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The Commission of National Education (1773—1794) Schools in the Greater Poland Department*

Summary: The Commission of National Education (KEN) created a comprehensive school network, including the Greater Poland Department, consisting of department and sub-department schools along with loosely connected with them parochial schools, which in its entirety remained under the authority of the Kraków Main School. This article presents the history of the Greater Poland Department from the time of the Commission of National Education's establishment in 1773 until the Commission terminated its operation in this region amid the Partitions of Poland taking place here in 1793. This study explores the department school in Poznań, sub-department schools in Kalisz, Wschowa, Trzemeszno, Toruń and Międzyrzecz, as well as parochial schools.

Keywords: Commission of National Education, Greater Poland Department, Commonwealth's education system

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In the first period of the work of the Commission of National Education, the Commonwealth was divided into school districts, i.e. departments, under the authority of the commissioners. In Greater Poland, the department was subject to the supervision of Gniezno Province Governor August Sułkowski and Kopanica County Governor Antoni Poniński. This state of affairs remained, with minor changes, until 1781. At the Commission's session on 26 February, a new distribution of schools was presented. The Crown was divided into nine departments: Poznań, Łęczyca, Warsaw, Płock, Kraków, Lublin, Lutsk, Zhytomyr and Kamianets. This division was modified after visitations were carried out in individual schools, which allowed designating their educational level and the department they belonged to. Eventually, six departments were set up in the Crown: Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Mazovian, Volhynian, Ukrainian and Piarist.

The Greater Poland Department included the following schools: the Poznań department school and the Kalisz, Toruń, Trzemeszno (Canons Regular school) and Wschowa (taken over by the Cistercians) sub-department schools. Moreover, the department was also home to the Rydzyna school which was subject to the Piarist Department. The functioning of these schools has been examined using both sources and prior publications.

Greater Poland's educational traditions date back to the Middle Ages when cathedral, collegiate, parochial and monastery schools were founded¹. The subsequent centuries saw further educational development, with the Lubrański Academy founded in 1519 in Poznań and functioning till 1780 as one of the most interesting schools of the modern era². The time of Reformation and Counter-Reformation is a particularly intensive period in the history of education. This was the time of thriving multi-faith schools on the one hand, particularly the schools run by the Unity of the Czech Brethren in Greater Poland, and the Counter-Reformation Jesuit colleges on the other³.

In the 18th century, Greater Poland's education did not record any particular achievements until the Commission of National Education was founded, even though Jesuit colleges, multi-faith schools and the Lubrański Academy, then a school-academic colony connected with the Kraków Academy, were all still in operation. In the mid-18th century the Jesuit education system and the

¹ See: D. Żołędź-Strzelczyk, *Szkoły w Wielkopolsce od średniowiecznych początków do reform Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Poznań, 2010; K. Ratajczak, *Szkolnictwo w Wielkopolsce na tle sąsiadów w okresie średniowiecza*, Poznań, 2017.

² See: M. Nowicki, *Akademia Lubrańskiego. Organizacja szkoły i działalność wychowawcza*, Warsaw, 2015.

³ See: J. Dworzaczkowa, *Reformacja i kontrreformacja w Wielkopolsce*, Poznań, 1995; D. Żołędź-Strzelczyk, *Szkoły...*, 67—145.

Lubrański Academy underwent reforms in line with the spirit of the times and social expectations. It is also worth noting that Poznań-based Jesuits made several attempts, sadly to no avail, at transforming their school into a university⁴.

Successive acts adopted by the Commission impacted the functioning of schools in Greater Poland. The Acts of 1783 are the most important ones, but other legal instruments were also significant. The senior-level schools were regulated by *Przepis na szkoły wojewódzkie* [*Guidelines on province schools*], prepared by Ignacy Potocki in collaboration with Grzegorz Piramowicz. In administrative terms, the school department was accountable to the Crown's Main School, exercising organisational, professional, educational and financial supervision. Within the school departments, the public schools of lower levels (sub-department, parochial schools and private educational facilities, such as girls' boarding schools and *convictus* dormitories for nobility youth) with the teachers employed there were strictly subordinate to the schools of higher levels, i.e. department schools and their supervisors. The ultimate authority in the department was vested in the department rector, whose principal responsibility lay in overseeing the proper functioning of the education system⁵.

