

## Polish School Motherland in the Northeastern Borderlands of the Second Republic of Poland

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*One of the socio-educational organizations operating from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Kingdom of Poland was the Polish School Motherland (Polska Macierz Szkolna, hereinafter: PMS). Initially illegal, work focused the attention of activists on the issues of teaching in Polish, which was addressed to various age groups of listeners. In 1916, the first Statute of the Motherland was developed, which presented the goals and directions of work and in which the promotion of and support for education in the Christian and national spirit constituted the main determinant of activity.*

*During the First World War, PMS turned its interest to the Northeastern Borderlands. When assessing the state of Polish education in these lands, it was obvious to take appropriate measures in the area of the former Russian Partition. However, the issue of nationality of these lands has not yet been resolved.*

*After 1918, PMS tried to organize appropriate educational institutions, but it should be emphasized that Warsaw activists encountered a number of difficulties which resulted, among others, from ignorance of the peculiarities of these lands. Finally, in September 1919, the Polish School Motherland of Eastern Lands was established and started developing intensive work in the field of organizing: daycare centers, public schools and secondary schools (few), courses for illiterate adults, libraries and reading rooms. The Motherland was also active in the field of material help for those in need.*

Key words: *Polish School Motherland; Kingdom of Poland; WWI; after 1918*

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Polish schooling in the Kingdom of Poland underwent only minor changes. Although the decree of the Tsar of October 17, 1905 allowed the establishment of private Polish schools, they would not enjoy the same rights as state schools. The certain political liberalization in Russia made it possible to set up (or to reveal the functioning of) cultural and educational organization and associations

which were aimed to organize the education of Polish children and youth. Among these organizations, one ought to note the establishment of the Polish School Motherland (Polska Macierz Szkolna, hereinafter: PSM)<sup>1</sup> on May 15, 1905. The origins of the initiative “can be traced back to clandestine teaching organized in autumn 1894”<sup>2</sup> by Cecylia Śniegocka.

Even though the work of the Motherland was legalized the Russian authorities would closely monitor the activities of this organization when it organized itself and broadened the scope of its educational efforts. The first two years of the work of the 781 circles of the Motherland in the Kingdom of Poland can be summarized with the following statistics: “in 1907 the authorities confirmed 141 schools, i.a., secondary schools in Pułtusk, Łęczyca, Płock, Siedlce, Wieluń, and Sieradz, also 317 daycare centers, 505 libraries and reading rooms were established and there was the functioning People’s University in Warsaw”<sup>3</sup>. The aim of the University, an institution for adults, was to increase the level of education and culture of Polish workers and craftsmen strata, honing their professional education, and providing decent and educating entertainment. Organizers of the University emphasized that “the People’s University conducts activities in the national spirit, without serving any partisan political interests, which is why no political agitation may be carried out on its premises”.<sup>4</sup>

The legal work of PSM did not last long. In December 1907 on the basis of the decision of the Russian authorities, further activities were discontinued – the organization was dissolved. In the decree of December 1907 of the general-governor of Warsaw one can read: “the main aim of the Association is not understood to be the enlightenment of the people, which would have been worthy of the support of the government, but a subversive awakening in the people of the spirit of purely national separateness”<sup>5</sup> and the breach of law was noted in the form of the teaching of Polish in the schools of the Motherland. In breach of the ban imposed by the Russian authorities some of the circles undertook clandestine activities through organizing lectures for various social and professional groups in the Kingdom of Poland.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Markiewiczowa, H. (2016) *Geneza, organizacja i działalność Polskiej Macierzy Szkolnej w latach 1905–1907*. In *Szkolnictwo, opieka i wychowanie w Królestwie Polskim od jego ustanowienia do odzyskania przez Polskę niepodległości 1815–1918*, Warszawa. p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Markiewiczowa, H. (2016) *Rzecz o Polskiej Macierzy Szkolnej*, Warszawa, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Markiewiczowa, H. (2016) *Rzecz o ...*, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Uniwersytet ludowy P. M. S. (Polskiej Macierzy Szkolnej) (1906), „*Konika Rodzinna*” 1906, Issue 1–2, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Polska Macierz Szkolna, (1908), „*Sprawy Szkolne*”, p. 79.

