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20 Years in the History of the Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh

20 lat z dziejów Polskiej Szkoły Przedmiotów Ojczystych w Edynburgu

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Abstract

Introduction. The article presents the role of the Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh in the education of children and young people in exile. The school's task was to maintain the Polish identity and instil a love of Polish culture among the younger generation of Poles by providing children and young people with a basic knowledge of their native language, teaching them about Polish history and geography, and providing religious education. The article presents the principles of the school's activities, cooperation with parents in the education process through organising parent-teacher meetings, involving parents in the running of the school through participation in the Parents' Association Board, supporting the organisation of academic ceremonies and school celebrations, *etc.*

Aim. The aim of this article is to present the origins and activities of the Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh, which was the first Polish school in Great Britain after World War II.

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Methods and materials. In order to address the research problem, a monographic method was used, along with a critical analysis of documents and existing literature in this field. The techniques used included internal and external formal analysis of documents.

Results. Based on the research conducted, the 20 years history of activity of the Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh, which was the first school of native subjects in Great Britain, was presented. Various forms of teaching, educational, and organisational work conducted by the school were presented, as well as its cooperation with parents and the local community, aimed at maintaining the Polish identity among the young generation of Poles in exile.

Conclusion. The Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh made a great contribution to the patriotic education of Polish children and young people in exile, preserving their Polish identity by teaching them their native language and national traditions, as well as instilling Polish culture in the younger generation. The school laid the foundations and provided the impetus for the establishment of further Polish schools of native subjects in the United Kingdom, and the school's teaching staff trained their successors.

Keywords: native education, parents, children, emigration, native language school

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. W artykule przedstawiono rolę Polskiej Szkoły Przedmiotów Ojczystych w Edynburgu w wychowaniu dzieci i młodzieży na emigracji. Zadaniem szkoły było utrzymanie polskości i wpojenie miłości do kultury polskiej wśród młodego pokolenia Polaków poprzez zapewnienie dzieciom i młodzieży możliwości nauki podstaw języka ojczystego, wiedzy o historii i geografii Polski, a także przez wychowanie religijne. Artykuł prezentuje zasady działalności szkoły i współpracę z rodzicami w procesie wychowania. Współpraca ta przejawiała się na przykład przez zebrania z rodzicami, angażowanie ich do prowadzenia szkoły poprzez udział w Zarządzie Koła Rodzicielskiego, wspieranie organizowania akademii i uroczystości szkolnych, itp.

Cel. Celem artykułu jest przybliżenie genezy powstania i działalności Polskiej Szkoły Przedmiotów Ojczystych w Edynburgu, która była pierwszą polską szkołą w Wielkiej Brytanii po II wojnie światowej.

Metody i materiały. W badaniach zastosowano metodę monograficzną, krytykę analizy dokumentów i dotychczasowego piśmiennictwa w tym zakresie. Techniki, które zastosowano, to wewnętrzna i zewnętrzna analiza formalna dokumentów.

Wyniki i wnioski. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań zaprezentowano historię 20 lat działalności Polskiej Szkoły Przedmiotów Ojczystych w Edynburgu, która była pierwszą szkołą przedmiotów ojczystych w Wielkiej Brytanii. Przedstawiono różnorodne formy pracy dydaktyczno-wychowawczej i organizacyjnej szkoły, współpracę z rodzicami i społecznością lokalną, której celem było utrzymanie polskości wśród młodego pokolenia Polaków na emigracji.

Słowa kluczowe: dzieci, rodzice, emigracja, wychowanie ojczyste, szkoła przedmiotów ojczystych

Introduction

The issue of Polish native language schools in Great Britain after the World War II has been addressed in various articles and publications, but to date no article has been published on the history of the Polish Native Language School in Edinburgh.

The aim of this research was to present the history of the establishment and activities of the Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh, which was the first Polish school in Great Britain after World War II. This school shaped the national identity of Polish children and young people in exile, cultivated Polish traditions, upheld cultural and religious heritage, and shaped national identity. For this reason, the topic presented in this article is still relevant and important in shaping the national identity of generations of Poles, both at home and abroad.

