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## **THE INSTITUTE FOR COMPULSORY EDUCATION OF YOUTH IN SMEDEREVSKA PALANKA**

### **Abstract:**

*The Educational museum in Belgrade, Department of archival materials and documents, keeps handwritten copies of curricula, school regulations, certificates and diplomas, invitations to school events as well as other archival materials relating to the history of education in Serbia. The process of digitization of cultural heritage makes it available to the general public, changes the meaning of the terms of the document, which is not only related to the handwritten copy, but also to the text or photos. Several years ago, the Educational museum digitized a fonds with photos and documents related to the Institute in Smederevska Palanka, which worked during the Second World War. In this way, archival sources were protected and became available to the general public. The article presents the history of the Institute and in short deals with the importance of digitized archives.*

### **Keywords:**

*digitization, Second World War, Institute in Smederevska Palanka*

### **Izveček:**

#### **Zavod za splošno izobraževanje mladine v Smederevski Palanki**

*Pedagoški muzej v Beogradu hrani na Oddelku za arhivsko gradivo ročno zapisane kopije urnikov, šolskih pravil, certifikatov, vabil na šolske dogodke ter drugo arhivsko gradivo, ki se nanaša na zgodovino izobraževanja v Srbiji. Proces digitalizacije kulturne dediščine le-to naredi dostopno širši javnosti. Pred nekaj leti je Pedagoški muzej v Beogradu začel z digitalizacijo fondov s fotografijami in dokumenti, ki se nanašajo na zavod v Smederevski Palanki, ki je deloval med drugo svetovno vojno. Na ta način je zaščitil arhivsko gradivo in ga dal na voljo javnosti. Prispevek v glavnem podaja historiat ustvarjalca arhivskega gradiva, Zavoda za splošno izobraževanje mladine v Smederevski Palanki, ter na kratko opiše pomen digitalizacije le-tega.*

### **Ključne besede:**

*digitalizacija, druga svetovna vojna, Zavod za splošno izobraževanje mladine v Smederevski Palanki*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Second World War appears as a subject in all areas of research for more than sixty years. In the Serbian historiography there is a large number of scientific works relating to that period, concerning military and political history, the social life being only partially discussed.

Given the importance of the documents, kept by the Educational Museum, for research of education during the Second World War, we decided to digitize photos and archival sources related to the work of the Institute in Smederevska Palanka.

The fonds contains 12 negatives, in dimensions 5x6 cm, 15 black and white original photographs, in dimensions 6x9 cm and 5 photographs, in dimensions 9x13 cm. In addition, there are also 7 newspaper articles, 26 copies in dimensions 30x40 cm and only one certificate. One of the reasons for digitization was the format of photographs. Photographs are mostly small, format 6x9 cm, quite preserved and because of that the characters are not clear enough. Most of them did not have a complete legend and it was necessary to determine them. We tried, by comparing with known data, to determine the names of the characters and time of creation.

During the research, we used sources from several archives in Belgrade, as well as the Historical Archives in Smederevska Palanka. The correspondence between the Ministry of Education and the Institute, which was located in the Archives of Serbia in Zeleznik, is important for the study of this Institution, but also the history of education in Serbia during the Second World War. In the Historical Archives of Belgrade, in the fonds Special Police, the correspondence between the police and the Institute is kept, in the Military Archives, in the fonds of Milan Nedic, there are also documents are important for the study of the Institute work. In the Historical Archives in Smederevo there is a fonds with photocopied archival sources and copies of photographs, as well as a memorial site on which a memorial plaque stood. In the Yugoslav Film Archives in Belgrade the German magazine UFA № 635/1943 is preserved, a propaganda film about the celebration of the anniversary of the Institute. Special attention was given to the phone-records, the memories of the former cadets, which were recorded during the interview at the Pedagogical Museum in Belgrade. Valuable sources are the published historical sources, such as *Statement 10 - The State Commission for the Investigation of the Crimes of the Occupiers and their supporters*, printed in Belgrade in 1945, and an extensive monograph, entitled *Camp Banjica*, published by the Historical Archives of Belgrade in 2009.

