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ACADEMIC EDUCATION OF POLES ABROAD. TRADITION AND NEW CHALLENGES ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF PUNO

KSZTAŁCENIE AKADEMICKIE POLAKÓW NA OBCZYŻNIE. TRADYCJA I NOWE WYZWANIA W ROCZNICĘ 80-LECIA PUNO

ABSTRACT: The everyday life of Poles living abroad is closely related to the tradition of their country of origin regardless of the elements that make up this life. Education and science play an important role in maintaining ties with the nation and the ethos of the Polish national heritage. This article undertakes the description of the conditions for implementing the academic education of Poles in exile and emigration, noting the importance of the activity of the Polish University Abroad for the traditions of Polish culture, education and science. The article also attempts to identify the mission and vision of academic education at the Polish University Abroad, as well as its present and future directions of development.

KEYWORDS: academic education, university.

ABSTRAKT: Codzienność Polaków przebywających poza granicami Polski, niezależnie od elementów, jakie się na nią składają, jest w ścisłym związku z tradycją kraju swojego pochodzenia. W zachowaniu więzi z narodem oraz z etosem polskiego dziedzictwa narodowego ważną rolę odgrywa edukacja i nauka. W artykule podejmujemy się opisanie warunków realizacji kształcenia akademickiego Polaków na uchodźstwie i emigracji, zwracając uwagę na znaczenie aktywności Polskiego Uniwersytetu na Uchodźstwie dla tradycji kultury polskiej, edukacji i nauki. Podjęliśmy także próbę wskazania Misji i Wizji kształcenia akademickiego w Polskiej Uczelni Wyższej poza granicami ojczyzny, w czasach teraźniejszych i kierunków rozwoju w przyszłości.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: kształcenie akademickie, uczelnia wyższa.

Introduction

In the spatial history of the Polish state, access to education was not always possible, even in accordance with the human right to education. Such restrictions particularly took place during partitions or wars. The 80th anniversary of the Polish University Abroad creates a convenient situation to familiarise Poles, especially the young generation, with the conditions in which actions were taken to maintain the continuity of the Polish language and of academic education. *The 80th anniversary of PUNO is the celebration of*

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the great idea of establishing a Polish independent university abroad working for the good of Poles scattered around the world and for the good of their homeland – an idea adopted by the Polish university founded in Paris, that has been continued and developed for decades by the Polish University Abroad in London (excerpt from a statement by Professor Tomasz J. Kazmierski, rector of PUNO, during the inauguration of the celebration of the 80th anniversary of PUNO on October 11, 2019 in London).

We devote this article to events related to Polish education between the years 1339-1940 and the memory of numerous heroes, among whom a large number were teachers. The social group most persecuted by the Germans at that time was the intelligentsia: priests, teachers, doctors, officers, officials, buyers, landowners, writers, editors, and others (Walczak 1995, p. 60). They were primarily people who received higher and secondary education. At the same time, similar survivors were recorded on the eastern side of the Polish border. They were primarily people who received higher and secondary education (Walczak 1995, pp. 26-27). The Soviets destroyed the Polish intelligentsia to make the remaining inhabitants of Polish nationality vulnerable to Moscow's indoctrination (Grzenia 1995, p. 14). In order to stop the development of the intellectual staff, the occupiers began a fight against all manifestations of national and cultural life. Higher education institutions were closed and the process of shutting down secondary schools in the entire territory of the Commonwealth occupied by German troops and elementary schools in the territories annexed to the Reich lasted from October 1939. Until March 1940, only general vocational education was left in the General Government (GG), preparing workers for the needs of German occupations (industrial, economic (arches, trade, agriculture and horticulture and others)), and elementary schools which banned the teaching of humanities and physical education (Pospieszalski 1952, pp. 43-45). Not only the level of organization of the chauffeur service, but above all the knowledge transferred aroused resistance. Two hours a day classes in German were conducted by German teachers, students exchanged their education for work, thus creating labor camps for children and youth (Walczak 1987, p. 44). On the basis of source studies, as well as reports of starosts and mayors, the War Compensation Bureau at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers in 1945 determined that during the Second World War, 5,851 teachers and academics (representing 6.6% of pre-martial law) died, including 3,963 from general education (5.1%), 848 from general secondary education (13.1%), 340 from vocational education (14.2%) and 700 from higher education (28.5%) (Walczak 1995a, p. 10). Two years later, he reported that 'the Nazis murdered 48,500 representatives of various intellectual professions (Walczak 1978, pp. 30-32). However, these statistics are not complete, as they come from the period of Poland being under the influence of the Soviet Union (Grzenia 1995, p. 7), which made it impossible to include data from the period of the Soviet occupation. Poles' struggle to

