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PREREQUISITES, OBJECTIVES AND FORMS OF SOVIET EDUCATION IN TERNOPIL REGION OF WESTERN UKRAINIAN SEPTEMBER 1939 – JUNE 1941

The way and methods of establishment and implementation of new Soviet educational system at the seized territories of Ternopil region are presented in this article. We studied documents of the state and party archives of Ternopil region as a fundamental material for the research. The new system of education, which was supposed to follow the objectives and principles of the new Soviet occupation regime, had to be effective in ideological and staff assistance for its social, economic and political institutions. We also analyzed various aspects of the Sovietization process of the region, where humanitarian aspect was of great importance that was mostly defined by the principles of official policy in cultural and educational life of the society. This expansion was comprehended as a means of communist ideology for imposing and development of a 'new personality' that would meet requirements of the regime. After taking the control over almost all educational, scientific and cultural institutions, the state began to develop personal worldview in the necessary direction in Western Ukraine.

Key words: Soviet education, educational reform, school teacher, socialist worldview, communist party.

Formation of the educational system, which would be appropriate for objectives and nature of the political regime and would effectively work for ideological staffing of its socio-economic and political structures, is one of the most important and necessary prerequisite for establishment of the social and economic order and political regime.

Before the attack of Nazi Germany the measures were taken for rapid implementation of Western Ukraine as a part of the Soviet Union. Humanitarian aspect was determined mostly by the essence of official policy in the spiritual life of society that was the most important in the process of Sovietization. It completely corresponded to the formula of the 1920-30s: party and state monopoly on the development of education and culture. This development was a means of communist ideology imposing and formation of a 'new personality' that would meet the requirements of the regime. Almost all educational, scientific and cultural institutions were controlled by the state, and then in Western Ukraine it began to develop personal worldview in the necessary direction [1].

So, we can understand the attempts of the Soviet government, which after the advent to Ternopil region created on 17-18 September 1939 17 temporary offices in the county centres and hundreds of peasant committees in villages to guide political, economic and cultural life of the region, to form its own educational structure as a part of unified system to guide the region.

Reorganization of local government preceded the educational reform. At the beginning of 1940 a new administrative-territorial division of Ternopil region was made: instead of the 17 counties 38 districts were formed, where party organizations influenced the most on their administration. They, or rather their authoritarian leaders provided 'the most active balance of Communists in all areas of manufacture, insisted in consistency and clarity in all areas of production, social and political activities', raised 'great political, economic, organizational, cultural and educational awareness of the population'.

So, the education of the region was a subject of a special attention of Ternopil regional committee of the CP(B)U, 38 just formed district committees, public Party organizations in towns and villages of the region. State school education and population literacy, due to cultural and educational policy of the Polish government in 1921-1939, was very low and unsatisfactory in some fields of knowledge. Policy of Poland in education in Western Ukraine was regulated by certain official documents, the main one was "School Charter" from 31 July 1924, which was also called "Cress School Law" that strictly outlined the establishment and functioning of Ukrainian schools. Due to that law the Ukrainian language was implemented in schools only if Ukrainian population was at least 25% of local community and at least 40 school children's parents wanted the school subjects to be taught in Ukrainian. But even following that legal norm, Polish authorities managed to decrease the number of Ukrainian schools from 51.5% to 5, 6% in 1921-1936. One third of children from poor families of Ternopil region did not study at primary schools at all, and secondary and higher education were not available for the most people, especially for the citizens of rural areas and small towns [2].

A similar situation was in other regions of Western Ukraine. It was explained by the mentioned above "Cress School Law", due to which Polish administration formed utraquistic (bilingual) schools, where the training should be delivered equally in Ukrainian and Polish as the government promised. However, the declared equality was violated by one of the rules of the "Cress law": to implement Ukrainian language into school teaching 40 parents' agreements were necessary, to implement Polish – only 20. Moreover, local Polish officials skillfully organized false statements from parents to make schools utraquistic or even Polish.

Ukrainian teachers were oppressed too: they were not allowed to work in Ukrainian schools for a number of reasons; they were transferred to central or western provinces of Poland to be separated from the local population and Ukrainian culture; Polish specialists were sent instead, often without any pedagogical education but they could teach children to neglect national history and culture.

According to the "Cress Law", the following compulsory subjects: the Polish language, history of Poland and 'Studies on modern Poland', were implemented in all state and private schools.

Due to the statistical information, for three years of rule of that law in Western Ukraine, Polish authorities had closed 1377 Ukrainian public schools and had opened 1019 utraqistic and 358 Polish schools. Ukrainian community tried to save national schools but they failed. There were some attempts to open private Ukrainian schools but mostly unsuccessful, and even if they were established, Polish authorities had a number of reasons to close them. The Ministry of Religious Confessions and Education of Poland obliged all the county school inspectors to conduct tough examinations in history and geography of Poland in all private Ukrainian schools and due to the inadequate results of such examinations many schools were closed. As a result of that biased and expedient inspection, 75% of private Ukrainian schools were dissolved.