The content of this article was developed utilising source materials collected in foreign archives, including the Archive of *Polska Macierz Szkolna* [Polish School Society] in Great Britain. Printed sources were also used, including a commemorative publication “Jednodniowa publikacja z okazji 20-lecia Szkoły Przedmiotów Ojczystych w Edynburgu...” [“One-day publication on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh...”] (1968) and annuals of Polish émigré educational magazines published in Great Britain: *Wychowanie Ojczyste* [Fatherland Education], *Wiadomości Nauczycielskie* [Teacher News], *Orzeł Biały* [White Eagle], *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza* [Polish Daily and Soldier’s Daily]. Works devoted to the origins and history of Polish education in exile during and after the World War II were also helpful, including: *Szkolnictwo polskie w Wielkiej Brytanii po drugiej wojnie światowej* [Polish Education in Great Britain after the Second World War] (Radzik, 1991), *Zrzeszenie Nauczycielstwa Polskiego Zagranicą w latach 1941–1991* [The Association of Polish Teachers Abroad in 1941–1991] (Radzik, 1992), *History of the Association of Polish Veterans in Great Britain 1946–1996* (Kondracki, 1996), *Polish Schools of Native Subjects in Great Britain in the Years 1948–1989* (Zamecka-Zalas, 2022), etc.

After the end of World War II, Polish emigrants in Great Britain, as a result of the Yalta resolutions and Poland’s subjugation to Russian hegemony, were faced with the difficult decision of whether to remain abroad or return to their country, which was under communist rule, exposing themselves to repression and persecution. Poles lived in hope that the international situation would change, but unfortunately, many of them did not live to see the return of a free Poland (Błaszczuk, 2018).

After the end of World War II, there were about 200,000 Poles in Great Britain, including children and young people, which is why Polish emigrants were faced with the task of building an alternative Polish supplementary education system and, consequently, a network of Polish schools teaching subjects in their native language. This task became a priority to counteract the British government's policy of liquidating Polish education in exile and its efforts to assimilate Polish children and young people and adapt them as quickly as possible to life in British society (Zubrzycki, 1956).

Émigré magazines warned about the threat of denationalisation of the young generation of Poles in Great Britain. Nowakowski, among others, commented on this issue in the London-based *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza*:

There would be only one way to preserve Polishness, and it would be radical, but the English would have to help us, namely by persecuting Polishness at every turn. If children in local schools were flogged for speaking Polish, if we were conscripted into the army and sent to Malaya or Korea, if every now and then a hundred policemen surrounded the Polish church on Devonian Road or started beating up the audience of a Polish performance, then, damn it, we would show them what kind of Poles we are. (Nowakowski, 1950, p. 3)¹

Mękarska wrote about this in the magazine *Orzeł Biały*: "[...] in exile, no Polish child should be left alone in a foreign environment. [...] By saving the younger generation from the anxiety and dilemmas of today's life, we increase their chances of finding their place in a foreign country" (Mękarska, 1948, p. 3).²

There was an awareness of the need to organise Polish schools that would maintain ties with Polishness and prevent the younger generation from "disappearing" in a foreign country (Zamecka-Zalas, 2018). Donigiewicz reminded readers of the responsibilities of the Zrzeszenie Nauczycielstwa Polskiego Zagranicą [*sic*] w Wielkiej Brytanii [Polish Teachers' Association in Great Britain] (hereinafter: ZNP WB) in exile in the pages of *Wiadomości Nauczycielskie*:

The important changes currently taking place in émigré circles are close to the Association as a professional teachers' organisation for several reasons. First of all, Polish teachers are extremely interested in the ideological side of refugee educational activities. When putting forward educational slogans, they must be in line with our pedagogical conscience and our sense of duty towards the nation and its culture. Secondly, teachers must remember that they serve the good of young people and all those to whom they devote their efforts.

¹ Author's own translation.

² Author's own translation.

[...] In the current circumstances, responsibility for education falls on a social factor, namely the Polish Teachers' Association. (Donigiewicz, 1946, pp. 4–5)³

Initially, Polish schools were established in Polish camps in Great Britain before 1948. They met the requirements of the British education system, and Polish was only required as a subject. These schools were maintained by the Education Committee for Polish Citizens in Great Britain under the supervision of the British Ministry of Education.