Ultimate supervision over all types of schools was vested in each of the eight members of the KEN, whereas members of the Society for Elementary Books were appointed as school inspectors in 1777. In 1780, the academies were designated as supervision centres. The individual school inspectors were assigned permanent visitation regions. The visitations resulted in visitation books, containing school inspectors' reports with their recommendations and warnings that were intended to improve the functioning of each school⁶.

The last legal instrument to impact the functioning of the Greater Poland Department was the School Code adopted at the very end of the existence of the Commission, titled *Ustawy dla stanu akademickiego i na akademie krakowską i wileńską i na wszystkie szkoły w Polsce i na Litwie* [Acts for the academic estate, the Kraków and Vilnius academies and all schools in Poland and Lithua-

⁴ L. Piechnik, "Działalność jezuitów na polu szkolnictwa w Poznaniu", *Nasza Przeszłość* 30, 1969, 196; D. Żołądź-Strzelczyk, *Szkoły...*, 128—130; S. Załęski, *Jezuici w Polsce*, 3, Lviv, 1902, 141; Z. Boras, *Tradycje uniwersyteckie Poznania*, Poznań, 2003, 102.

⁵ KEN school legislation has seen several source publications: *Pierwiastkowe przepisy pedagogiczne Komisji Edukacji Narodowej z lat 1773—1776*, ed. Z. Kukulski, Lublin, 1923; *Ustawodawstwo szkolne za czasów Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Rozporządzenia, ustawy pedagogiczne i organizacyjne (1773—1793)*, ed. J. Lewicki, Kraków, 1925; *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej. Pisma Komisji i o Komisji*, ed. S. Tync, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1954; *Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej dla Stanu Akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane*, ed. K. Bartnicka, Warsaw, 2015.

⁶ *Ustawy...*, 68 and subsequent.

nia]. The text of the new Acts was approved by the Commission on 2 February 1790 and it came into effect on 1 October 1790. However, the Commission never managed to publish it and deliver it to schools before the collapse of the Commonwealth⁷.

Poznań

When discussing the history of schools in the Greater Poland Department, it is worth starting with the department school operating in Poznań. Its history was divided into two periods: first, when there were two schools in town: the Lubrański Academy and the school that was set up in place of the old Jesuit college. In the case of the post-Jesuit school, it was the efforts aimed at transforming it into an academy that were extremely interesting. Priest Józef Rogaliński, former professor of the Jesuit college in Poznań, a distinguished scholar, teacher and science promotor, was the one who undertook this initiative⁸. Unfortunately, like the prior Jesuit initiatives, his attempt eventually failed and instead of becoming a university, the Poznań school became one of the Commission's department schools. It was to consist of both of Poznań's excellent schools: the Lubrański Academy and the remnants of the former Jesuit college that had been temporarily, as it turned out, transformed into an academy⁹.

The following part presents the Poznań department school itself in the years 1780—1793 in the different areas of its activity, as well as people connected with the Poznań school — its rectors, prefects, teachers and students. Until 1780, it was mainly the Jesuits, 26 people in total, that had taught at the Poznań-based school; later it was more and more often academic professors, sadly with varying qualifications and ways of conduct. Over the years, the composition of the teaching staff did not change significantly until 1781 when the transformation was really substantial. In 1773—1774, there were seven Jesuit teachers; the following year, two others joined in. The Jesuits continued to outnumber the

⁷ "Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej dla stanu akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane (2 II 1790)", in *Ustawodawstwo...*, 209—330. See: K. Bartnicka, "Sprawa przedruku Ustaw Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Wileńskim Okręgu Szkolnym początku XIX wieku", *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty* 20, 1977, 91—106; K. Bartnicka, "Wprowadzenie", in *Ustawy...*, 49. This is an examination of the preserved copies of the 1790 act.

⁸ F. Chłapowski, *Józef Rogaliński — uczonec poznański czasów Oświecenia, fizyk, astronom, pedagog*, Poznań, 2007; B. Natoński, "Rogaliński Józef Feliks", in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, ed. E. Rostworowski, 31, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1988, 401—404; J. Poplatek, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej. Udział byłych jezuitów w pracach Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, ed. J. Paszenda, Kraków, 1974, 192—200.