In general, in Western Ukraine for four years of “Cress law” only 774 Ukrainian schools were left of 3662 functioning before the Polish government. At the same time, the number of utraqistic schools increased: there were 79 of them before adoption of the law, 2114 in four years after, and 2273 absolutely Polish schools, where the Ukrainian language was taught only as one of the subjects [3]. In particular, in Volyn region there were 95% of Ukrainian population, in 1939 only one Ukrainian school was functioning.

Secondary education faced many difficulties too. In three western provinces (Lviv, Stanislavsk, Ternopil) teaching in the Ukrainian language was only in 14 schools, and in 1937-38 academic year – only in 5. There was no public Ukrainian school in Ternopil and Volyn provinces in 1939. At that time, there were only 7.5 thousand Ukrainians among 41,000 students of secondary schools. High school was not available to Ukrainian people.

Only 5 institutions of higher education functioned in Western Ukraine. They were situated in Lviv, teaching was in Polish. Ukrainians had minimal chances to enter the university because of unequal competitive conditions of entry and tough anti-national policy of the Polish government in education. So, there were a very small number of Ukrainians among university students: at Lviv University – less than 14%, at Polytechnic Institute and Academy of Veterinary – about 10% [4].

The policy of Poland in education was anti-Ukrainian not only due to laws and regulations, but also to social, cultural, moral and spiritual principles together with political cynicism. Such cynicism was evidenced in implementation studies in the Polish language at utraqistic schools after declaring them as bilingual by Polish authorities. All the major and thus fundamental educational subjects were read in Polish. The subjects, which did not influence on the worldview development of a pupil, were taught in Ukrainian: crafts, physical training, as well as Latin and religion, which the language was not of great importance for.

The attitude of Polish administration to Ukrainian national culture was cynically dismissive. In schools, the students were imposed with the idea that Ukrainian nation had a low level of personal development, because all Ukrainians were ‘slaves and rabble’, that is why many Ukrainian people took every effort for Polonizing, for example, they took the metric from Orthodox churches to Catholic ones. It was the easiest and the most accessible way to change the nationality and, according to Polish teachers, to become an intelligent person.

Another manifestation of cynicism of Polish authorities in education was in an official story about school plebiscites that were supposed to ensure the right of the Ukrainian people to study in their native language and to organize national schools. Polish authorities did their best to prevent school plebiscites. Their measures were explicitly insidious. The government unofficially convinced the peasants that the plebiscite on language of teaching should be held only in those villages, where there was a Polish school, and this plebiscite was not necessary if there was a Ukrainian school in a village. Then the lack of a plebiscite in a village, where there was a Ukrainian school, was interpreted as reluctance of its citizens to teach their children in their native language and automatically the decision was made to reform a Ukrainian school into a Polish one. Bureaucratic hurdles were widely practiced: peasants were denied to certify the signatures on the declarations; various additional documents were required to identify a student; declaration consideration was delayed till deadline, when these declarations became invalid; complaints were denied or ignored; false declarations in favour of the Polish school were applied.

Under these conditions, the school plebiscites became mass demonstrations of Ukrainian population for national schools and teaching in the Ukrainian language. Even before adoption of the “Cress law” the communities of 1814 counties in Western Ukraine submitted declarations on teaching in schools in the Ukrainian language, and these declarations referred to nearly 140 thousand children. The result of this demonstration was opposite: the Ministry of Religious Confessions and Education of Poland accelerated the liquidation of Ukrainian schools. Due to decrease in number of national schools in Western Ukraine, the distance between the schools increased as well as the distance students had to overcome in countryside to attend the classes. These distances were measured in tens of kilometres: a large number of villages were located 30 km from elementary and 50 km from secondary schools. Geographically there was one school per more than 20 square km. As a result, only 30-40% of children of school age visited school in most districts. So, the number of children not involved in school studying was increasing constantly and in 1939 it reached 400 thousand people.

A lot of pressure to Ukrainian school was put by Polish authorities in all possible directions, including financial and human resources. In particular, Poland’s state budget provided expenses for education within 1 million Zlotys, and for police maintenance – more than 120 million. Human resources policy of Polish government was repressive too: 1500 best Ukrainian teachers were resettled by force from Western Ukraine to central and western regions of Poland; 2500 teachers of Ukrainian schools were fired without any objective reason; only one in six school employees was of Ukrainian nationality.