preserve the continuity of Polish education and science also contributes to the destruction of Polish dignity. Therefore, and due to the 80th anniversary of PUNO, we have attempted to answer the following questions: What were the reasons for the establishment of PUNO? What is the tradition of a university abroad? What is the significance of academic education abroad for Poles in exile today? Due to the time and historical circumstances of numerous PUNO events, this article does not aspire to describe all the conditions that may answer the questions posed. These considerations are an attempt to show continuity that is independent of external influences of the university and of conditions of continuity of the academic tradition; a tradition that has enabled and continues to allow Poles to receive academic education outside their homeland.

Methodological conditions for gathering empirical data

The establishment and maintenance of a Polish university abroad can be analysed from two perspectives: horizontal and vertical. The first indicates the external causes of the establishment of the university, and these are the historical and cultural circumstances of Poland and Poles. The second perspective is the tradition of academic education and patriotic education which has changed over time and under the influence of political and religious changes. In order to describe both perspectives, this article refers to documents found in the Polish Library in Paris and to scientific (analytical) texts, as well as studies popularising the activities of academic education abroad, issued on the occasion of a number of ceremonies and celebrations such as the previously mentioned 80th anniversary of PUNO and previous 50th, 70th and 75th anniversaries.

In the Polish Library in Paris, reviewed were the executive acts documenting the conditions for the functioning of the University and the scientific and didactic activities undertaken. The documents have been grouped into three categories: 1) Materials related to the establishment and organization of the Polish University Abroad in Paris (documents related to the establishment of the University and university norms), 2) Materials regarding the activity of the University abroad, 3) Files on financial matters and other materials. A total of 26 documents were analysed.

The second method used to answer the questions was a free interview conducted among PUNO graduates. Nine people participated in the interview, this included 2 people currently living in France, 1 in Switzerland, and 6 in Great Britain. Interviews took place during the 80th anniversary of PUNO, in the POSK building in London. The situation (break in the graduates meeting) of obtaining research material favoured the conversation. Respondents felt free to provide information about their private lives. They were informed that their statements would be made public. The ethical aspects of interviewing in relation to acquired knowledge were taken into account (Sennett

2004, pp. 37-38). As a result of the analysis of documents and interviews, extensive empirical material was collected. Due to the volume, this article mentions only a few fragments and is a general outline and at the same time an introduction to the issue. More extensive material is being prepared for printing at the University Abroad in London Publishing House.

Contexts of the establishment of the first Polish University Abroad

The first weeks of German and Soviet occupation were a time of destruction of Polish culture. The detention of 183 professors from the Jagiellonian University and the AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków was particularly tragic. Nobody thought that the events of the end of September 1939 were the beginning of systematic actions aimed at the destruction of the Polish intelligentsia. Information about mass arrests and mass executions taking the form of murder shocked not only Poles. For this reason, among other things, 80 professors and associate professors as well as 60 assistants arrived in France after participating in the establishment of the Polish university abroad. The Polish University Abroad was established in Paris on the initiative of the Republic of Poland with the help of the French Republic.

The first headquarters of the University was then the building of the Polish Library, which still serves as an open library with cultural activities promoting not only Polish artists. The aim of the actions taken was to maintain free and independent Polish science and free higher education. The National Culture Fund, established on October 1, 1939 by the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, provided financial protection over the University. In June 1940, the Fund was incorporated into the Ministry of the Interior, and in the summer of 1943 to the reconstructed Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment. Thanks to this initiative, studies could be free and thus available to all Poles who wanted to continue their education in the Polish school during the occupation of Poland. At the time of opening, a total of 100 students enrolled with women constituting half of them.