⁹ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, ed. M. Mitera-Dobrowolska, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1973, 127. See: T. Mizia, *Szkoły średnie Komisji Edukacji Narodowej na terenie Korony*, Warsaw, 1975, 4.

other teachers until the end of the first period, i.e. the year 1780—1781, when the ratio became more or less even with seven Jesuits and eight other teachers. Such a situation remained until the year 1789—1790. In the last period, the Jesuits constituted a minority until the year 1792—1793 when the last two Jesuits were employed, and the number of other teachers was eight. Like in other schools, the initial period was the most difficult, when financial matters, particularly regarding teachers' remuneration, had not been fully settled¹⁰.

When the decision was made to unite all the Poznań schools into one, Franciszek Minocki was appointed its first rector. After all the schools had been united, Jan Paprocki was appointed the head of the Poznań department school in 1781 while remaining the rector of all the Greater Poland schools. He managed the school until his death in 1784 when he was superseded in the position of the rector by Józef Przyłuski, the rector of the Kalisz school until then, who did not arrive in Poznań until September 1785. During Paprocki's illness and in his successor's absence, it was Priest Kazimierz Golecki, the school's prefect, that was in charge of the school but not very efficiently.

Apart from the rector, the school always employed several teachers. The Commission cared about teachers and sought to raise the prestige of the profession among the public, e.g. by raising teachers' qualifications. *Przepis na szkoły wojewódzkie* [*Guidelines on province schools*] of 1774 contained comments concerning the teaching profession. They emphasised the teacher's morality, qualifications for sharing the knowledge and its scope, as well as their attitude to students.

The students of the Poznań department school came not only from the Poznań Province but also from the provinces of Gniezno, Kalisz, Sieradz and Brześć Kujawski. They were mainly sons of nobility and townsman families of Poznań and other towns of Greater Poland. There were not as many of them as there had once been in the Jesuit college, and their number kept changing in different years. Secular teachers and the new school model did not gain trust of the general public soon, but it was happening gradually, and the number of students was rising. Until the reform of 1781—1783, the number of students had reached 140—150 (except the years 1774—1775, when the number was higher: 300 in 1774, 194 in 1775) and as many as 207 in 1781; after that, the number was gradually declining for a few years, only to exceed 170 in the years 1788 and 1789; in 1792, the number of students reached 212¹¹.

The students who often arrived from distant locations used lodgings offered by the city of Poznań and its environs. In most cases, they lived in private lodg-

¹⁰ J. Poplatek, *Komisja...*, 200—201.

¹¹ Data on the basis of Teodor Wierzbowski's records (*Raporty Szkoły Wydziałowej Poznańskiej składane Szkole Głównej Koronnej w latach 1777—1790*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1905, 214 and subsequent).

ings where their education and conduct was supervised by directors. Part of the students could benefit from the school dormitories. Some of them could live at the Szoldrskis' dormitory, funded in the mid-17th century. It provided accommodation for 12 students, had a comfortable building with a garden that was fitted for the students' recreation and had fruit trees¹². The Commission of National Education took over the Szoldrskis' dormitory funds as it did of the Zalasowski's dormitory, funded by Mikołaj Zalasowski in 1703 for five students aspiring to become priests. The dormitories' income was combined in the Lubrański Fund, which name was apparently meant to commemorate its origin from the famous school. There were six to eight students benefitting from it, and their names were recorded in the account book¹³.

The Poznań school's functioning can be recreated using general school inspectors' reports, reports prepared by the school and sent to Kraków, as well as the school's chronicle that has luckily survived¹⁴. The full picture relates only to the period following 1777, with changes applied to the school year 1781—1782. Reports show a really well-functioning school whose curriculum complies with the Commission's recommendations. Therefore, in the initial period, in accordance with the *Przepis na szkoły wojewódzkie*, we can see the division of the school into classes, each of which had a designated head teacher, with separate teachers of foreign languages. Drawing from the aforementioned sources, we can reproduce the way in which the Commission's recommendations were enforced regarding the syllabus and teaching methods and which textbooks were in use. We can see that in the initial period mainly old Jesuit textbooks that were available in the school's library were being used. Thus, the Poznań school's condition must have been quite good as it had a fairly well equipped library. With time, when new textbooks were published on the initiative of the Commission, those were the ones the teachers used.