In the years of the partitions of Poland, the area of educational activities of the Motherland was explicitly formed. The experience acquired and the inclusion of new activists and listeners (students and pupils) were to become a major contribution to the realization of goals on numerous levels of care and education in independent Poland.

The outbreak of World War I and the anticipated changes of the political map of Europe awakened the Polish society who focused their attention on, among others, the question of the education of the Polish society. On April 28, 1916 Polish School Motherland was reactivated. Numerous circles were established in the Kingdom of Poland and in the Eastern Borderlands (regions of Wołyń, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna, Grodzieńszczyzna).

The first Statute of the Motherland – the “Act of the Association of the Polish School Motherland” of 1916 presented the goals and the directions of the work in which the promotion and the support of education in the Christian and national spirit were prevalent. This leading idea was reiterated in the first Statute in independent Poland of 1924 and the subsequent document of 1930: “both the Christian character and the national element of the education were idiosyncratic of the work of the Motherland and they were inseparable”.<sup>6</sup>

In the gradual development of its activities, the association would set up and maintain schools of all levels for children and youth, daycare centers, reading rooms, libraries, dormitories, and day rooms.

While in the lands of the former Kingdom, the central voivodships of the Second Republic of Poland, the work of PSM developed well, in the northeastern borderlands the Motherland circles would encounter numerous organizational and financial obstacles. First and foremost one ought to note that the Motherland active in the areas of the Kingdom did not have the opportunity to cooperate with the educators in the northeastern lands.

Originally the educational activities in the region of Vilnius were of limited scope. The work carried out at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century revealed that the number of individuals (secular and clerical) interested in the educating the society was insignificant. The people were poor, in particular the rural population, and they were not able to financially support pedagogical projects. It needs also to be emphasized that the population of the borderlands was ethnically and religiously diverse, which presented the educational activists with further difficulties.

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<sup>6</sup> Markiewiczowa, H. (2016) *Rzecz o ...*, p. 39.

The most intensive educational work was concentrated in Vilnius. The first associations were established, such as the Association of People's Education (1891), Association of National Education (1893), Association for the Care for the Learning Youth (1900), Association of National Work (1905), the Philaretos Association (1905), the "Education" Association (1906), and a number of others. However, the period of the legal activity of the aforementioned organizations and associations was short. They were formed illegally to reveal their existence in 1905 and to subsequently undertake again their clandestine activities after 1907/1908.

Beyond Vilnius education of children would lie within the circle of interests of a few individuals, typically well-educated women, who would frequently teach children independently, focusing on Polish and talks about Polish history.<sup>7</sup> Between 1918 and 1919 the problem of whether the northeastern borderlands would become a part of the independent state of Poland was not regulated.

The schools in these areas, of all types and levels, were supervised by educational authorities which changed quickly along with the dynamic political situation. As part of the Civil Authority of Eastern Lands the problems of education were dealt with by the department of education organized with the Administrative Section; subsequently, Public Enlightenment Section was organized in October 1919. The Section was dissolved in August 1920. Soon, the statehood of northeastern borderlands changed. They came under Lithuanian government which became the supervisor of school administration, with the national school departments under its authority. The situation was to change again in short time. The establishment of Central Lithuania leads to the rise of new school authorities – the Education Department of the Provisory Governing Commission of Central Lithuania (October 9, 1920 – February 20, 1922). In February 1921 the nowogródzkie voivodship was delineated and along with this new administrative unit of the Second Republic of Poland the School Authority of the Nowogródek School District (based in Lida) was introduced. After the region of Vilnius became a part of Poland in 1922 the authority was dissolved. With the liquidation of the Nowogródek School Authority, the School Authority of the Vilnius School District (based in Vilnius) was formed, with a number of other bodies.