The inauguration of the academic year took place on December 1, 1939, in the presence of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland and the commander-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces, General Władysław Sikorski. It was chaired by a long-time rector of the University of Paris, a world-famous neurologist, Professor Gustave Roussy. At that time, the Organising Committee, which also fulfilled the role of the Academic Senate, was elected. It was composed of representatives of six Polish universities and two polytechnics: the Jagiellonian University in Kraków was represented by Professor Stanisław Kot, the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius by Professor Stefan Glaser, the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv by Professor Olgierd Górka, the Józef Piłsudski University

in Warsaw by Professor Oskar Halecki, the University of Poznań by Professor Stanisław Runge, the Catholic University of Lublin by Professor Stanisław Stroński (who was replaced in the Committee's work by Professor Paweł Skwarczyński, because he himself served as deputy president and minister of state), Warsaw University of Technology was represented by Professor Gustaw Mokrzycki, and the Lviv University of Technology by Associate Professor Adam Rose. The function of the Chairman of the Committee was entrusted to Professor Oskar Halecki, and Professor Paweł Skwarczyński became the Secretary (Pelczar 2006, p. 88; Judycki 2008, p. 42).

Many documents drew attention to the role and importance of Professor Oskar Halecki in the shaping and further course of academic education abroad. He was a person of outstanding personality. His life goal was to prepare Polish scientific staff for post-war Poland. He was fascinated by Polish-Lithuanian history during the Jagiellonian times. He sought the agreement of Eastern European nations. In the years 1939-1940, he lectured at the Sorbonne. Due to the post-war Soviet occupation in Poland, he settled in the United States where he managed the Polish Institute of Science in New York. He was the head of the Department of Eastern European History at Fordham University (1944-1961) and a lecturer at Columbia University, the University of Montreal, The University of California Los Angeles, as well as the University of St. Ignacy Loyola in Rome (Pelczar 2006, p. 88; Judycki 2008, p. 42). As a historian, he entered the continuity of academic education that could have been preserved (Halecki 1939, p. 68). However, in Paris for a long time and on other conditions than in Poland, because the short period of activity did not allow for the development of an appropriate university statute and approval by the President of the Republic of Poland, as a result of which it did not acquire the right to confer academic degrees in France (Pelczar 2006, p. 88). After two semesters of activity, in the face of the fall of France in June 1940, Polish academic education was transferred to Great Britain in agreement with the Polish government in London.

Professor Oskar Halecki laid the foundation for the creation of PUNO in London. In 1941-1944, temporary Polish faculties and academic schools were established in several British universities. Among others was the Polish Faculty of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, by virtue of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland August Zaleski, of February 24, 1941 (Sulimirski 1955, p. 51). Moreover, a Pedagogical College and the Polish Veterinary College were established in Edinburgh which functioned the longest. Two schools were established in Oxford: The Polish University College, by virtue of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland, of March 7, 1944, and the Polish Law Department, by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland, of April 14, 1944. The Polish School of Architecture was founded in Liverpool and was one of the oldest and best architecture schools in Great Britain. Its solemn opening

was celebrated on November 6, 1942, in the presence of general Władysław Sikorski, professor Stanisław Stroński and university authorities (Szmidt 1995, p. 98). Actions taken by Poles to *preserve intellectual substance and Polish scientific potential in a tragic period for Poland cannot be overestimated* (memories of Professor Andrzej Pelczar). *It was managed to maintain the continuity of Polish higher education in Great Britain, thanks to the fact that Polish faculties could operate in British universities* (memories of Professor Sas-Skowronski, p. 89). Historical continuity of academic education was ensured by integrated activities combining personal, structural and ideological activities.

Structural contexts of the PUNO mission

In the conditions of mass settlement of Polish emigrants in Great Britain, in 1949 they were recreated from Polish faculties and academic schools in the slightly changed name of the Polish University Abroad – PUNO. Poles living abroad managed to create conditions for continuing higher education, as well as raising professional qualifications in Polish, which is also emphasised in many statements by PUNO graduates, among others: *PUNO's activities enabled us to maintain a sense of national belonging, to maintain a bond with traditions in a sense of security, and at the same time gave mild assimilation to the new conditions of the host country [...]. In the history of post-war Europe, activities related to the establishment of a university in exile, as well as the creation of an academic support network by establishing academic centers and branches of academic education in various countries was an exceptional phenomenon.*

Since its protoplast in Paris, PUNO has taken over and developed an educational and scientific mission. On December 9, 1948, the Provisional Council of the University Abroad adopted the PUNO Organizational Statute. The ethnographer Professor Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreuz-Jędrzejewiczowa also actively joined the process of renewing universities abroad. She came to England from Palestine in 1947 and set out two main tasks for the development of the university: 1) *the University's activities are to be guided by the spirit of freedom that science has been deprived of in the country and, where possible, rectify false information disseminated about Poland in the free world*, 2) *efforts should be made to make young generations of Polish scholars educated at foreign universities retain the Polish national personality and become Polish scholars.* (Czubińska 2019, pp. 14-21).