About this subject the most data exists in the articles published by the daily, professional and informative magazines. During the War, newspapers *New Time*, *Renewal* and *Serbian People* regularly brought reports about the work of the Ministry of Education and the Institute, and in the *Official Gazette* on several occasions regulations were printed, which regulated the work of these institutions. It is worth mentioning that some articles were illustrated.

We point out that during the collection and sorting of material we stumbled upon dilemmas, uncertainties and inconsistencies, and because of that the work seemed more interesting.

Our intention was to determine the essential features of one segment in the history of Serbian education, namely, in the history of pedagogical ideas, which existed in the development of Serbian society. We tried to objectively observe the formation and work of the Institute, as well as the functioning of individuals and all social factors on the formation of Serbian youth, especially the formation of ideological attitudes among young people.

After the research work, which was related to the legend of the photographs, we started with digitization. We had digitized 46 photos and 8 pieces of archival documents. Data is stored on a separate hard disk with other digital copies and on the CD.

## **2 SCHOOLING SYSTEM DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

Social functions of education in Serbia, in this period, are poorly researched and only few studies have been written, so this phenomenon is not known enough to the general public. In our history of education mainly analysis were made about the work of partisan schools, while in the monographs the wartime is interpreted as negative or the period of stagnation in the work of primary and secondary schools. With a careful study of this period, however, it can be concluded that the Ministry of Education and Religion series of legal provisions, was trying to organize a comprehensive system of education and determine its role in society. Based on a deeper study, we can recognize that the educational institutions were ideological, political and professional, and influenced on the formation of several generations. So, in the post-war period they actively participated in all social events in the country. Of course, there were those, who for ideological reasons, left Serbia and continue their education in the countries of Western Europe or America.

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, together with minister Velibor Jonić as its head, was primarily supposed to define the goal of education, then to indicate the relationship between individual and social education as well as the relationship between all-round and vocational education. New perspectives on education, or the perspectives of New Serbia, required that elementary and secondary schools should meet two important conditions – to be of the all-round and professional educational character. In accordance with this, radical reforms were carried out in the schooling system with the purpose of eradicating all the nasty phenomena in the Serbian educational system. They related to the replacement of teachers, establishment of new schools, reduction of syllabi and curricula, and reorganization of the working framework of the Ministry of Education.

The educational policy identified the goal of education, which was defined as the upbringing of Serbian youth in the national spirit, in the spirit of Serbian folk traditions. This was supported by religious education as a basis of a non-materialistic insight into the world and life, which is why catechism was introduced as a subject even in schools where it had not been taught until then. In order to organize the overall schooling system in an easier way and to identify the types of schools according to the demographic and economic structure of specific regions, vocational schools were transferred from the field of agriculture and national economy to the field of education.

In the 1941–1944 period, there were several experimental public schools established in Belgrade and Serbia, all of which had working and living in the community as their essential characteristic; there were quite a few civic schools which represented an ideal blend of all-round and professional, i.e. practical education, while gymnasiums<sup>1</sup> were given a modest position among schools of crafts, secondary schools of civil engineering, trade and training schools.

Theoretically speaking, in the course of the first years of war, there was a valid syllabus and curriculum from the inter-war period, but every possible variation was allowed in its realization. The focus of classes was on studying the contents that were associated with Serbian history, tradition, culture and religion, i.e. everything that was in *the spirit of Serbia*. Teaching could be carried out only under the condition that some of the subjects are excluded from the syllabus or the amount of classes be reduced. The opportunity for a variation in the regular curriculum emerged with a shortened curriculum, which was introduced in early November 1941, while its further reduction lasted during the second and third year of the occupation.<sup>2</sup> The educational course was performed under the severest circumstances in schools, and where this was impossible, pupils were instructed to teach themselves.

Control over the youth's life and work used to be realized via pedagogues and monitors<sup>3</sup>, by the cooperation between the school and parents as well as by helping the destitute, i.e. by establishing pupils' canteens. One of the forms of being engaged in the field of educational policy was a huge number of lectures and speeches given in public places or on the radio. Lectures were mostly given to pupils or their parents by professors and headmasters, whereas the Minister of Education, Velibor Jonić had a great amount of public performances as well.