As a result of the policy of liquidation of Polish institutions and Polish education, the authorities of the ZNP WB decided to save Polish education. Demands concerning Polish schools teaching native subjects were discussed during the ZNP WB Congress on 11–12 July 1946 in Glasgow. They concerned, among other things, organisational and curricular issues, and above all, ensuring that young people educated in courses and schools acquired the necessary knowledge of Polish culture and were brought up in the spirit of Polish democratic ideals (“Z uchwał Walnego Zjazdu Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego...” [“From the resolutions of the General Assembly of the Polish Teachers' Association...”], 1946). The discussion on curriculum changes in Polish schools and the future of Polish education was also covered in the press, including an article by Dąbrowski entitled “On the subject of curriculum changes”:

The proposal to change the curricula in Polish schools in Great Britain emerged at this year's general meeting of the association (in Glasgow) from a discussion on the future of Polish education in that country. This was a natural phenomenon, because if Polish education in the British Isles is to continue to exist, it should not be left “up in the air,” which would inevitably happen if it were decided to leave it unchanged. (Dąbrowski, 1946, p. 12)⁴

The first Polish School of Native Subjects was established in Edinburgh on the initiative of the ZNP WB, which first organised courses in native subjects at the primary school level in Edinburgh in 1945, and then transformed them into a school in 1948 (Zamecka-Zalas, 2022).

History of the School

The Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh was the first school where Polish children, as well as children from mixed marriages, attending British schools,

³ Author's own translation.

⁴ Author's own translation.

could partake in additional classes on days off from school to learn Polish language, history, geography, and Roman Catholic religion. The school was funded by public donations and supervised by Polish teachers organised in the ZNP WB, based on Polish institutions and Polish organisations (Radzik, 1992).

In the summer of 1948, on the initiative of various Polish social organisations, the *Komitet Opieki nad Polskimi Dziećmi w Szkocji* [Committee for the Care of Polish Children in Scotland] was established in Edinburgh. Dr Stanisław Mglej became the chairman of the Committee. The Committee appointed a five-member executive body, which included two representatives of the ZNP WB. The committee's aim was to organise events and competitions for children and young people, to create a centre (club) for young people, and to organise classes in native subjects. The implementation of the first two points was entrusted to Polish social organisations in Edinburgh, and the third point was handed over to the Edinburgh branch of the ZNP WB. The branch was tasked with developing organisational, programme, and educational guidelines and selecting a teaching body from among its members. It was agreed that the president of the ZNP WB Circle would be the course director and that the group leaders (for secondary and primary schools) would be selected by the Circle's management board and the teaching team. (Maj, 1968).

On September 27, 1948, classes in native subjects began, which were transformed into a school. Initially, classes were held in a boarding school for boys (5 Royal Terrace) twice a week for three hours, where Polish classes for boys living there had been held since 1946 (Maj, 1968).

In the first school year, 40 children attended the courses. They were divided into four age groups: 1) children aged 6–10 (grades I–IV of primary school); 2) children aged 10–12 (grades V–VI of primary school); 3) children aged 12–14 (grades I–II of secondary school); and 4) young people over 14 (higher grades of secondary school, first grade of high school).

All the children spoke Polish well, and the lessons were conducted by fully qualified and experienced teachers. Initially, there were no funds to run the courses, and the entire financial burden of running the courses fell on the local Circle, so the Circle's Management Board notified the Main Board of the ZNP WB about the organisation of the courses, requesting the necessary aids, textbooks for children and teachers, and support in obtaining subsidies from the Polish central authorities, social organisations, or Polish institutions with funds. Thanks to the support of the Main Board, textbooks and subsidies from the *Polski Fundusz Edukacyjny za Granicą* [Polish Education Fund Abroad] were provided. The fees paid by parents were low, as many of them were unemployed or were not accustomed to paying such fees (Maj, 1968; Fragmenty artykułu S. Maja opublikowanego w „Jednodniowej publikacji”... [Excerpts from an article by Maj in the “One-day publication”...], 1973).

