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**Barbara Techmańska, *Szkolnictwo mniejszości narodowych na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1989* [Education of national minorities in Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1989], Łomianki: Wydawnictwo LTW, 2019, pp. 379.**

After World War II, Lower Silesia became an area of residence for various national and ethnic groups. The German population was predominantly resettled as a result of the Potsdam Agreements, and only a small portion remained. The majority of new residents were Poles coming from the central districts of the country and displaced people from the former eastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic – provinces which had been seized by the Soviet Union – as well as people coming from Western Europe. Also, Polish citizens of Jewish origin, who managed to survive the hell of war, settled here in large numbers. However, in the following years and in successive waves of migration, Jews (along with the wealth of their activities) left Lower Silesia, and their presence came to an end after the infamous anti-Jewish campaign unleashed by the communist authorities in 1968.

An important national group that arrived in Lower Silesia in the 1940s as a result of the top-down policy of forced resettlement from the eastern part of the country during the so-called Operation Vistula were (and still are today) the Ukrainians. A little later, a fairly large group of people connected to the communist partisans, Greeks and Macedonians, who had sought asylum in Poland because of the civil war in Greece, were also settled in this area. For a rather short period of time, the Polish–Czechoslovak borderland was also inhabited by Czechs. The historical literature on the history of national minorities in Poland after 1945 is already substantial. As a rule, however, those works concentrate on the history of

particular nationalities, and often they are of a contributory nature, since they focus only on selected aspects or problems. The situation is similar in the case of the education of children and young people from national minority communities. This is demonstrated by the extensive literature review in the *Wstęp* [Introduction] to the book under review and the References (pp. 347–370).

Barbara Techmańska, writing a work dedicated to the education of all national minorities living in the south-western part of post-war Poland, undertook a comprehensive and multifaceted discussion on this matter. The chronological timeline is appropriate, since it covers the period from the end of World War II to the democratic changes in Poland in 1989. This approach has enabled the Author to present minority educational issues during the entire period of domination of the communist ideology. The arrangement of contents is clear and logical. It includes an Introduction, 6 chronologically and substantially separated chapters, Conclusion, References, List of abbreviations and tables (there are as many as 43 of them), List of illustrations, and Index of persons. In the Introduction, the Author provided made a general description of particular national minorities living in Lower Silesia, i.e. Germans, Jews, Czechs, Ukrainians, and Greeks. In the initial part of the work, she discusses formal, legal, and economic foundations of minority education in Poland after 1945. Then, she described its organisational status and presented its educational and pedagogical dimension. In a separate part, the two basic groups for the functioning of schools – teachers and pupils – were characterised. The issue of social perception of minority education was presented an interesting way, taking into account both the reality of that time, i.e. the period of the Polish People's Republic (PRL), and the contemporary situation. A lot of information on this subject is provided in the last chapter, which is slightly different in content, as the Author made use of mainly memoir material.

Essentially, the work under review focuses on the problems of minority education, but the issue has been placed within several broader political and social agendas as well as different contexts. Because the analysis of the History of education in that period was carried out through the prism of minority communities, and not only their geographical distribution and state statistics, it enabled the Author to formulate a well-founded statement that schools played an important role in the consolidation of national minorities. Thus, despite the apparent uncertainty of everyday life and the often hostile environment, individual national communities gave education an important place in the preservation of their

language, religion, and culture, i.e. the markers of their national identity. This perspective of Barbara Techmańska, as it were “from the inside”, made it possible to present a targeted analysis of the content of teaching, the educational plans and programs in force, as well as the characteristics of the specific conditions of educational activity. Mostly, however, the members of the minorities were concerned with the material difficulties encountered because of the poor condition of buildings and equipment in minority schools. The schools suffered from lack of textbooks and experienced difficulties in teaching due to unstable numbers and rapidly changing composition of students and teachers resulting from various reasons. In addition, the teaching process was burdened with important (especially from the point of view of the authorities) propaganda and ideological content, including the potential use of minority education to deepen Polonization processes among the youth. Activities aimed at the integration of minorities into Polish society were undertaken, both through the layout of the curriculum and textbooks, as well as through the number of Polish language classes within a week.

By including a view from the “outside”, that is from the side of local and central authorities (both political and educational), Barbara Techmańska’s monograph allows for noticing a high degree of interference and pressure on the implementation of top-down formulated educational policy. This approach can be seen mainly in the presentation of Polish society’s reaction (often negative) to the creation and activities of minority schools. The internal relations between various minorities in the field of education were insignificant, perhaps due to the fact that the apogee of the activity of individual nations fell at different times during the times of the PRL. For them, moreover, relations with the Polish majority were of much greater importance. In these circumstances, it would be valuable to try to draw a picture of the place minority schools had in the *de facto* Homogeneous post-war Polish society. However, this issue would require further research, concerning not only the minority communities.