At the order of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, pupils' working troops were formed for the purpose of developing the sense of responsibility.<sup>4</sup> These troops engaged the youth in the area of labor activities within which they participated in shoveling snow in winter and cultivating land in summer.

The reform of the Chief Educational Council was carried out during the war. Its new assembly consisted of experts from all fields and social layers, from the Serbian Orthodox Church, from all the Ministries, as well as experts from scientific and educational institutions. Furthermore, members of the Chief Educational Council set up the *Project of the State Educational Plan* stipulating the number, types and the schedule of schools according to geographic, demographic, cultural and economic circumstances. This *Project* envisaged the opening of some new schools such as the schools of forestry, rural agricultural schools and town schools of maintaining a household, agricultural-

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<sup>1</sup> *Gymnasium: a school in Germany, Scandinavia, or Central Europe that prepares pupils for university entrance.*

<sup>2</sup> *AS, MPSB, GPS, F. 2, p 31/1942: the record from the meeting of the Educational board, 8 September 1941.*

<sup>3</sup> *Monitor is a school pupil with disciplinary or other special duties.*

<sup>4</sup> *AS, MPSB, GPS, F. 6, p 6/1941: the decisions of Main Educational Council about the introduction the working troop.*

training schools as well as preparatory schools associated with laboratories. Within the war period vocational schools were opened, such as the Academy of Administration in Belgrade, the Secondary Technical School in Kragujevac, the Academy of Trade in Kragujevac, III Academy of Trade in Belgrade, the Communal School of Winemaking in Smederevo, the School of Fruit and Wine-Growing in Arandjelovac, the School of Cattle-Breeding and Dairy Farming in Boljevac as well as the Abitur<sup>5</sup> courses in Jagodina, Čuprija, Valjevo and Kragujevac.

As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs was assigned the tasks within the framework of educational policy to organize the work of educational institutions and institutions for physical education and sports, to supervise the work of literary, art, scientific, cultural and educational institutions along with the supervision of publishing organizations and the overseeing the work of religious communities. The tendency in creating the intellectual and ethical elite was being reached by means of observing pupils and instructing them towards what best corresponded to their psychophysical potentials. Nedić's town for children was founded in Obilić for abandoned children in June 1944. (<sup>6</sup>*The Regulations of Children's City, Official Gazette*, no. 1344, 15 February 1944, 1.

The Ministry of Education in Smederevska Palanka founded the Institute for Compulsory Education of Youth in 1942. It was intended for the pupils who were to correct their political standpoints.

### 3 INSTITUTE IN SMEDEREVSKA PALANKA

The work of the Institute in Smederevska Palanka, which was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs along with a certain kind of control on the part of the Ministry of Interior, was regulated by the *Decree on the Establishment of the Institute for Compulsory Education of Youth in Smederevska Palanka*, published in the *Official Gazette* on 4 August 1942 ( *Decree on the Establishment of the Institute for Compulsory Education of Youth in Smederevska Palanka, The Official Gazette* on 4 August 1942, 1.).<sup>7</sup>

The Decree stipulated that compulsory education should be provided to pupils of secondary schools who were expelled by school authorities, as well as students and freshmen of other academic institutions from 14 to 25 years of age. Additionally, the youth from schools or elsewhere could be sent to the Institute even without parents' or careers' consent, since those were young people on whom their parents lost the educational influence or who did not understand their national duties properly. The stay in the Institute lasted from six months up to two years; however, the amendments to the Decree of 21 January 1943 prolonged this period up to three years.