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<sup>7</sup> Walasek, S. (2000) Nauczycielki tajnej oświaty w Okręgu Szkolnym Wileńskim w latach 1864–1915. In *Partnerka, matka, opiekunka. Status kobiety w dziejach nowożytnych od XVI do XX wieku*, ed. K. Jakubiak. Bydgoszcz, pp. 495–503.

In spite of the changing political situation of the discussed lands the school, authorities would undertake actions aimed to organize and maintain public schools, secondary comprehensive education schools, vocational schools including teacher training seminars, daycare centers, and schools for adults. A number of the mentioned initiatives was supported by local associations and educational organizations.

After 1918 PSM undertook actions in the borderlands, stating that in these areas (wotyńskie, poleskie, nowogródzkie, wileńskie and partly białostockie voivodships) there exist aims "concerning the nation and the state which can and ought to be fulfilled by the Polish School Motherland. In these areas not only the cultural heritage needs to be strengthened, but also the scope of the influence ought to be broadened and deepened, which is why the work of the Polish School Motherland in the Borderlands cannot be weakened in any form of activity, but to the contrary, it must intensify".<sup>8</sup>

The activists of PSM based in the Kingdom of Poland failed to comprehend the specificity of the borderlands. It may be assumed that this was the reason why the educators in Vilnius made the decision to define their own set of aims, on the basis of the general guidelines of the Board of the PSM in Warsaw and taking into account the character of the borderlands. In 1919 the Vilnius-based Catholic Association of Polish People's School initiated talks with the PSM headquarters in Warsaw on changing its name to Polish School Motherland. The talks were concluded positively for the Vilnius side and on September 31, 1919 the Catholic Association was dissolved. It is difficult to say whether the newly established Motherland was the origin of the Polish Motherland of Eastern Lands or the reformed Catholic Association was merged with the Motherland of Eastern Lands. On the basis of source materials it may be stated that the Motherland of Eastern Lands was mostly active in Polish and Catholic circles. As it turns out, schools for Belarusian and Orthodox Christian children were established, as well.

As early as the first half of 1918 the Motherland maintained 33 public schools for 2,600 children in Vilnius, with 136 teachers. Noticing the poverty of the local communities, meals were distributed to school children, mostly consisting of soup, occasionally bread. On September 1, 1919 the Motherland set up further public schools in the city.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Zarząd Główny Polskiej Macierzy Szkolnej (1934), O ratunek dla szkół. „*Polska Macierz Szkolna*”, Issue 1, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Stan szkolnictwa polskiego w Wilnie i na Litwie (czasach okupacji niemieckiej Ob. Ost) (1918). „*Polska Macierz Szkolna*”, Issue 11–12.

During the functioning of the Section of Public Enlightenment, headed by Lucjan Zarzecki, the cooperation of the Motherland and the local school authorities was successful. It may be assumed that this resulted from the fact that previously Zarzecki took on the position of the head of pedagogical department and the entire Board of PSM (February 16, 1917). Zarzecki was also editor-in-chief of the local journal titled "Polska Macierz Szkolna".

With the dissolution of the Section of Enlightenment and Zarzecki's resignation from the function of its head, the Education Department of Central Lithuania took supervision of the entire schooling, attempting to reduce the Motherland to monitoring and coordinating extracurricular education.