At that time, there was a strange resistance to contributions for social causes. Once the difficulties had been overcome, the courses ran smoothly and produced good results. The Edinburgh Circle's management decided to issue certificates at the end of the school year, preparing appropriate forms for this purpose, which were validated by the Minister for Polish Citizens Abroad in 1949 (Maj, 1968). The letter from the Ministry read as follows:

I hereby accept for approval by the Polish Teachers' Association in Edinburgh the course in native subjects for Polish youth and approve the composition of the committee proposed by the Main Board of Polish Teachers to conduct examinations for the aforementioned course. At the same time, I approve the validity of the certificates issued by the course management and stamped with the longitudinal seal of the Polish Teachers' Association Abroad. (Maj, 1968, p. 3)⁵

Stanisław Maj became the chair of the examination board, and the teaching staff of the school's native language subjects became its members. In the 1949/1950 school year, the number of children at the school decreased to 27, as a significant number of Polish families left Edinburgh and moved to London or other industrial areas in England in search of work. The school premises were moved to the Veterans' Home (11 Drummond Place). In the same year, thanks to the efforts of the *Stowarzyszenie Polskich Kombatantów* [Association of Polish Combatants] (hereinafter SPK) Circle No. 3 and ZNP WB, a new centre for teaching native subjects was established in the village of Macmerry, in Midlothian, which was attended by 20 children. The courses in Macmerry were under the supervision of the school in Edinburgh. Over time, cooperation between the School Committee and the ZNP WB Circle deteriorated, and a dispute over competencies arose between the boards. The president of the School Committee at that time was Colonel Aleksander Ruchaj, and cooperation also took place during the general meeting of the School Committee in September 1950.

Lieutenant Colonel F. Znamirowski became the chairman of the School Committee, and the School Committee changed its name to the Education Committee in Edinburgh. The beginning of the 1950/1951 school year was very difficult. The dispute between the boards affected the number of children, which fell by 20. In September 1951, at the General Meeting of the Committee, Zdzisław Malicki became the chairman. The number of children attending the school increased to 32, five of whom did not speak Polish. In the 1951/1952 school year, a school was organised in Addiewell village, in Midlothian, which, like the school in Macmerry, was completely under the management of Edinburgh. Every Saturday, teachers from Edinburgh, members of the ZNP WB

⁵ Author's own translation.

Circle, came to both schools: Danuta Majowa and Janina Gieczewska to Addiewell, and Klara Szymańska and Jadwiga Chrościcka to Macmerry (Maj, 1968).

Due to a lack of young people, the secondary school course was closed down in 1952/1953. The primary school was doing quite well. In the same year, the school in Macmerry ceased to exist due to the closure of the Polish family camp located there. In 1953/1954, 53 pupils attended the school in Edinburgh, including 25 who did not speak Polish. A separate class with two groups was created for these pupils. In the spring of 1954, the school was moved from the Veterans' Home to St. Mary's School on York Lane, Albany Street, and was given space for five classes. Classes were held every Saturday and lasted three hours. In the same year, the Education Committee was dissolved, and the Polish School Society in Edinburgh was established. Stanisław Maj, became the president of the Society (Podhorodecka, 2003).

During the school years 1954/1955 and 1955/1956, the school experienced a minor crisis as a result of political divisions among the émigré community. The number of children fell to 40. As a result of Polish families leaving Addiewell, the local school was closed in 1956. In the following school year, the number of children increased to 66, 34 of whom did not speak Polish. In 1957/1958, the number of children increased further to 73, 37 of whom did not speak Polish. In June 1958, the school celebrated its tenth anniversary, and a one-off publication was issued to mark the occasion. In the following years, the number of Polish children in Edinburgh decreased, and thus the number of children attending the native language school also decreased.

In the 1958/1959 school year, 55 children attended the school, including 25 who did not speak Polish, and in the following year, the number of children fell to 44, including only 13 who did not speak Polish. The decrease in the number of children who did not speak Polish was related to teachers making parents aware that for a child to speak Polish, it was not enough for them to attend school once a week, but that it was also necessary for parents to be involved and talk to their children in their native language. In 1959, the Polish School Society club expanded, and a Parents' Committee was established to cooperate in running the school, headed by its president, Nikosiewicz (Podhorodecka, 2003).