Task continuity and the achievement of the set goals was ensured thanks to the reconstruction in London of the university structure of the Polish University Abroad in Paris. The Faculty of Humanities was maintained, and instead of the Faculty of Law and Economics, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics was created. Particularly important for maintaining the tradition of academic education abroad was

the creation of three PUNO branches: 1) the Polonia Biography Institute in France, which continues its work, 2) the Faculty of Fine Arts – the Polonia Atrium Academy in Munich, operating in 1982-2013, 3) the Institute of Science and Culture – a branch of PUNO in Chicago, operating from the late seventies to the early nineties, 4) the Polish-Scandinavian Scientific Institute in Copenhagen (Pyłat 2010; Polish Science in Exile 1955; Documentation 1986). The support network of other universities, including those located in Sweden, the Netherlands, the USA, Peru, Portugal and Germany, was invaluable for maintaining the tradition and development of academic education.

The Polish University Abroad in London received full rights of the state academic school on December 5, 1952, pursuant to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland. The statute, which was an annex to the decree, was established by the Ordinance of the Minister for the Affairs of Polish Citizens in Exile (Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1952). Its content introduced the organizational structure of the University and the functioning of individual entities such as: 1) Academic authorities (rector, academic senate, Council of the Humanities Department, faculty commissions), 2) Special studies, 3) Scientific departments, 4) Economic administration, 5) Group of teachers, 6) Studies and students, 7) PUNO branches, 8) Correspondence studies, 9) Transitional provisions (Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1952) on the model of a university in Poland. Granted diplomas were honored in Poland and in many countries around the world, among others in the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, France.

The ideological contexts of the PUNO mission

National continuity, including ideological continuity, was created by the goals and ethos of the Polish University Abroad and its close connection with the educational mission after the war. The PUNO mission was divided into two fields (in the analytical description adopted – horizontal historical-cultural and vertical scientific-educational). PUNO became the symbol of the “MOTHER” university, which united universities and cared for the continuity of Polish science abroad (from the memories of PUNO graduates). It enabled soldiers, their families, refugees and emigrants from Poland to continue or take up studies in Polish outside of Poland. PUNO was also a home for outstanding scholars who conducted scientific research and/or disseminated their results worldwide. Poles who found themselves in the “west” after World War II, and who were not allowed to complete their studies in the country and achieve academic degrees after the war, were allowed to conduct doctoral and postdoctoral dissertations in the field of Polish studies, history, law, economics, sociology and natural sciences and technical at PUNO university (memories of PUNO graduates). For the younger generation PUNO gave access to

full and regular education at an academic level on the basis of pre-war curricula and regulations of Polish universities, adapted to the needs and conditions of the Polish exile environment. The Polish University Abroad *became a guardian of truth and academic freedom and was to oppose the ideological indoctrinations that universities in Poland were subject to* (memories of PUNO graduates). A dozen or so doctors promoted at PUNO were appointed as heads of Departments at Universities in many countries. PUNO professors included the most eminent Polish scientists in exile, most of whom also found employment at foreign universities. The Polish University Abroad is the “heir” of their experience and acts as a guardian of the memory of their lives and activities for maintaining Polishness, including in lands that provide free and independent national education. The University’s task is to promote Polish science and culture in the country of settlement (*Statut Polskiego Uniwersytetu na Obczyźnie* 2015).

Personal contexts of the PUNO Mission

Several generations of emigrants worked and studied at the Polish University Abroad. The first generation of PUNO professors were people born during the period when Poland was under partitions. They were educated in interwar Poland. To this generation belong, above all, the creators of the ethos of independence and the ethos of work on rebuilding the damage done not only to the Polish nation, but primarily to Polish culture and its traditions. Many professors from the Paris University started working at the London University, these were, among others: 1) Professor Oskar Halecki, an outstanding academic teacher and chairman of the Organising Committee of the Polish University Abroad in Paris, 2) Professor Stanisław Stroński, a philologist, political scientist, academic teacher, deputy minister, information minister and documentation minister in the government of general Władysław Sikorski – professor PUNO in 1951-1955, 3) Professor Marian Kukiel, division general, historian, academic teacher, deputy minister of military affairs in Paris and London in 1940, and between 1942-1949 the minister of national defense.