The definition of aims that the Motherland perceived as limited led to outrage among its members. However, the administration in Vilnius did not breach its prerogatives and competences believing that it was the only authority in the management of schooling.<sup>10</sup>

In December 1919 the PSM of Eastern Lands Address was published which informed about the establishment of a Vilnius-based educational association Polish School Motherland of Eastern Lands and the need for the active participation of the society because "Polish society must understand how powerful a factor in the reconstruction of the free Motherland education of all social strata in our country is".<sup>11</sup>

On the days of January 4 and 5, 1920 the Polish School Motherland of Eastern Lands organized the First Convention of Educational Associations (in the borderlands). The aim of the convention was to reach mutual understanding in questions pertaining to education. The convention was chaired by Witold Węstawski. The presiding board included: L. Zarzecki – head of Enlightenment Section, prof. Siedlecki – rector of the University of Vilnius, Janowski – representative of educational organizations in Kiev and P. Nowak, delegate of the People's School Association in Galicia. The days of the convention were filled with reports on the realization of the goals of cultural and educational efforts in the Borderlands. At the end of the sessions, 15 motions submitted by

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<sup>10</sup> Walasek, S. (2006) *Szkolnictwo powszechne na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej (1915–1939)*. Kraków, pp. 211–212.

<sup>11</sup> State Historical Archive of Lithuania, (hereinafter: PLAH), collection 1135, carton 4, Issue 62, p. 184, PSM of Eastern Lands Address of December 1919.

<sup>12</sup> Ostachiewiczowa, K. (1919–1920). Pierwszy Zjazd Towarzystw Oświatowych, zorganizowany przez Polską Macierz Szkolną Ziem Wschodnich. „*Szkoła Powszechna*”, Issue 3–4, p. 98.

<sup>13</sup> State Archive of Lithuania, (hereinafter: PAL), collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 12, Koło PMS im. K. Promyka w Wilnie. Sprawozdanie z działalności Koła od 1/X 30 r. do 31/VI 21 r.

the general education, schooling, library and distribution, and lecture sections of the Motherland were presented. The motions were accepted by the Convention, and the efforts to implement them were initiated by “combating illiteracy, establishing 1- and 3-grade schools and developing them into regular 7-grade public schools, organizing lectures, field trips, and establishing libraries”.<sup>12</sup>

Actions were also carried out towards organizing PSM circles. In Vilnius in 1919 Fr. N. Dyakowski organized the K. Promyk Circle which in January 1920 was reorganized after the Bolshevik invasion by Fr. B. Jeleński, the prefect of Polish schools in Vilnius and rector of the Lord Jesus’ Heart church. According to the report<sup>13</sup> the Circle would focus on raising national and social awareness among the deprived inhabitants of the “Wilcza Łapa” (“Wolf’s Paw”) suburb. In the reporting period, the circle would include 120 acting members. The circle organized a People’s Home which consisted of a library and a book-lending service. It was a place where lectures were held. At the turn of 1920 and 1921, five lectures were organized, including two on the Constitution of May 3 and to the January Uprising. The circle also conducted handicraft classes for girls. The circle planned to hold courses for adults and establish a daycare center for children in school and preschool age in autumn of 1921. “In the latter issue, the Circle trusts in the help of the PSM Headquarters”.<sup>14</sup> From the general report of the PSM Headquarters, it can be concluded that “because of the distance to the city and the lack of an intelligent leader”<sup>15</sup> the Circle limited its efforts to lending books and a few lectures.

The report of the Antokole-based Piotr Skarga Circle (established on September 1, 1919) for the same period as that described by the K. Promyk Circle includes a number of initiatives for children and adults.<sup>16</sup> The circle maintained a Piotr Skarga public school (School No 29) of 5 grades for 200 children and employing 5 teachers. Furthermore, the Circle ran 5 schools in the Antokole parish outside the city and two nurseries in the villages of Papajany and Dworczyany. Talks were held for adults frequenting the tea shop. “Newspapers were read and distributed”<sup>17</sup> and field trips to the countryside were organized to “raise the awareness of the people through games”. The head of the circle was Fr. T. Zawadzki, parson of the St. Peter church. The circle had 54 acting members and 400 participants were registered. The circle operated

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<sup>14</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 6a.

<sup>16</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit.

a People's Home in Antokolska Street, a lecture room, a course room, a tea shop, and a room for a library. Unfortunately, no book lending service was organized. The Circle asked the PSM authorities to send books because there appeared to be a high demand for them. Fr. Zawadzki would lend his own to books to those interested.