In the following years, 1960/1961 and 1961/1962, cooperation with the Parents' Committee went very well. From 1962/1963 onwards, there was an increase in the number of children who did not speak Polish. The following year, 1963/1964, saw a breakthrough in terms of parents' interest in native language classes. One of the reasons for this was the increasing frequency of family trips to Poland. During visits to their homeland and meetings with family, parents often felt embarrassed that their children did not speak Polish. For the children, the Polish language and Poland became something real, not just their father's sentimentality and a child's vague imagination. At the general meeting of the Parents' Committee in 1964, Tadeusz Ziarski-Kornberg took over

as chairman. Cooperation with the club continued to go very well. In the 1964/1965 school year, a secondary school course was launched, and the number of children increased to 61, including 18 who did not speak Polish. Twelve pupils attended the secondary school course. Between 1960/1961 and 1964/1965, there was only one class of students who did not speak Polish.

In the 1965/1966 school year, a second class was opened for pupils who did not speak Polish, due to the fact that the number of such pupils had risen to 22. In the following years, interest in the Edinburgh school grew, and the number of children in the 1966/1967 school year rose to 69. The Youth Club operating in Edinburgh had a positive impact on the attitude of young people (aged 15–21) towards Polish affairs and learning the Polish language, who themselves applied to the Polish native language school to learn Polish. A separate class was even opened for them. In 1967/1968, the number of pupils at the Polish Native Language School in Edinburgh increased significantly to 86, of whom 40 did not speak Polish and 13 were in secondary school classes (Maj, 1968).

Activities of the Parents' Association, Continuing Polish Traditions and Participating in National and Patriotic Celebrations

One of the tasks of the *émigré* community, including families, was to ensure the national and religious upbringing of their children in a spirit of patriotism, based on the values of national culture and the record of their homeland, on belonging to the Polish nation, together with its language, history, traditions, customs, moral culture, and religion (Gołowski, 1955). Religion was an important integrative factor in Polish settlements and schools and was inextricably linked to patriotic education (Chmielewski, 2017).

This task was only possible thanks to the cooperation of the family, the school, and the Polish community in exile. The attitude of parents and the Polish community in Edinburgh towards the Polish School of Native Subjects was very favourable, and interest was enormous. From the very beginning, the school enjoyed the support of the Polish clergy in Edinburgh. The rector of the *Polska Misja Katolicka w Szkocji* [Polish Catholic Mission in Scotland] and successive parish priests constantly reminded parents of their duty to send their children to the Polish School of Native Subjects. Thanks to the cooperation of parents, the school, and the clergy, a First Holy Communion ceremony was organised every year. At the end of this great day, the children and their parents took part in a pilgrimage to the Cistercian Abbey in Nunro (Chmielewski, 2017).

The image of the Polish School of Native Subjects also includes continuing Polish traditions and participating in national and church holidays. Thanks to the efforts

of the Parents' Committee, traditional Christmas wafers and blessed food were organised in schools. St. Nicholas visited the children and handed out gifts. National holidays were celebrated with great reverence. The school took part in the celebrations of the Constitution Day on the 3rd of May and Independence Day on the 11th of November. Pupils took an active part in the Feast of Christ the King. Anniversaries of national uprisings were celebrated, *e.g.*, the 60th anniversary of the school strike in Września (1901–1961). The school participated in the celebrations of the 600th anniversary of the Jagiellonian University (1364–1964) and the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of Poland (966–1966), as well as the centenary anniversary of the birth of Marshal Józef Piłsudski (Chmielewski, 2017).

All these forms of influence in the field of education and the teaching of children and young people had to be applied both in school and at home. It depended on the cooperation of both entities whether a love for Poland and a sense of national identity would be instilled in them (Zamecka-Zalas, 2022).

