski. His idea in this field was primarily a reference to the inspection system – legacy left by the National Commission of Education. In the subordinate district superintendent Czartoryski knew directly only the university subject to him although he was obliged to visit the whole region. In fact the prince toured his district only twice and, consequently, he relied mainly on the reports from inspectors and presidents who were next in the school hierarchy. The idea of appointing – as it was at the time of the National Commission of Education – a group of inspectors informing the university about functioning of schools came from prince A. J. Czartoryski who shared it with professor Poczobut replacing president Stroynowski.

School headmasters were at a lower level in the hierarchy of the system of education. They were heads of middle schools and district schools who represented the university authorities in individual governorates. A tendency to look for headmasters who were not professors prevailed in the Empire. This function was considered a civil and public service, and the only criterion for obtaining it – as in the case of other positions – was noble birth and nomination. However, in the district of Vilnius the situation was different. Headmasters were elected at the University from among the members of the so-called teaching corps. Headmasters were a rather homogeneous group constituting a natural link between the teachers and the university authorities.

Of the six scientific districts created on the basis of the imperial edict by Alexander I (*Temporary Provisions...*), the Vilnius District boundaries

corresponded almost exactly the boundaries of the lands seized by Russia in the subsequent partitions (Beauvois, LXV, 1974, 1, 62)<sup>4</sup>. Thus, when these areas became part of the Russian Empire they also became an integral part of the Russian educational system and educational policy, at least until the November Uprising. Compared to other districts in the territory of the Russian Empire, this one was specific – Polish nature and language of instruction as well as supervision and most of the staff of Polish origin. Usually language teachers and professors of subjects still not available among Poles were foreigners. This was the case particularly with Vilnius University and Volhynia Middle School in Kremenets.

The Vilnius Scientific (School) District territorially included eight governorates in the western part of the Empire: Vilnius, Grodno, Vitebsk, Minsk, Mogilev, Volhynia, Podolia and Kiev. After a few years, i.e. on 25 November 1810, the Białystok district joined the Vilnius district after it was obtained from Prussia on the basis of the Treaties of Tilsit of 7 and 9 July 1807. On 27 July 1815 a district school of the missionaries in Ilūkste in the Courland Governorate which had been part of the Tartu district joined the Vilnius department. In turn, on 12 January 1812 all the existing Jesuit schools stopped to be controlled by the Vilnius department even though they were located in its territory. The schools were included in a separate department and became subject to Polotsk Academy. Further, schools for girls run by Roman Catholic and Basilian orders were excluded from the district and on the basis of the imperial edict of 23 October 1811 they were passed to the church authorities. Finally, in 1818 the Kiev Governorate was excluded from the Vilnius department and it joined the Kharkiv district. All the schools in the governorate became subordinate to the university (LPAH, 567, 2; Ambros 1939, 147).

The governorates in the south western part of the Russian Empire were characterised by a kind of specificity and clear distinction among the territories in the Russian Partition, not only in the field of education. In the structure of Russian Western Krai, which were the Taken Lands also called Lithuanian and Ruthenian lands, it referred to the “Ruthenian” – southern – part of the territory discussed. Actually, a more appropriate name for this area should be the Ukrainian lands which were inhabited mainly by Polish nobles and Ukrainian people, especially when it comes to the rural area. A significant percentage of people were also Jews, especially in the cities, although the urban population was low (Beauvois 2005, 45; Beauvois 2003, 21–22). Although the tsar authorities changed the administrative borders, Volhynian, Podolia and Kiev governorates, which were part of Right-bank Ukraine, referred to the names

---

<sup>4</sup> In fact the Vilnius School District area was bigger than the territory taken by Russia in the subsequent partitions.

of former provinces of the Noble Republic. Their common names were references to geographical and historical tradition, thus these governorates were frequently called Volhynia, Podolia and Ukraine. The place where the main school in this part of the Vilnius Scientific District was located was previously unknown Kremenets in Volhynia which thanks to a sort of a higher education facility established with efforts of Tadeusz Czacki became the second (after Vilnius) cultural centre in the Russian Partition and was one of the important elements of Russian educational policy towards Poles in the Taken Lands.

Administratively, the location of schools in the Vilnius District and other departments was as follows: one middle school per governorate and one district school per province, and parish schools in parishes. There was a hierarchical dependency between these three types of schools, based on the above-mentioned pyramidal structure specified in Temporary Provisions of Public Enlightenment, i.e. parish school teachers were subordinate to the headmasters of district schools who, in turn, were subordinate to the headmasters of middle schools dependent on Vilnius University which “reigned” over the network of schools in the whole district. As it can be noticed it was a structure specific to the former system of education in Poland. What is more, the internal structure of schools was not different from the old Polish schools (Beauvois II, 1991, 40–41; Beauvois 2010, 367–368).