In the People's Home on Sunday afternoons or evenings, there would be readings and talks on politics, economics, and nature. From January to May 1920 16 such meetings were held. The participants were predominantly interested in politics and talks on current issues. On the evening courses for youth trips were organized to the most important churches in Vilnius and to the glassworks plant in Śnipiszki. 25 people were enrolled in the evening courses. The classes were suspended in summer. What is more, the Circle organized choir classes and, three times a week, reading of the Sienkiewicz trilogy for youth. Dances and games supervised by the members of the Board were an integral part of the work of the circle.

The Circle members planned to establish a dormitory for older girls from rural areas willing to take part in evening courses and learn handicraft in the morning. Plans were made to set up a kitchen for the impoverished intelligentsia, cooking courses, and craftwork courses in shoemaking and tailoring. There was also the idea to have the members of the Circle participate in an amateur theatre.

The Adam Mickiewicz Circle re-initiated its work in January 1921. The first week was devoted to organizing the circle with 62 acting members but no supporting members. Fr. J. Songin was Head of the Circle. The Circle maintained a People's Home in which there was a tea shop and a small reading room with local periodicals. Talks on current affairs and the importance of People's Homes were held three times a week. The attendance was unimpressive due to the size of the room. Trips were not organized. The Board of the Circle intended to start courses for adults in April and May, however, because of the low number of those interested the decision has been made to postpone the initiative until autumn. Attendance in handicraft classes for older girls was more significant. The Circle Board planned to focus on developing reading and holding cultural and educational talks.<sup>18</sup>

The activity of the St. Bernard Circle, established after the Bolshevik invasion in November 1919, was substantially richer. At the beginning Fr. J. Kretowicz was head of the Circle, to be followed by Leon Perkowski.

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<sup>18</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 16.

The Circle had 365 members. Lectures were held and a People's Home was maintained in the district of Zarzecze with a reading room, library, and a theatre. 165 people would use the library, most of whom were children, probably pupils in local schools. Lectures in the People's Home were conducted weekly<sup>19</sup> and, furthermore, lectures on the following topics were given in Zarzecze in Filarecka and Jerozolimska streets: On the problem of Vilnius, On citizen duties, Russia and Poland. The interest in the lectures was high, especially in those on history and social and political issues. In the People's Home theatre plays were staged twice and games in the garden were organized once. In its future work, the Circle planned trips to the city (history of Vilnius), to the power plant and the waterworks, and to the Home of the Heart of Jesus (an institution headed by Fr. Lubianiec). The Board also planned to begin citizenship courses in autumn if "it turns out to be necessary to provide supplementary courses in Polish language, history of Poland, arithmetic, and nature".<sup>20</sup> In the case of the St. Bernard Circle in 1919 all the members of the board of the circle moved out of Vilnius. The well-developing People's Home in Połocka Street 5 which had a beneficial influence on the rural population, discouraging them from frequenting Jewish pubs and inns and encouraging the reading of Polish periodicals and books was soon to be completely demolished. As it turns out the devastation was the work of the owners of the premises who used the absence of the Board as an opportunity to destroy the belongings of the Circle and start a grocery store in the building. "It was nearly necessary to go to a court of law to get back the equipment and the books, numerous of which were missing".<sup>21</sup> In February 1921 the St. Bernard Circle set up a new People's Home in Zarzecze Street 5. The premises there were significantly worse.

The Circle in Śnipiszki would focus first and foremost on reading books. The Circle was established on November 7, 1920. Before the Circle of the Motherland was founded there was a parish library with 300 books, set up thanks to the efforts of Fr. L. Olszewski. The library was financed from donations of the readers as well as Rosary Circles, hence the name: The Library of the Living Rosary, which was changed after the PSM Circle was started. Because of the rising prices of books the available funds turned out to be insufficient to purchase new copies and

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<sup>19</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337.

the fees collected from the readers were not high enough. It might have been that these facts led to the founding of the PMS Circle which made it possible to acquire funding from the Main Board. The finances thus received made it possible for the much needed library to function in Śnipiszki. The circle with 200 members was headed by Fr. L. Olszewski.