The Poznań school possessed quite a vast collection of physical, mathematical and astronomical equipment that had been used in the days of the Jesuit college, which had been largely collected by Józef Rogaliński. Sadly, this equipment was, on the Commission's order, taken to Kraków by Jan Śniadecki, specifically delegated to Poznań for that purpose¹⁵.

¹² M. Nowicki, "Organizacja, majątek i życie codzienne w Bursie Szoldrskich w Poznaniu w latach 1653—1780", *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* 61, 2013, 391—408.

¹³ *Księga percepty i Expensy Funduszu Lubrańskich zwanego*, Archdiocesan Archive in Poznań, M 1/4, 1v.

¹⁴ *Dzieje domowe albo Opis przez dni osobliwszych dziejów i przypadków zdarzonych w szkołach wydziałowych poznańskich 1781—1793*, ed. D. Żołędź-Strzelczyk, Poznań, 2006.

¹⁵ *Testamenta varia et resolutiones Comissionis Educationis*, Jagiellonian University Archives (JUA), 482, 12669.

The Poznań school, a province school first and a department school later on, enforced the Commission's orders also in the educational field. Students were engaged in annual end-of-year school ceremonies involving students' showings and medal awarding for the best studying achievements. The ceremonious format of these events, the attendance of state and Church officials, the direct addressing of the students and making them responsible for the state must have made a strong impression on the students. The best example could be the ceremonious celebration of the anniversary of King John III Sobieski's Victory at Vienna. The king was presented as a role model, not only as a victorious leader but also as a properly educated man.

The speeches delivered each time on the occasion of the opening of a school year also had a great educational significance. By law, the ceremony was supposed to be held always on 29 September, but students' late returns from holidays often caused a few days' delay. Secular and religious dignitaries and other officials attended the event. The ceremony was held in a church, and it was commenced by a divine service. Various professors gave speeches both in Polish and Latin, and the names of the students who had obtained promotion to the next class were read out loud. It was usually concluded by the joint singing of *Te Deum laudamus* in honour of the person who was presiding in the Commission of National Education at that time.

With the right guardianship and upbringing, the students' community was, as the sources suggest, fairly closely knit. The school's chronicle makes no mention of any conflicts among students, even though the youth came from different social strata. The whole community's participation in religious life had no small bearing on the effects of the upbringing at the Poznań school. The chronicle demonstrates that the students along with the teachers attended all the major religious occasions in church. The students would usually stand in the middle of the church with school flags and staves held up high.

Raporty szkoły wydziałowej poznańskiej [*Reports of the Poznań department school*] show that in educational practice the Commission of National Education's ideals were implemented gradually with the teachers' rising preparedness for pedagogical challenges, new textbooks and the inflow of new professors. The school's teaching staff followed school inspectors' advice as far as they could, adjusted to the new system changes and received positive evaluation in consequence.

The Poznań school operated till 31 January 1793 when Prussian troops marched into town¹⁶.

¹⁶ *Dzieje domowe albo Opis...*, 69.

Kalisz

Schools of lower levels operated in similar ways. The second school in terms of size and importance was the Kalisz school, a province school first and a sub-department school later on. In the past, the town on the Prosna River had been home to one of the biggest and most populous Jesuit colleges, funded by Primate Stanisław Karnkowski¹⁷. The school's remarkable development, particularly in the late 18th century, gave solid foundations for the enforcement of the Commission of National Education's work. Of particular interest was the *convictus* dormitory for nobility youth, reorganised in 1746, directly following the tradition of the elite colleges of the Theatines and Piarists in Warsaw¹⁸.

Following the closing down of the Jesuit Order, the Kalisz school possessed a sizeable property and income which, however, the inspectors' work seriously shrank; consequently, no funds were available even to remunerate the teachers. 18 of the Jesuits had remained in Kalisz, including Prefect Józef Przyłuski, as well as some 600 students. There were no major changes in the educational work at the Kalisz school in the first few months following the establishment of the Commission. No transformation occurred till late 1774¹⁹. In subsequent years, the school followed the requirements set down by the Commission of National Education and the Society for Elementary Books. The teachers and curriculum were being gradually replaced. This, as we know, seriously upset the nobles and was reflected in the number of students.