Apart from framework laws valid in all the school departments, two of them – Tartu and Vilnius – used specific laws different from other school districts in the Russian Empire. The Vilnius School District, first of all, was issued the *Act of Imperial Vilnius University Confirmation* of 4 April 1803 and the *Acts – General Provisions of Imperial Vilnius University and Schools in its Department* of 18 May 1803 (BUWil, 2, 645; LPAH, 721, 1, 9; Jučas 2009, 443–444). Both documents were the work of Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Severyn Potocki and Jerome Stroynowski, and were developed at the behest of minister Zawadowski and to a large extent they alluded to the acts by the National Commission of Education. The same was true of the document prepared by Vilnius University and approved by the Minister on 20 August 1804 entitled *Project of Organization of Schools in the Department of Imperial Vilnius University in Accordance with the Principles of the Public Enlightenment and Acts for the University and Schools Assigned to It*. Subsequently, the Act of 31 August 1807 regulated the operation of parish schools in Volhynia, Podolia and Kiev governorates (BUWil, 2, KC 232, 300–304). Special laws regulated also Volhynia Middle School in Kremenets (Act of 29 July 1805), school for state land-surveyors at the middle school in Kremenets (Act of 27 July 1807) and a middle school established much later in Kiev (Act of 13 October 1811) (including BUWil, 2, KC 232, 286–289; Ambros 1939, 147–149).

Adam Czartoryski who was supposed to prepare the draft law for Vilnius University entrusted it to priest Jerome Stroynowski. Interestingly, Stroynowski completed his job first. His project, which had been discussed during a meeting of the General Board of Schools, was approved by the tsar on 18 May 1803 under the name of Act of Vilnius University and Schools in the District, covered all the schools subordinate to the university in Vilnius.

The system of education in the Russian Partition was based on the above law for the next several decades until the outbreak of the November Uprising. Further, the educational policy in that part of the Russian Empire was also based on those documents. Later, it was modified and the changes were not always favourable for the Taken Lands. It was particularly evident when Nikolay Novosiltsev became the superintendent for the Vilnius School District and when Nicholas I became the new ruler a year later.

Unfortunately, during the Napoleonic wars the policy of the Russian authorities towards the Polish society in the Taken Lands, including educational policy, was not so favourable as it was in the early years of the reign of Alexander I. It could be noticed especially in the years 1809 and 1812–1813 due to obvious sympathy of Poles with Napoleon as his war against Russia gave hope to regain independence. It is not surprising that during the Napoleonic wars the first signs of tightening the policy towards Poles were revealed. Then, the process of limiting the Polish nature of the system of education and manifestations of persecutions of both Poles and Polish education in the whole territory of the Taken Lands by the tsarist authorities became clearly perceptible. It did not have a clear relationship with the Polish patriotic movement, although the sympathy and pro-Napoleonic enthusiasm among the Poles in the Taken Lands, especially among the teaching staff at schools in the district and students and pupils, contributed to such a state of affairs. It affected mostly Tadeusz Czacki and prince Adam J. Czartoryski. Not only were their positions threatened but also the existence of Vilnius University and other schools in the district were on a knife-edge, especially Volhynia Middle School which mainly due to the youth attitude and proximity of the Austrian borderline was supposed to be moved to Vinnytsia, Lutsk, Zhytomyr or even to Kharkiv (Przybylski 2003, 89). Russians during the war of 1809 were afraid youth would join the army of Józef Poniatowski who “marched” triumphantly through Galicia. The authorities even sent out a special letter and an announcement of August 1809 to schools which strictly forbade students to go abroad in order to enlist with “foreign” armies (CPAHU, 707, 315, 7, 338–339; CPAHU, 707, 314(1809), 5, 136; CPAHU, 707, 314(1809), 10, 1). However, it was not very useful since “ucieczki za Bug przybrały charakter epidemii” (Przybylski 2003, 96). In 1812, after Napoleon’s army entered the Russian Empire and occupied Vilnius, the authorities decided to suspend the schools in the Taken Lands. The school year ended earlier than

usually and the students were ordered to go home. In order to prevent them from escaping to the Napoleonic army the students in the Vilnius district started to be enlisted with the tsarist army. Even Tadeusz Czacki experienced it personally as his son Felix was on the enrollment list in the Volhynia Governorate. On the other hand, after some time, Poles enlisted themselves with the Russian army. However, they did it mainly for fear of confiscation of their properties for supporting the French.