As in the remaining PSM circles in Vilnius, it was also in Śnipiszki that the importance of reading and lectures was noticed. 500 people would use the library in Śnipiszki, and, as it was pointed out, "the number of persons willing to use the library is constantly increasing".<sup>22</sup>

In the report it is stated that the number of the members of the Circle was relatively low. This was caused by a lack of a building available to organize meetings. It was only on April 23, 1921 that the premises were extended by renting a room adjacent to the library. This made it possible to hold a number of lectures. The Circle did not operate a People's Home although certain efforts were made to do so.

The Zwierzyniec Circle of PSM, which had a People's Home, organized two talks and three lectures,<sup>23</sup> and staged two comedies between January 1 and June 1, 1921. The lectures and the talks were combined with singing, music, and poetry readings. A library with 500 books was set up. 25 people would use the library.

The Circles of the Motherland in wileńskie voivodship were established from 1919, however, "the Bolshevik onslaught and the subsequent Lithuanian government brought all the cultural and educational works in our lands to a halt".<sup>24</sup> From November 1920 the works were re-initiated. Libraries were reopened and courses for adults were started. The reorganization of the Tomasz Zan Library Circle was also conducted. On the first meeting of the Board on October 28, 1920 it was decided that it would function as an independent unit. The vice-president of PSM Fr. P. Miłkowski let the circle the premises in the Michalscy building in Św. Anny Street 7.

In December 1920 the Main Board in Vilnius distributed libraries of 300 books each to all of the circles, along with periodicals such as "Jutrzenka" [Aurora] and "Przyjacieli dzieci" [Children's friend]. What is more, 2 libraries were transferred to the school inspector of oszmiański powiat and 2 further ones to the Bystrzyckie Circle in Bystrzyca, and one to the new circles of PSM in Lebediewo and Nowo-Święciany.

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<sup>22</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 6.

Furthermore, circles in Holszany, Dukszty, Ławryszki, and Nowo-Wilejce received sets of books.

The board also granted subsidies to be spent on defined goals.<sup>25</sup> The Board in Vilnius distributed also writing materials that Head of PSM received during his stay in Warsaw. Unfortunately, the amount of the materials to be distributed was greatly diminished by the willful actions of the army who requisitioned certain part of the notebooks, paper, ink, and pencils.

On March 20, 1921 a Convention of the Polish School Motherland in Eastern Lands took place. There a new Board and a Supervisory Board were elected. W. Węstawski was elected president, K. Dmochowski and Fr. St. Miłkowski vice-presidents, and prof. S. Kościatkowski and director T. Szopa and others were elected to the Supervisory Board. Those elected to the managerial bodies of the PSM were well-known for their cultural and educational work in the region of Vilnius and they had been involved in clandestine teaching in the times of the partitions, undertaking initiatives during the German occupation and participating in constructing the foundations of education in independent Poland. The popular personas would successfully promote the efforts of the Motherland and guarantee reliability and responsibility in the works carried out as part of the organization. This was paramount to the local society who did not always accept the educational aims.

Among other projects of the Motherland, ne ought to note the founding of the teacher training seminar for men in 1920 and undertaking proper steps to establish a network of daycare centers for children aged 3 to 4 in the oszmiański powiecie, whose national character was deemed to be threatened.