In the beginning, aforementioned Józef Przyłuski headed the school until he left for Poznań in September 1785 and was superseded by Jan Gorczycki, also a former Jesuit, who had taught in Kalisz for years and was reputed by school inspectors. It is well known that he personally supervised education and actively engaged in the school's work. He advised the professors to encour-

¹⁷ See: C. Biernacki, "Jezuici w Kaliszu (1581—1773). Szkic historyczny", *Biblioteka Warszawska* 17, 1857, 465—491; J.A. Splitt, "Jezuici przed jezuitami. Pierwsza próba sprowadzenia jezuitów do Kalisza", in *Jezuici w przedrozbiorowym Kaliszu. Materiały z sympozjum poświęconego 400-leciu konsekracji kościoła pw. św. św. Wójciecha i Stanisława w Kaliszu*, ed. M. Bigiel, Kalisz, 1996, 12—14; J. Paszenda, "Fundacja ks. Prymasa Stanisława Karnkowskiego dla jezuitów w Kaliszu", in *Jezuici...*, 15—26; S. Bednarski, *Upadek i odrodzenie szkół jezuickich w Polsce. Studium z dziejów kultury i szkolnictwa polskiego*, Kraków, 1933, 117.

¹⁸ K. Puchowski, *Jezuickie kolegia szlacheckie Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Studium z dziejów edukacji elit*, Gdańsk, 2007, 141—147.

¹⁹ "Raport z wizyt odprawionych w niektórych szkołach wielkopolskich przez Józefa Łódzia Rogalińskiego, rektora akademii poznańskiej, w listopadzie i grudniu roku 1774", in *Raporty wizytatorów generalnych z lat 1774—1782*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1907, 5—8; See: *Fundusz*, Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, 1603, 1, 80, 47v.

age students to participate in drills and physical exercise, and he also provided students with wooden rifles for exercise. He encouraged students himself, on his visitations, to engage in this activity²⁰.

In general, the Kalisz school teachers, former Jesuits, were reputed for their work which was characterised by stability and diligence, although their obvious lack of qualifications to teach new subjects and the lack of suitable textbooks seriously affected their work. Between 1774 and 1777, there had been a slight reshuffling of the teaching staff, but the changes were to become greater soon. Secular teachers began work from 1781 onwards; with time, so did graduates of the seminary at the Crown's Main School, who had been educated in the new spirit of progressive philosophy²¹.

The students attending the school came not only from different parts of the Kalisz Province but also from outside: Poznań, Gniezno, Sieradz, Płock, Kraków and even Dobrzyń. The remaining information allows establishing the social origins of some students, but it applies only to the most distinguished representatives of the nobility and only to individuals. In the case of the others, nothing precise can be said. Students varied in terms of age, which was natural in those days, and they were all boys aged from 7 to 18 years²². Poorer students could use three dormitories; however, they did not function perfectly. The visitation report of 1782 says that the Karnkowski *convictus* dormitory that could have accommodated 12 students due to financial shortages only housed four, whereas the post-Jesuit dormitory housed seven students²³. A new *convictus* dormitory was opened in 1788 for nobility youth. This funding provided poor students with food and clothes and covered the necessary expenses. Two directors, i.e. guardians, were hired and remunerated to oversee the students. The students were supposed to live in the dormitory for seven years, i.e. for the entire period of school education²⁴.

The Kalisz schools' syllabus was compliant with that of the Poznań schools described above. However, the schools varied in terms of the length of education: the learning process was laid out over six classes in Kalisz and over seven in Poznań. From the beginning, both schools had enforced the syllabus of a prov-

²⁰ *Protokół obrad [Szkoły Głównej Koronnej] w materyach nauk od r. 1790 do r. 1797*, JUA, 10, 64.

²¹ Zob. M. Mitera-Dobrowolska, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794. Pierwszy urząd wychowania w Polsce*, Warsaw, 1966, 97. See: J. Neuls, "Wpływ Komisji Edukacji Narodowej na rozwój szkolnictwa w Kaliszu (1773—1793)", *Rocznik Kaliski* 5, 1972, 18 and subsequent.

²² *Raporty Szkoły Podwydziałowej Kaliskiej składane Szkole Głównej Koronnej w latach 1778—1790*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1907, 116 and subsequent; *Raporty wizytatorów szkół wydziałowych, podwydziałowych i parafialnych w Koronie 1782—1793*, JUA, 451, 155 and subsequent.

²³ *Raporty Szkoły...*, 137 and subsequent.