Thanks to the assistance of the Parents' Committee and SPK Circle No. 25, trips for children and young people were organised at the school. In 1956, a trip to Falkirk and Stirling was organised, and in 1959, to St Andrews and Dunfermline. In 1961, a trip to Abbotsford and the Scottish Borders was organised, and in 1963, to St Andrews – Craigtoun Park. These were trips following the trail of Polish soldiers from 1940–1945. In 1965, a trip was made to the Polish School in Kirkcaldy. The school took part in all the rallies of native language schools in Scotland. The parents of Polish youth in Edinburgh did not immediately play a leading role, but over time they became key partners. It should be noted that most of the founders of the school in Edinburgh were not directly interested in opening a new Polish institution. Their motives were purely altruistic, as they did not have school-age children. The organisers of the school in Edinburgh initially had to persuade parents to send their children to the Polish School of Native Subjects. In the early post-war years, many compatriots did not know what to do – whether to remain in exile, emigrate to other parts of the world, or wait for changes in Poland and return to their homeland (Ziarski, 1968).

The establishment and development of the school in Edinburgh, considering the conditions and mood at the time, can be described as an outstanding achievement of the Polish community in Great Britain. The Polish community in exile, together with the teachers, were an important link in this project. Without their cooperation and mutual understanding, these links would not have been able to find common ground with Polish youth, who were inevitably assimilating into the diaspora and becoming denationalised (Ziarski, 1968).

Magazines drew attention to the need for cooperation between parents, schools, and the social environment in the field of educating children in their native language. Czulowski wrote on this subject in the journal *Wychowanie Ojczyste*: "A person can only

achieve full development when their intellect and character can be shaped by the simultaneous influence of their family home, school, and social environment” (Czułowski, 1977, p. 7).⁶

The role of the Parents’ Committee gradually evolved, and administrative matters ceased to be its exclusive domain. Parents took part in school and personnel matters, showing understanding, interest, and growing support for the school over time. Parents made a significant contribution to its functioning and development. They organised summer camps, trips, national and holiday celebrations. For many years, Józef Nikosiewicz was an important member of the Parents’ Committee and was awarded the title of honorary chairman of the Committee (Ziarski, 1968).

Over time, the school’s activists changed; their absence was caused by various factors: leaving Edinburgh, old age, illness, or death. During the twenty years of the school’s operation, the following people passed away: General Aleksander Ruchaj, who was the second president of the Committee for the Care of Polish Children in Scotland after Dr Stanisław Mglej. The general’s daughters, Aldona and Aleksandra, were pupils at the school. Major Zdzisław Malicki – president of the Polish School Committee, whose daughter Ewa also attended the school in Edinburgh; Lieutenant Colonel Znamirowski and Antoni Herbich – distinguished activists of the Parents’ Committee, organisers of summer camps for children, whose sons were also pupils of the school. During the period of the School Parents’ Association’s activity, the following left the school: the late captain Stanisław Szymański, Mrs Irena Chaszczewka, due to her departure from Edinburgh, and architect Jan Muszyński, who moved to Australia with his wife and daughters (Ziarski, 1968). Here is an excerpt from an article from the diary of an Edinburgh teacher:

At the Third of May Academy in 1949 [...] a poem was recited by the young Kalina Chrościcka, a student at the Polish School. In January 1950, a large number of school children performed at the “Po Kolendzie” [*sic*] evening. During the May Day Academy in the great hall of the YMCA, the Polish School dance group gave a performance. The children danced the polonaise, krakowiak, and trojak under the direction of Ms Danuta Dubieńska. The dances in folk costumes were performed with such verve and colour that the applause was endless, and the recitations by Kalina Chrościcka and the two Pudło-Jeżycki brothers were met with a well-deserved demand for an encore. That same year, there was a grand ceremony in honour of Christ the King, at which the children performed a beautiful collective recitation. In 1951, there was a performance of “Polish Bethlehem.” The fame of the Polish School spread beyond Edinburgh, and the children performed at celebrations in Cowdenbeath. That same year, an evening dedicated to the Queen of Poland was held, with performances by Aldona Ruchaj,

⁶ Author’s own translation.