The beginnings of the work of the PSM circles were difficult. The year 1920, until November, was devoted to organizing libraries, enrolment of students, and restructuring some of the circles. "Ostensibly everything appeared to be in order and that the passing Bolshevik onslaught did not do significant damage to PSM".<sup>26</sup> It turned out however that the situation was dramatic. The People's Homes in Zarzecze and in St.Stefańskiej street did not exist. So was the case with three circles of evening courses,

<sup>25</sup> For the circles in Lebediewo 2,000 marks, in Holszany 5,000, to Fr. Tyszkowski for the schools in the wilejski powiecie 5,000, to Mrs. Newierowska for the schools in Mołodeczno 5,000, for the circle in Nowogródek 15,000, for the People's Home in Dukszty 5,000. Furthermore, books and writing materials were delivered to circles in Nowo-Wilejka 33,550, in Holszany for remuneration for private teachers 15,000 and 4,375 for private teachers in the schools in Oszmiań County (Ashmyany).

<sup>26</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 1, Issue 337, p. 26.

vocational schools, and circles organizing field trips. They did not exist. Lack of funds was felt strongly because the 200,000 marks left by the Board were distributed in various subsidies. The situation in Vilnius was bad and in the rural areas, educational life disappeared altogether. On July 1, 1920 there were 30 circles in the area which managed about one hundred schools and daycare centers, and courses of Polish language were conducted in nearly all schools. "The Bolshevik onslaught destroyed all of these efforts. The largest loss lay in the lack of intelligentsia in the rural areas".<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, the earlier work of the Board and the Motherland "caused a complete revolution among the rural population. These people who up to then would look at schools with indifference were currently awakened from their spiritual stupor".<sup>28</sup> People would enquire about Polish schools which the Motherland would maintain by supporting them financially.

The Motherland attempted to support independent educational initiatives and occasionally to organize them, competing with other associations or societies. Such events are described in a report (from November 1, 1920 to May 31, 1921). The Motherland organized in Vilnius (1921) celebrations of May 3 during which money collection was conducted, among others. So was the case with celebrations outside the city, where funds for PSM were collected. These actions were conducted by the circles in Lida, Dukszty, Wilejka, and Bystrzyca, who collected 22,185 marks. In other towns and villages "collections for the National Security Association were carried out with utter incompetence on May 3".<sup>29</sup> The Board deemed such actions unamicable because "according to the custom, the day of May 3 always belonged to PSM and all the collections organized on that day ought to provide for the Motherland".<sup>30</sup>

The money collections constituted financial support for the works of the Motherland. The effort aimed for borderland voivodships enforced the "Polish state of possession, conducting the work of statewide gravity and great national significance".<sup>31</sup> Founding schools, appropriating proper land parcels for their construction required enormous funds. In order to acquire finances in 1924, yet again, the Main Board of the Motherland held a collection named "National Contribution of May 3" and the address

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<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Op. cit., p. 7a.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., p. 7–8.

<sup>31</sup> Polska Macierz Szkolna (1924), „Sprawy Towarzystwa Nauczycieli Szkół Średnich i Wyższych”, Issue 11, p. 167.

to the society pertaining to this issue was signed by the greatest personas of the country, i.e., marshals of both legislative bodies, highest representatives of the clergy, ministers along with the prime minister, leaders of the political clubs, etc.”.<sup>32</sup>

Financial problems would accompany the Motherland all throughout its activities in the Second Republic of Poland. The sacrifices made by the society, the money collections, could not provide for all the enormous needs connected with maintaining schools and conducting courses.

Schools were set up in small rented rooms. Equipment shortages were reported. There were cases when the Motherland would discontinue a school due to lack of funds. This occurred in the 1933/34 school year in Pertkany (Dukszańska commune, święciański powiat).<sup>33</sup> For example, the Private Public School of PSM of 3 grades in Romaszkowice (Komaje commune, święciański powiat) had 45 students (33 Polish students, 11 Lithuanian and one Russian).<sup>34</sup> As the school principal and teacher, Jan Gazda stated nearly all the students had course books, but they lacked notebooks, which they could not purchase because their parents were poor. The school did not have a library, a table, a chair, and the desks of 4 and 5 places were ill-suited for children. The principal expressed his hope that the situation would be improved because funds for the school were earmarked in the budget of Komajska commune for the year 1935/36 as they would be for state schools and thus the school would be provided a building, heating, and equipment.