<sup>5</sup> *Arbiter is corresponding to A-levels.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Regulations of Children's City, Official Gazette, no. 1344, 15 February 1944, 1.*

<sup>7</sup> *Decree on the Establishment of the Institute for Compulsory Education of Youth in Smederevska Palanka, The Official Gazette on 4 August 1942, 1.*

The youth that ended up in the Institute were primarily from Belgrade, but they also came from some other towns of the occupied Serbia – Užice, Valjevo, Čačak, Kruševac, Kragujevac, Leskovac etc. To the Institute, boys and girls, by the Special Police of the City of Belgrade's Authorities, local police authorities in Serbia, the Ministry of Education and the German secret police were sent. They used to be arrested or punished for reading communist literature, collecting money contributions and sanitary material or for simply supporting partisans. However, there were also those who were spending a certain amount of time in the Institute at the order of their own parents, who were afraid of their children ending up as German captives. One thing was for sure – notwithstanding the reasons, which had brought them to the Institute – all of them were against the occupying force, against Germans. Approximately 1270 young boys and girls got into and out of the Institute during the two years of its existence (Krsitic, M., (1981) *Un-servile Youth: Belgrade*).<sup>8</sup>

The role of the Institute was to carry out the political and ideological reorientation and root out the idea of communism from the Serbian youth, as well as to save young lives from shooting in German vengeance. Adopting a new ideology was carried out via special pedagogical methods, which were based on the ideas of nationalism, strict discipline and obedience. According to the principal's opinion, young people should be prompted to direct their positive characteristics towards the national community by means of mild treatment and examining the reasons of their pro-communist orientation.

In fact, working with the youth in the Institute had two goals: the primary – the morally educational one which was of a political and national character, i.e. reeducating the communist youth in the spirit of national renaissance, and the secondary – the educational one which related to acquiring all-round education and enabling them to do a particular job. This was realized through the political and vocational education that required the division of recruits according to the political orientation and the degree of knowledge into three groups: the first group consisted of students, the second group was made up of secondary school pupils and the third group assembled workers and peasants (Nikolova, M., (2010). *The Institute for Compulsory Education of Youth in Smederevska Palanka: Belgrade*).

The first category was formed of recruits who were supposed to acquire all-round and national education through the following courses: the course and seminar on the introduction to philosophy, for the purpose of gaining general education, the course in economy and social studies, and the course on the introduction to literature with basic information on literary culture. They also had to take the course and seminar on the introduction to politics, on the right goals and the wrong doctrine of communism, on masonry and on New Serbia, all of which was undertaken in order to get more profound national education.

Recruits of the second category were to gain all-round secondary and national education. This was realized by means of mastering a reduced program of corresponding grades of a secondary school, school of crafts or a vocational school. Besides, teaching courses in national history, literature and art was intended for this category. The

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<sup>8</sup> Milos Krstic, *Un-servile Youth, Belgrade, 1981.*

following courses were contrived for reasons of gaining national education: the course on capitalism, democracy, communism, national socialism, fascism and freemasonry, then the course on the destructive methods of the Communist International, the course on the Soviet Union, the course on the tactics of the Communist International and the course on New Serbia.

Recruits of the third category were required to gain all-round, vocational and national education, just like the two previous categories. As for the frame of elementary education they were supposed to master literacy, knowledge of nature, geography and Serbian history. As far as vocational education was concerned, there were certain crafts available to learn. Those who were engaged in agriculture were gaining elementary knowledge of cattle breeding, crops growing, fruit and wine growing as well as of making pottery.

The educational work with recruits in the Institute was performed by means of all-round education, ideologically political engagement, cultural and entertaining programs, sport activities and physical toil. All-round education was realized via gymnasium classes, courses for pupils of training schools and trade academies, as well as for pupils of secondary schools of agriculture. Classes were given by professors of the gymnasium of Smederevska Palanka, by pedagogues or by recruits. The choice and organization of their leisure time depended mostly on recruits themselves. They had at their disposal an association of dilettantes, i.e. a theatre and musical section, folklore, a literary section, sport activities – football, volleyball, athletics, basketball, Ping-Pong, boxing and chess. Virtually every week there were entertainment shows organized in a specially equipped hut. Their themes corresponded to the declared educational aims, so that literary pieces, theatre plays or folklore shows were all of an explicitly national character. Recruits were assisted in the organization of their leisure time as a form of a spontaneous friendship and an indirect educational influence.