Maria Kowalska, Marysia Raczkówna, Marek Herbich, and the Pudło-Jeżycki brothers. On Independence Day in 1954, 40 children recited poems about Poland, a country, for them, far away and unknown, and sang Polish songs under the direction of Ms Szukisowa and Ms Szymańska. Iwonka Dekañska and Andrzej Turek performed at the Third of May Academy. (Sliżyński, 1968, p. 11)⁷

During the twenty years of operation of the Polish School in Edinburgh, there were approximately 52 ceremonies attended by the school's pupils. The participation of young people in such national, religious, or state celebrations had two aspects: one was the impact on the audience and participants of the Academy, who came to see the children recite poems about Poland, sing songs about it, or dance Polish national dances. This built and strengthened the sense of Polishness in the hearts and minds of the participants, lifted the spirits of those who doubted, turned the thoughts of people preoccupied with everyday problems to more important matters of national existence, gave rise to patriotic competition, and also spread to other neighbourhoods. It encouraged parents to increase their efforts and care for their children's Polish identity. The children's performances at school celebrations were also a crowning achievement and recognition for the teachers who taught these children in Polish schools. The second aspect was the impact on the young actors, for whom performing at the Academy with recitations, singing, or dancing was a tremendous experience and led to identification with Poland and Poles: "The young soul becomes a Polish soul, the young heart a Polish heart that beats for Poland. And this is the fundamental purpose of the Polish School abroad" (Sliżyński, 1968, p. 11).⁸

During the celebrations of the 10th anniversary of the Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh, the celebration committee included, alongside distinguished teachers—Danuta Majowa and Stanisław Maj, Michalski, and Szymański—the names of former students of the Polish School: Ewa Malicka, Herbich, and Malczewski. The entire 10th anniversary celebration of the Polish School was proof of the effectiveness and beautiful fruits of the teachers' labour. All national celebrations involving the Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh emphasised the perseverance and diligence of the teaching staff, and at the same time were proof of their success and struggle for Polishness (Sliżyński, 1968).

The Polish School of Native Subjects was supported by the ZNP WB in Edinburgh. On the occasion of its 25th anniversary, the association received a congratulatory letter from the ZNP WB, which read:

⁷ Author's own translation.

⁸ Author's own translation.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the work of the Association of Polish Teachers Abroad in Edinburgh, and on the delegation to Scotland, we send our heartfelt congratulations and thanks for the past quarter of a century and our wishes for perseverance and success in implementing the ideals of our teaching vocation. [...] Therefore, in offering our 'birthday' wishes to the Edinburgh Association, we are not striking a note of jubilee optimism. The struggle for the soul of the Polish child, which we have committed ourselves to preserve for Poland, is difficult and may become even more difficult in the future. Nor do we believe that there is any need for special appeals to "close ranks," "redouble our efforts," *etc.* You yourselves, colleagues, know what the situation is and what needs to be done. However, we would like to share with you our sincere conviction that, with God's help, by cooperating with parents, the clergy, and social organisations — just as we did at the beginning of our activities, by maintaining friendship among ourselves, and above all by working with and among young people — we will fulfil our duty of service. ("Pismo Związku Nauczycieli Polskich Zagranicą..." ["Letter from the Association of Polish Teachers Abroad..."], 1968, p. 23)⁹

Conclusion

The Polish School of Native Subjects in Edinburgh has made a significant contribution to preserving Polish identity among children, passing on the language and national traditions, and instilling Polish culture in the younger generation. The school's teaching staff have also trained their successors, as mentioned in the anniversary newsletter:

Several of our former students have taught and continue to teach at Polish Schools. We warmly welcome you. We hope that your ranks will grow, that you will continue this work, that you will improve it and introduce changes, but do not destroy the altars of the past.

"Even if you have something more perfect to build,
The sacred fire still burns on them,
And human love stands guard there,
And you owe them respect" (A. Asnyk). (Maj, 1968, p. 7)¹⁰

Scattered around the world, the students of this school knew and felt that Polishness must be passed on to the next generation, because renouncing Polishness is not only national betrayal, but also damage and harm done to a young soul.

⁹ Author's own translation.

¹⁰ Author's own translation.

After World War II, a network of Polish schools teaching native subjects, known as Saturday schools, was established in Great Britain. These schools were organised and supervised by *émigré* associations, including the ZNP WB, the SPK and the Polish School Society (Radzik, 1991). These schools kept alive the memory of the homeland's past and passed on its cultural heritage, Polish traditions, history, language, and religion from generation to generation. They raised several young generations of Poles who were proud of their identity and aware of their roots.

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