For them, an important task of schools for national minorities was to maintain the awareness of their historical roots and to preserve the ties with their own nation among young people, born outside of Poland and already integrated into other Communities. This process takes place, as the Author writes, through the transmission of own traditions, cultural heritage, history, language, and religion. The effectiveness of this transmission depends, among other things, on the qualifications of the teaching staff and their relationship with the pupils’ family environment. However, it

cannot be ignored that in the post-war period, the teachers' professional preparation left much to be desired. Among the teachers, there were many casual people who did not have sufficient education. Both this last problem and the difficult financial situation of the teaching profession resulted in a high level of staff fluctuation in schools. It should not be forgotten that parents' perceptions of school as an educational institution varied. In the realities of a socialist school, the goals of teaching and upbringing set for pupils were often at odds with the values professed by parents.

In principle, each of the national minorities living in Lower Silesia had the opportunity, although at different times and to a different extent, to receive education in their native language. As the Author writes, this is evidenced by the schools, departments, complementary classes, or teaching centres, which, depending on the needs, provided education in national languages. The degree and quality of this teaching was determined by the number of young people of a given minority and the level of its dispersion. Interesting in this respect are the findings of the Author who showed, on the basis of archival materials, the dependence of the perception of particular nations by state and Party authorities not only on the balance of power in the country but to a much greater extent on the international situation. The Author writes that Czech schools were opened in 1947 after the signing of the Polish–Czechoslovak agreement, whereas permission to establish German institutions was given in 1950, i.e. after the signing of the Polish–East German agreement in Zgorzelec. She also stressed that schools for this minority ceased to exist, along with the “family reunification” action and with the Germans leaving for East Germany and West Germany, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was also important that in Lower Silesia, from 1945, the Jewish population was the first to obtain permission to establish minority schools. However, when the international situation changed and the state of Israel came into being, as well as the Stalinization of the country sharpened, after 1949 all of them were nationalised and lost their autonomy. In Lower Silesia, at the peak of the development of Jewish education, there were almost 30 educational institutions, which constituted 2/3 of all Jewish educational institutions in Poland. The end of the 1960s ended the functioning of those schools. The late 1960s ended the period of functioning of These schools ceased to function in late 1960s. Only 2 Czech schools, which existed in Lower Silesia since 1947, testified about small Czech population in Poland – and both closed at the beginning of 1960s, when pupils and their parents left for Czechoslovakia or Germany.

From the moment the first groups of Greek and Macedonian refugees arrived in Poland in 1948, the authorities made attempts to organise teaching for them, but the first classes were opened only in the school year 1957/1958. They ceased to exist in the mid-1970s, after a significant number of Greeks and Macedonians left for Greece, Yugoslavia, or Bulgaria. The authorities did not grant Ukrainians permission to teach in their own language until 1952 – and only in Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania. Ukrainian schooling continued until the end of the period discussed in the book and is operating also currently, with its own secondary school (4<sup>th</sup> High School of General Education in Legnica).

This very interesting monograph provokes questions about issues less represented in the work under review – for example, the problem of ideologisation of minority education and the broader national context, related to the introduced school reforms and several changes in curricula, would be an issue worth deepening. The need to broaden our knowledge about the role and significance of educational institutions in the lives of other national minorities living in post-war Poland is also noticeable. The use of press materials to a greater extent (both from specialist periodicals and those of a general nature) could yield more information about the presence of the minority educational segment in the public sphere.

Barbara Techmańska's work convinces us of the tremendous effort made by individual ethnic and national minorities to create own education – especially because the awareness of temporariness and uncertainty often accompanied them in their actions. The factual content of the book under review fully confirms the Author's statement that "[e]ven state-controlled and supervised education has contributed to the preservation of cultural identity by representatives of particular minorities and to the acquisition of education in their own language" (p. 17). The overview of all problems and achievements of Jewish, German, Czech, Ukrainian, and Macedonian education in the perspective of the post-war half-century provided in the monograph *The Education of National Minorities in Lower Silesia in 1945–1989* is a valuable scientific undertaking. Barbara Techmańska's monograph presents an in-depth and comprehensive picture of the education of national minorities in Lower Silesia, which is very important for recent Polish historiography.