Closing of Ukrainian schools was held in two ways: they were either closed or polonized. From 1919 till 1939 the number of Ukrainian schools decreased in more than 25 times. One of the forms of fighting against polonizing of Ukrainian schools was boycotting the educational process in Polish and polonized schools by parents and students. When mass closing of Ukrainian schools by making them Polish or utraqistic started, many children refused to attend classes and even gave up studying. In particular, 81 students in the village of Sapohiv of

Borshchivcounty; 45 – in the village of Utishkiv, 73 – in the village of Verkhobuzh, 33 – in the village of Luka of Zolochivcounty; 30 – in the village of Polovtsi, 33 – in the village of Kolodiany, 52 – in the village of Zvyniach, 72 – in the village of Rosokhachof Chortkivcounty; 153 – in the village of Balkaof Mostysk county; 102 – in the village of Butsnevo of Ternopilcounty. This fact was widespread in all regions of Western Ukraine (Pavliuk 1957).

This proves that during the 20 interwar years, Polish authorities put a continuous pressure to Ukrainian schools, mainly by making them utraquistic (bilingual), which, in fact, was just a way to the complete polonization of education. In 1936-1937 academic year, 52.8% of Ukrainian students of three Galician provinces studied in schools only in the Polish language, 40.9% of pupils – in utraquistic schools and only 6% – in Ukrainian [1].

So, as a result of purposeful anti-Ukrainian policy of Polish government in education, Ukrainian national school was almost destroyed at all levels: elementary, secondary and high. This is the way specific prerequisites were established for implementation of the Soviet educational system by new occupation authorities. First, due to the lack of adequate national network of educational institutions there was no need for the Soviet government to take efforts for destruction – dissolving of inadequate educational institutions for the regime (they were dissolved by Polish authorities). Second, total illiteracy and low competence of children, youth and adults in Western Ukraine was a kind of 'educational virgin', where it was easy to implement their own educational programs with specific worldview and ideological guidelines (people with higher educational level have a developed worldview of a certain ideology and usually respond negatively to implementation of other ideological stereotypes). Third, underdevelopment or rather absence of national vocational secondary and higher education led to a total deficit of national staff son secondary and higher levels in all spheres of social life of Ukrainian society, which prevented professional opposition to the new personnel policy of Soviet government (professionals of Western European school have a different from the Soviet one ideology-driven worldview but also professional and occupational attitudes) – so, there were no impediment for personnel expansion of the Soviet regime into all spheres of social life and in all organizations and institutions of the material and cultural spheres, including and especially into educational one. Fourth, the decline of national school in Western Ukraine was a beneficial contrasting background to illustrate positive trends and innovative advances of the introduced Soviet educational system towards the improvement of literacy of children and youth, increase in cultural and educational competence of population, training of qualified personnel, providing access of public to achievements of science, culture and art as well as to public affairs, social and political life etc.

Abandoned, sometimes critical state of educational institutions in Western Ukraine during the occupation by the Red Army in September 1939 was beneficial for the Soviet government. The following fact proved it: closing of Ukrainian educational and cultural institutions, which were founded during Polish regime, was the first what the Soviet administration did in the field of culture and education. In particular, before the Soviet government, there were 2,984 offices of Prosvita (Enlightenment) in Western Ukraine, which united more than 100 thousand people. The organization Ridna Shkola (Native School) consisted of 1,075 clubs and 43,088 participants. Soiuz Ukrainok (Union of Ukrainian Women) counted in 25,000 women. Also, there were the organization Sokil (Falcon) (38 clubs), youth organization Luh (Meadow) (520 clubs), educational society Hromada (Community) (1200 participants), Shevchenko Scientific Society. They accomplished cultural and educational work for patriotic development, and at the beginning of the 1940s they all were closed because they did not meet the standards of Soviet education and communist ideological principles.

The reorganization of schools was carried out in the same way. Taking into account their different from Soviet traditional methodically structured educational system, this reforming was more difficult than closing. Thus, in October 1939 Berezhany Ukrainian College, which was famous for its national traditions, cultural and educational achievements, was closed [5].

Changes in education affected the majority of the population. Without interrupting the studying at schools and not starting more thorough reforms in education, since October 1939 the new government began to adjust the educational process in schools. First of all, the acting teachers were clearly explained what is necessary to do under the new state of affairs. Meetings of teachers were held in cities for expanding the information. For example, on 6 October 1939 in Ternopil under the aegis of the Political Administration of Ukrainian Front citywide meeting of teachers was held to inform them about objectives for the following academic year. Courses for teachers were also implemented at that time, mainly to study the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism.

Sovietization of education in Western Ukraine had a strategic objective to make local schools as an ideological means of communist regime establishment; russification of Ukrainian population; education of citizens, especially children and youth, in the spirit of communist ideology and loyalty to the communist doctrines of the USSR, such as the main postulate on supremacy of Russian people as an 'elder brother' to other peoples of the USSR, especially Ukraine, and the statement about the leading and guiding role of Communist party in all spheres of social life.

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