²⁴ *Raporty Szkoły...*, 139 and subsequent.

ince school, and it was not until the Acts were brought into effect in 1781 that the legal status of both schools began varying, but the period of education was unified and took six classes. Owing to the fact that the Kalisz school had the status of the department's "bigger school", it employed six professors on a permanent basis, teaching a full range of subjects. Regular visitations to the Kalisz school show a very good standard of the educational work.

Prussian troops marching into Kalisz on 13 February 1793 had the decisive impact²⁵, as it meant the de facto new partition, incorporating the Greater Poland lands into the Prussian state. Consequently, the sub-department Kalisz school was accountable to a new jurisdiction. It needs to be noted, though, that the town's capture by foreign troops did not interrupt the education which most likely was continued.

Wschowa

The county and sub-department school in Wschowa is the next school on the list. Wschowa was another town to host a Jesuit school prior to the establishment of the Commission of National Education. The Jesuits had arrived in town in 1723 and before the Order was closed down, they had run a five-class school with four teachers that educated some 100 boys²⁶.

The school's work in the days of the Commission of National Education can be divided into three stages²⁷. The first stage followed immediately the closing down of the Order. This was when the Commission was considering closing down this fairly small school, but it cancelled its decision in the light of the local community's protests, and the school continued work as a county school under the authority of a former Jesuit, Paweł Grabski, who remained in charge until 1777. In 1775, Priest Michał Rychłowski, also a former Jesuit, was appointed prefect and remained in his position until 1781 when the Commission granted him a pension. The remaining reports show the functioning of the school which taught subjects that the KEN ordered for county schools. Aside from the lessons, the school staged monthly and "general" showings at the end of the year, to which respectable guests were invited. Initially, it was a two-class county school, but with time, in 1783, it was converted into a sub-department school with five professors.

The second stage in the Wschowa school's history spanned the years 1782—1784 when attempts were made again at closing it down. Also in this case, the

²⁵ B. Wojciechowski, "Fragmenty z dziejów szkół kaliskich", in *Archiwum do dziejów literatury i oświaty w Polsce*, 8, Kraków, 1895, 340.

²⁶ S. Bednarski, *Upadek...*, 117.

²⁷ J. Sobczak, "Szkolnictwo wschowskie w dobie Komisji Edukacji Narodowej", *Rocznik Leszczyński* 6, 1982, 125—152. See also: D. Żołądz-Strzelczyk, "Szkola podwydziałowa we Wschowie", in *Pamięć wieków kształtuje potomność*, Kraków, 2010, 457—466.

local community's protests and petitions prevented the school from closing down. The school was taken over by the Cistercian Order, who had been interested in it for some years, and it was the Wschowa school's third period. Its teachers, mainly the Jesuits, departed, and Priest Wawrzyniec Drzewiecki was appointed prefect. In accordance with the Commission's orders, the Cistercians employed in the school had acquired education and obtained the necessary certificates at the Main School. In most cases, the Commission was not content with the level of teaching at the schools run by monastic orders, but the Wschowa school, aside from the Pultusk school, run by the Benedictines, was an exception, which was what school inspectors emphasised²⁸.

There were not many students studying at the Wschowa school. The nobility living outside of Wschowa were reluctant to send their sons to the school, because they had nowhere to live. There were too few suitable lodgings in town as the majority of the residents were religious dissidents who were not keen to take in students. This was why an idea came up to use the former Jesuit residence to isolate a venue where students could be accommodated under the guardianship of proper directors. The new *convictus* provided lodging for six to eight boys²⁹.

Like many other Commission schools, the Wschowa school initially used various textbooks. They were often newly issued books written by the Jesuits that had been used before the Jesuit Order was closed down. From around 1780, reports start mentioning textbooks of the Commission of National Education³⁰.

There were three groups of teachers at the school. The first group included the Jesuits who remained there after the closing down of the Order and the Wschowa school; when the school was restituted, Paweł Grabski convinced them to take up the jobs and remunerated them. That school was said to employ 11 former Jesuits in different years. At that time, a secular *metr* teacher of German was also employed in Wschowa. When the school was taken over by the Cistercians, its long-time teachers departed and were superseded by monastic teachers who had prepared for new duties while studying at the Main School in order to fulfil the Commission's requirements.