Clear changes in the educational policy of Russia towards the Taken Lands could be noticed as early as in January 1807 when, for example, Czacki was sent for a compulsory visit to Kharkov for the period of two years, allegedly for the purpose of visiting a local university there, and Kołłątaj was sent to Moscow. Czacki went there at the behest of the military general-governor of the Volhynia Governorate M. Golenischev-Kutuzov (Rolle 1923, 149; Przybylski 2003, 82–86). In 1809 he had to explain himself in St. Petersburg because of the aforementioned mass escape of students to the army in the Duchy of Warsaw. Then he was close to lose his position and what saved him was basically superintendent Czartoryski's intervention who interceded with the authorities for him.

In the Vilnius School District it became common to appoint posts related to education at the tsarist authorities' discretion and thus, to force the local facilities to hire people who were more loyal to the authorities than qualified or skilled. It was particularly evident after the dismissal of minister Zawadowski. When it comes to Vilnius University, a particularly acute dealing was the disapproval of elected authorities and other jobs at the university. For example:

Wpływowe stanowiska dziekanów fakultetu wedle zapatrywań Petersburga mogły zajmować osobistości nie z woli ich członków, lecz ministra, który często niemiły sobie wybór unieważniał [...]. Później chwycono się radykalniejszego źródła i wprost narzucano ludzi; taką drogą został w Wilnie rektorem – Pelikan, w Krzemieńcu [dyrektorem] – Bokszczanin – obaj niedobrej pamięci (Janowski 1923, 245).

The change in the policy towards the Polish education in the Taken Lands was markedly intensified after the Congress of Vienna. A glaring example of this was the exclusion of the Kiev Governorate from the Vilnius School District in 1818 and including it in the Kharkiv District, primarily for the purpose of Russification of the schools there. Moreover, in 1820 the University of Polotsk and all the Jesuit schools were closed. In 1824 the Vitebsk and Mogilev governorates were excluded from the Vilnius District and they were included in the Petersburg District. Furthermore, during the reign of Nicholas I, in 1829, the Minsk Governorate was excluded from the Vilnius Scientific District and in 1830 (still before the November Uprising), at schools in the Kiev Governorate, lectures on the Polish language as a subject were abolished. On the other hand,



much earlier, in 1811 the then education minister A. K. Razumovsky limited the school access for the poorest ordering that the children from the so-called taxed states, not belonging to the nobility, should not be admitted to schools. Individual schools were divided into categories suitable for different social groups. What is more, in order for children to be taken away from under the influence of the family dormitories were established. All of this was aimed at raising blind supporters of despotism. It was then that

jako przedstawiciel korpusu nauczycielskiego, wystąpił najznakomitszy rektor wileński, Jan Śniadecki z mocnym pismem do kuratora, gdzie nazwał to zarządzenie Razumowskiego nieprzyjacielem ludzkości” (Janowski 1923, 245).

A significant change in the educational policy of the Russian authorities in the Taken Lands occurred in 1824 when prince Czartoryski was substituted in the position of superintendent of the Vilnius Scientific District by Nikolay Novosiltsev (LPAH, 567, 2, 32; 721, 1, 602). Appointing him was crucial for the future of Polish education in the Taken Lands and the consequences were experienced primarily by Vilnius University and other schools in Lithuania. A year later, after the death of Alexander I and ascension of Nicholas I to the throne of Russia, the anti-Polish course in the educational policy and extensive system of restrictions in this area escalated. The persecution of Poles and Polish education by Novosiltsev was only a prelude to what was happening in the Taken Lands after the outbreak of the November uprising, and especially after it fell.

The November Uprising, however, was only a pretext to liquidate the Polish education in the Russian partition. As it is known the Russian policy towards Poles, including education, changed radically at that time. First of all, by the imperial edict of 21 August 1831 the Vilnius School District was dissolved. It resulted in closing most schools in the area, especially Vilnius University and Volhynia Lyceum in Kremenets – two most important facilities in the entire district (BUWil, 2, KC 655). In total, including community schools run by Basilian and Latin orders and secular clergy and local citizens, the Russian authorities closed 248 schools with the Polish language of instruction, mostly in the governorates in the south-western part of the Empire, i.e. Volhynia, Podolia and Kiev. They left one middle school in Kiev (with the Russian language of instruction), 4 district schools and 14 common schools but none of these schools had the full staff (Rolle 1913, 122). Instead, in 1832, the tsarist authorities created two new districts: Belarusian and Kiev Scientific District. The latter was based on the southwestern governorates and the superior facility there became St. Vladimir Imperial University, established in 1834 in Kiev, where Russian was the language of instruction. It should be emphasized that this was a kind of

sensation because school districts were usually created around universities and in the case of Kiev it was in reverse order – the district had been created first and then the university was established. In accordance with the regulations the capital city of a school district could only be a university city. However, the authorities did not care because they just wanted to create a Russian alternative to the dissolved Vilnius Scientific District and the subordinate Polish educational institutions.