In the same year, the PSM in Vilnius received a report on the work of a 1-grade school (of 3 departments) in Wiązowiec (motodeczański powiat). The school had 68 students, including 64 Orthodox ones. The children did have books, but the teacher asked the Motherland for notebooks, pencils, nibs, and color paper.<sup>35</sup> As in the case of the two aforementioned schools, this one also lacked didactic materials such as boards with drawings, maps, and sports equipment.

Information and enquiries for help in equipping schools pertained also to schools and courses for adults. In this department, the Motherland would focus on work with illiterate adults, which was initiated in 1917. In independent Poland, attention was drawn to educational work in the Eastern Borderlands where the problem was particularly acute.

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<sup>32</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 4, Issue 380, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 4, Issue 356, p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 4, Issue 356, p. 24.

Education of adults was conducted all throughout the times of the Second Republic of Poland.

As it is pointed out in one of the reports submitted into the PSM Board in Vilnius the needs in adult education continued to be vast. In the PSM Public School in Kudziany 25 students were enrolled in evening courses. As the school principal stated what was required were materials on economic and social issues to conduct work in the day room for youth. According to the author of the document such materials were necessary because "with their use, one could awaken social life among the local population and produce a result of this work arising from the duty of the teacher and a representative of this institution which is aimed to educate the ignorant masses".<sup>36</sup>

Through diverse efforts, the Polish School Motherland of Eastern Lands would realize the fundamental aims of its activity. The broad scope of the work, including organizing daycare centers and preschools, public schools for children and adults, courses for the illiterate, distributing food to children, as well as starting day camps at the end of the 1930s shows the interest of the members of the Motherland in the social problems of the Eastern Borderlands. Financial problems were frequently encountered, which is why the efforts could not be realized in their entirety.

Financial problems and the resulting major limitations of the work of the Motherland are discussed in the Report of the association for the period from January 1, 1937 to April 1, 1938.<sup>37</sup> At the moment of undertaking the management of the Vilnius region, the Motherland transferred over 400 public, secondary, and vocational schools to the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment. In the subsequent years focus was placed on extracurricular education. The situation did not change until the beginning of the 1930s. When the economic crisis began and the state funds for education were greatly reduced the Motherland provided help.

In the middle of the 1930s, due to the improving economic situation of the country the Motherland limited the number of public schools from 48 in the year 1936/37 to 42 in 1937/38. However, it turns out that this was not the only reason for decreasing the number of schools. In the Report, it is stated that teachers' remunerations had increased, and the subsidy provided for the Motherland by the Vilnius School District Authority was

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<sup>36</sup> PAL, collection 172, carton 4, Issue 356, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> PLAH, collection 1135, carton 13, Issue 347.

limited.<sup>38</sup> Because of the financial transfers for the public schools, the Motherland was required to limit the funds for extracurricular education. This work in the reported period covered regular libraries (20) and mobile libraries that the Association had over 100 of. 15 reading rooms/day rooms, courses for pre-draft soldiers, prelection action, and two People's Homes in Postawy and Krasno on Usza remained under the supervision of the Rector.

The report expresses an amicable and cordial approach to the work of PSM of the authorities and the society. "In the period of its existence from April 1919 to April 1938 the Association attempted to carry education to the remotest and the wildest areas of the Vilnius region to appropriate these lands that we all love and admire for Polish culture".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> In the year 1936/37 subsidy was provided for 41 schools and in the following year for 36. Help in providing for PSM schools in 1936/37 was granted by Senate of the J. Piłsudski University (three schools), The Circle of Vilnians with the Association of the Development of Eastern Lands in Warsaw and Association of the Employees of Polish Telegraphic Agency in Warsaw and numerous circles of PSM in the Vilnius region. PLAH, collection 1135, carton 13, Issue 347, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> PLAH, collection 1135, carton 13, Issue 347, p. 4.