Not only did physical work, workshop engagement and work on agricultural fields play a practical role, but also an educational one. Work served as a didactic means in forming personality and reeducation, as well as a means of directing an individual towards the aims of the community.

Since the first group of recruits at the beginning of 1943 was a small one, educators had a direct contact with them. They were allowed to have a friendly relationship among each other within the areal range of the Institute, to receive visitors and packages from their parents. Mild treatment, good food and lodging and decent hygienic conditions made living in the Institute bearable, and anyway better than in Banjica or some other camp. In mid-1943, after the unsuccessful attempted escape, conditions of living exacerbated – there was little food, the sheds were crammed, while the anticommunist lectures and the lectures on politics, history, literature and economy became a mandatory method in reeducation. An almost soldierly way of living, along with sentences of imprisonment or putting recruits into a so-called *isolator* urged the ones whose conduct *could not be corrected* to show resistance, which was demonstrated, in the form of escapes, connections with partisans and with the communist organization in Smederevska Palanka. The Institute's Authorities strived to direct some of the youth to quisling military formations, while those whose behavior was described as beyond

repair were handed over to the Special Police, and some of them were directed to the camp on Banjica.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

For the purpose of forming a certain group of people who would undertake the creation of a New Serbia after the liberation, the idea of nationalism and moral education in the patriarchal spirit was promoted through ideational, political lectures and courses, along with harsh criticism of the communist doctrine. The staff from Institute influenced the change of recruits' political orientation and life viewpoints. Even though there were some principal's reports, which indicated that the majority of them had their opinion oscillate, it is questionable to what extent they really changed. For there were those who had really changed their mind and were becoming educators or clerks of the Institute, there were those who did not resist so that they were free to go after a certain amount of time (some of which actually feared a new arrest so that they used to come back), but there were also those who resisted permanently and did not conceal consistency in their standpoints. According to some historians, most of the boys and girls remained firmly convinced of the victory against the occupying force until the end of their stay in the Institute.

The existence and work of the Institute is to be considered within the framework of the corresponding historical state of affairs in the occupied Serbia. In the times of great perishing and political upheavals it was a place for reeducation and control over opponents, the intersection of what was passing away and what would mark the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an institution of a special kind the Institute was part of the schooling system and part of everyday life in the war-ravaged and split Serbia.

#### **SOURCES AND LITERATURE**

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## SUMMARY

### ZAVOD ZA SPLOŠNO IZOBRAŽEVANJE MLADINE V SMEDEREVSKI PALANKI

Zavod za splošno izobraževanje mladine v Smederevski Palanki, ki je bil v pristojnosti Ministrstva za izobraževanje in verske zadeve, je bil ustanovljen avgusta 1942.

Z namenom oblikovanja posebne skupine ljudi, ki bi se lotili ustanovitve nove Srbije po osvoboditvi, so skozi ideološke in politične učne ure poudarjali ideje nacionalizma in moralnega izobraževanja v patriarhalnem duhu z močno kritiko komunistične doktrine. Vplivali so na spreminjanje politične orientacije dijakov in njihovih življenjskih nazorov. Obstoje in delo inštituta je potrebno preučevati v luči zgodovinske situacije v takrat okupirani Srbiji. Kot zavod posebne vrste je bil del šolskega sistema in vsakodnevnega življenja.

Pedagoški muzej v Beogradu hrani na Oddelku za arhivsko gradivo ročno zapisane kopije urnikov, šolskih pravil, certifikatov, vabil na šolske dogodke ter drugo arhivsko gradivo, ki se nanaša na zgodovino izobraževanja v Srbiji. Proces digitalizacije kulturne dediščine le-to naredi dostopno širši javnosti. Pred nekaj leti je Pedagoški muzej v Beogradu začel z digitalizacijo fondov s fotografijami in dokumenti, ki se nanašajo na zavod v Smederevski Palanki, ki je deloval med drugo svetovno vojno. Na ta način je zaščitil arhivsko gradivo in ga dal na voljo javnosti.