Trzemeszno

The Greater Poland Department was also home to operations of the sub-department school in Trzemeszno, a town that till the end of the 18th century

²⁸ "Wschowa. Raporty", in *Raporty Szkół Podwydziałowych Toruńskiej, Trzemeszeńskiej i Wschowskiej składane Szkole Głównej Koronnej w latach 1777—1790*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1910, 80—126.

²⁹ *Protokół not od roku 1781 do roku 1788*, JUA, 5, 78; "Wschowa", 35.

³⁰ "Wschowa", 93.

had belonged to the Canons Regulars who had, most likely as early as the Middle Ages, founded a school that had existed till the 17th century³¹. The following century, the incumbent abbot, Priest Michał Kościesza-Kosmowski opened a secondary school named Collegium Tremensensis with an *alumnat* lodging for students. The inauguration of the college and the *alumnat* took place on 4 May 1776³². Following the founder's wish, the school was incorporated in the Commission's reformed system, becoming a sub-department school³³. The learning process took six years and was divided into three two-year classes. Priest Kajetan Grochowicki was appointed the prefect; he was superseded by Priest Ignacy Oczykowski, who soon came into conflict with abbot Kosmowski.

The school was not overly popular with the local inhabitants who would have sent their sons to other schools, e.g. to Gniezno. Proposals were even put forward to transfer the school from Trzemeszno to Gniezno. This was all the more viable that the teachers employed there most often received negative evaluation from school inspectors. In 1787, the next prefect to be appointed was Priest Paweł Szejbrowski, educated at the Main School, during whose tenure the number of students rose significantly. Unfortunately, that number again fell considerably during the tenure of the next prefect, Priest Wojciech Jasiński.

The school suffered a gradual collapse, which school inspectors' reports clearly show. This resulted from Poland's general condition on the one hand and the resistance of a part of the Polish society towards educational reform on the other, as well as from the competition of the nearby schools in Gniezno and Pakość. Lastly, reasons could also have been found in the school's internal difficulties, connected with the frequent reshuffling of the teaching staff.

Trzemeszno school students came from the Gniezno Province, as well as from other regions, mainly from the Poznań, Brześć Kujawski and Kalisz regions. The school recorded the biggest attendance in the early 1780s, peaking in 1782 with 230 students. The subsequent years saw those numbers decrease: 126 in 1783, 51 in 1784 and as few as 30 in 1785 and 1786. As has been mentioned, the number of students rallied to more than 90 in 1788, only to fall soon after.

Toruń

The Toruń school was the next sub-department school under the authority of the Greater Poland Department. The period preceding the KEN establishment saw two schools, Lutheran and Catholic, functioning side by side. In the early

³¹ *Dzieje Trzemeszna*, ed. C. Łuczak, Poznań, 2002, 62 and subsequent.

³² *Wybór źródeł do dziejów gimnazjum i liceum w Trzemesznie*, ed. D. Konieczka-Śliwińska, Poznań, 2006, 24; "Kościół i szkolny gmach w Trzemesznie", *Przyjaciel Ludu* 8, 1841, 214.

³³ D. Żołądz-Strzelczyk, *Szkoły...*, 234.

17th century, despite the Lutheran inhabitants' refusal, the Jesuits were brought in and opened a school³⁴. The announcement of the papal breve took the Toruń Jesuits by surprise³⁵. After temporary suspension of its activity, the Toruń college resumed work, which the Commission of National Education approved. From 1774 onwards, the school functioned as a county school with three two-year classes, with Priest Antoni Samplawski, a former Jesuit, as its prorektor.

The school inspectors pointed to the school's deficiencies, reported on the decreasing quality of teaching and applying old methods and even emphasised their reluctance towards the new regulations and textbooks. As far as the students numbers are concerned, the Toruń sub-department school educated 90 students in March 1775, 58 in January 1778, 61 in March 1779, 82 in 1780 and 62 in 1784. In its final period of operation, there were 47 students.

The reshuffling within the teaching staff undertaken at the Toruń school in the years 1783—1786, intended to improve its operations, did not prevent the school's worsening condition. The continual attendance crisis and conflicts within the narrow milieu of professors led the Commission of National Education to decide to close down the school³⁶. The following laws were passed in 1786.