Following the fate of the University and the biographies of its professors, lecturers and students, one can be tempted to state that PUNO was (and is) not only a university, it was also a “*haven*” for Polish research workers *in the free world*. PUNO was influenced by those whose lives were broken during World War II and then as a result of the “communist occupation”. These include the founders of the university – Professor Karolina Lanckorońska, Professor Cezaria Baudouin De Courtenay Jędrzejewiczowa, Professor Tadeusz Brzeski, representatives of independence emigration Professor Aleksander Blum, Professor Marian Bohusz-Szyszko, Professor Józef Bujnowski, father Józef Bocheński, as well as those who were forced to leave the country, including those in the

seventies and eighties: Professor Józef Parnas, Professor Jerzy Drewnowski, Professor Jan Venulet, Professor Andrzej Żaki and many others. They were not only academic teachers, scientists, but also high-ranking military representatives, politicians and social activists often removed from the Polish national memory by the Polish People's Republic (PRL) (Kaźmierski 2019, p. 9).

It should not be forgotten or underestimated that after 2004, many young people – representatives of EU emigration – were looking for work in PUNO in order to find opportunities for further education and development. Unfortunately, due to the lack of accreditation in Poland, PUNO can offer little in this matter. In the current legal and economic status, seminars, symposia and conferences are organised in cooperation with domestic and foreign universities. Participants are people coming not only from Poland, but also the United States, Canada, Kenya, Germany, Italy, France and many others with whom academic teachers cooperate through research projects.

Polish scientific institutions, which are still functioning, are important points of support for Polish scientific and foreign employees. The University's goal is also to promote Polish science and culture in the country of settlement and in the world (*Statut Polskiego Uniwersytetu na Obczyźnie* 2015). Here, the question can be asked: How long and under what conditions will Polish education in exile survive? Certainly, life will soon verify the conditions and give an answer to that question. Is waiting until the changes are made themselves enough? What can or what should the Polish state do in such a situation?

Instead of a conclusion – a vision of contemporary alma mater abroad

This rainy, September evening I went to Exhibition Road and in the distance I could see the "Polar Star" – an illuminated white eagle on the pedestal at the entrance to Imperial College invited guests to the place of the Congress of Contemporary Polish Culture Science Abroad (London, September 12, 1970). After reaching the place, the volunteers welcomed me warmly and handed briefcases with congress materials. In this way I joined the Polish state abroad (memory of a graduate, Professor Eugeniusz S. Kruszewski).

After the Second World War, the Polish University Abroad was the main intellectual and scientific center of the Polish diaspora in the world. It was the focal point of uniting Polish tradition and culture with science and education on a global level. Currently, however, it has lost its rank. Paradoxically, in the face of the increase in the number of Poles in exile in Great Britain in relation to the PRL period, its possibilities were limited, and academic activities were reduced to post-graduate and course education. In the face of current education standards, it is difficult to provide a full range of educational services without adequate infrastructure and material support, relying solely on the

work of volunteers (Siomkajło 2003, pp. 39-47). The generosity and determination of former emigrants in the service of Poland has now taken on another dimension. This article began with a statement from a Pole, an emigrant and an academic teacher, and is concluded with a memory of a Pole in exile standing on the other side of the academic tradition – a student who said: *I am Polish but I am not an immigrant, I went to the United Kingdom for profit, from the prospect of a temporary stay and thinking that one day I will come back to Poland.*

Paying attention to the words of Poles, spoken in historically different contexts, for the sake of preserving the tradition of Polish culture in the lives of Poles, it is worth considering the mission and vision of academic education of Poles abroad. What can academic education today offer Poles, not immigrants, but voluntary migrants? Perhaps more extensive scientific research should be undertaken, which as a result of historical reflection and maintaining the bonds of the past (traditions of families and people staying abroad) with the present, will open the field for designing the academic education of Poles in the future.

Based on the analysis of documents and statements of employees and graduates, it can be said that the mission of the Polish University Abroad is not only to maintain the continuity of science and higher education outside of Poland, but, above all, to allow all generations of Poles who are outside their homeland or their country of origin and want to continue their academic studies in Polish, to broaden their knowledge of the modern world and maintain contact with Polish science and culture.

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