### References

- AMBROS, M. (1939), *Zarys statystyczny szkół Wydziału Wileńskiego*. Wilno.
- BEAUVOIS, D. (1974), Adam Jerzy Czartoryski jako kurator wileńskiego okręgu naukowego. In: *Przegląd Historyczny*. LXV/1, 61–85.
- BEAUVOIS, D. (1991), *Szkolnictwo polskie na ziemiach litewsko-ruskich 1803–1832*, T. I. Rzym / Lublin.
- BEAUVOIS, D. (1991), *Szkolnictwo polskie na ziemiach litewsko-ruskich 1803–1832*, T. II. Rzym / Lublin.
- BEAUVOIS, D. (2005), *Trójkąt ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793–1914*. Lublin.
- BEAUVOIS, D. (2003), *Pouvois russe et noblesse polonaise en Ukraine 1793–1830*. Paris.
- BEAUVOIS, D. (2010), *Wilno – polska stolica kulturalna zaboru rosyjskiego 1803–1832*. Wrocław.
- JANOWSKI, L. (1923), *W promieniach Wilna i Krzemieńca*. Wilno.
- JUCAS, M. (2009), *Mokslai ir mokymas*. In: *Alma Mater Vilniensis: Vilniaus universiteto istorijos bruožai*. Kolektyvine monografija. Vilniaus, 443–522.
- PRZYBYLSKI, R. (2003), *Krzemieniec opowieść o rozsądku zwyciężonych*. Warszawa.
- ROLLE, M. (1923), *Ateny wołyńskie. Szkic z dziejów oświaty w Polsce*. Lwów / Warszawa / Kraków etc.
- ROLLE, M. (1913), *Tadeusz Czacki i Krzemieniec*. Lwów.
- РОЖДЕСТВЕНСКИЙ С. В. (1902), *Исторический обзор деятельности Министерства Народного Просвещения*. Санкт-Петербург [Rozdiestwienskiy, S. W. (1902), *Istoriczeskiy obozor diejatelnosti Ministerstva Narodnogo Proswieszczenija*. St. Pietierburg].
- STUDNICKI, W. (1906), *Polityka Rosjan względem szkolnictwa zaboru rosyjskiego*. Kraków.
- TRUCHIM, A. (1960), *Współpraca polsko-rosyjska nad organizacją szkolnictwa rosyjskiego w początkach XIX w.* Łódź.
- WOŁOZYŃSKI, R. W. (1984), *Polacy w Rosji 1801–1830*. Warszawa.

### Sources

- Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ [Centralne Państwowe Archiwum Historyczne Ukrainy w Kijowie] (CPAHU), fond 707, opis 315, dzieło 7 – Korespondencja z Kuratorem Wileńskiego Okręgu Szkolnego dyrektorami szkół Guberni Wołyńskiej i Liceum Krzemienieckiego o mianowaniu nauczycieli Liceum i szkół Guberni Wołyńskiej – od 5.12.1805 r. do 15.12.1809 r.
- Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ [Centralne Państwowe Archiwum Historyczne Ukrainy w Kijowie], fond 707, opis 314, dzieło 5(1809) – bt.
- Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ [Centralne Państwowe Archiwum Historyczne Ukrainy w Kijowie], fond 707, opis 314 dzieło 10 – bt.

- Lietuvos Valstybės Istorijos Archyvas [Litewskie Centralne Archiwum Historyczne w Wilnie] (LCAH), fond 567, opis 2 – Wileński Okręg Szkolny.
- Lietuvos Valstybės Istorijos Archyvas [Litewskie Centralne Archiwum Historyczne w Wilnie], fond 721, opis 1 – Uniwersytet Wileński 1803–1832.
- Vilniaus Universiteto Biblioteka [Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego] (BUWil), fond 2, sygn. KC 232 – Raporty Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego od 1803 r.
- Vilniaus Universiteto Biblioteka [Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego], fond 2, sygn. KC 237 – Raport ogólny Uniwersytetu i szkół jego Wydziału z 1805 r.
- Vilniaus Universiteto Biblioteka [Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego], fond 2, sygn. KC 506 – Raporta o szkołach w Wydziale Imperatorskiego Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego.
- Vilniaus Universiteto Biblioteka [Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego], fond 2, sygn. 645 – Komitet Szkolny. Różne akta... z lat 1804–1831.