Międzyrzecz

A school operating for a brief period within the Greater Poland Department was the one in Międzyrzecz. As a centre of Protestantism from the 16th century, the town, due to its geographical location, was often exposed to the ravaging by marching troops. The town's most splendid period of development occurred in the late 18th century with Międzyrzecz becoming one of Europe's major centres in cloth trade. The Jesuits, who were brought here from Poznań in 1660, two years later founded a school that before the Order's suppression educated some 150 boys³⁷. Following the suppression, seven Jesuits remained in Międzyrzecz and continued their work. On visiting the school, Antoni Poniński appointed Priest Wojciech Czaplicki as the school prefect and designated the school's status. From now on, the school functioned as a parochial school³⁸.

³⁴ J. Łukaszewicz, *Historia szkół w Koronie i w Wielkiem Księstwie Litewskiem od najdawniejszych czasów aż do roku 1794*, 4, Poznań, 1851, 153—175; S. Tync, *Szkolnictwo Torunia w ciągu jego dziejów*, Toruń, 1933.

³⁵ J. Poplatek, *Komisja...*, 228—229.

³⁶ "Raport wizyty generalnej szkół wydziału małopolskiego: pińczowskich i kieleckich; wielkopolskiego: poznańskich, kaliskich, wschowskich, trzemeszyńskich, toruńskich [...] odprawionej w roku 1786, przez ks. Waleriana Bogdanowicza", in *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów z r. 1786*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1914, 18—20.

³⁷ S. Załęski, *Jezuici...*, 4, Kraków, 1905, 1515—1517.

³⁸ "Raport Antoniego Ponińskiego o wizycie szkół w Poznaniu, Międzyrzeczu i Wschowie", in *Raporty generalnych wizytatorów z r. 1774*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1906, 31.

The number of students studying at the Międzyrzecz school was now significantly smaller than in the Jesuit times: 80 in late 1774 and only 37 in 1776. The attendance was then gradually rising to reach 61 students in 1781, but the number was still too small. This apparently prompted the Commission's decision. Eventually, the school was closed down in 1781, its property sold, the church handed over in 1781 to Poznań Bishop Antoni Okęcki, and the dilapidated building was soon disassembled³⁹.

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There were also parochial schools operating within the Greater Poland Department, over which the Commission attempted to assume authority. Despite its obvious financial shortages, the Commission nevertheless undertook efforts to assume control over the parochial education system⁴⁰. Supervision over these schools was exercised by sub-department schools which were obligated to send reports every six months to the Main School's secretary. In most cases, they did not duly discharge this duty, but the Greater Poland Department was a conspicuous exception here, as Rector Przyłuski and Prorector Gorczyzewski had divided between themselves the parochial schools they visited and really did conduct the visitations. Part of the Commission's orders were ignored by the Church authorities despite the concordats that obligated Church officials to relay the proper information to the Main School. Village parish priests were supposed to exercise supervision over the school and relay reports to the KEN about the number of students attending each school, as well as about the school buildings and funds from donations that remained in the hands of the Church. It was not until 1792 that the Commission surrendered supervision of the parochial education system.

Greater Poland's rich educational legacy enabled the work of the Commission of National Education to flourish in the Greater Poland Department in exceptional ways, considering all of the above limitations and difficulties connected with the scarcity of textbooks and the lack of proper teacher training. Individual visitations and reports submitted to the Main School clearly demonstrate that the reform had begun yielding anticipated results, and the people of Greater Poland had started looking at the thriving secondary schools more favourably.

New inventories have revealed that the number of parochial schools in the Greater Poland Department exceeds considerably the estimates of the histori-

³⁹ S. Załęski, *Jezuici...*, 4, 1521.

⁴⁰ See e.g.: M.J. Poniatowski, *Rozporządzenia y pisma pasterskie [...] do dyecezyi plockiey wydane*, 4, Warsaw, 1785, 56—57; T. Mizia, *Szkolnictwo parafialne w czasach Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Wrocław, 1964, 49.

cal studies so far. The terminology used in relation to parochial school teachers also needs revising given the unambiguous picture provided by the sources.

This study is the first monograph of the Greater Poland Department and its schools. On the one hand, it presents a picture of this region's education system shortly before the Commonwealth's collapse, but on the other, it may well serve as a starting point for further analyses and studies. Examination of the archives has revealed that not all materials were rightly used in the past and that there are areas that await examination or a new perspective. This article is another step in research into the history of the Commission of National Education and its schools, but it clearly does not exploit all opportunities afforded by the existing sources.

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