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## EDUCATION IN NAZI GERMANY FROM 1933 TO 1945

*Abstract:* This paper studies education during the Nazi Germany period, from 1933 to 1945. In order to achieve their goals, the Nazis who founded the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSGWP), in addition to numerous laws and state programs, saw great importance in educational activities. The concretization of the goal of education during the period of Nazi Germany implied the education of children and youth on eugenics, nationalist, racist, anti-Semitic, ideological, occult, theological, militaristic and alchemical bases with the aim of encouraging and developing awareness of the importance and preservation of the pure Aryan race, about the German people as the most civilized and God-given to rule the world, with their sublime tradition and culture.

*Keywords:* Nazism, Third Reich, Aryan race, educational activities, eugenics, ideology, occultism, racism, fascism, anti-Semitism.

### INTRODUCTION

The understanding of the importance of education in achieving socio-political and economic goals has been prevalent in the world for a long time. Regardless of the importance of the power of education, and the fact that *knowledge is power*, in modern times, this phrase often has the opposite meaning, so *power prevails over knowledge*, i.e., knowledge is a powerful tool for achieving social and political goals (Slović 2019: 203). That is why the power of education „... captures the attention of theorists and practitioners of pedagogy as the most general science of education“ (Milenović 2011: 556). Not only pedagogues, but also philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, andragogues, and in a broader approach also anthropologists, biologists, economists and other scientists also study it. Hence, as stated by Miomir Ivković, there is the need to grasp the power of education and to master it (2004). In this paper, power represents the definition of social and,

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above all, national action of education, as a key and categorical concept of pedagogical science. The issue that this paper is studying could be defined as the study of the (mis) use of the *power of education* in achieving the higher interests of a social community, or more precisely, the study of the educational activities of the NSGWP and the Nazis in Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945.

Educational activity during the Nazi Germany period was based on the realization of Nazi ideas, on the creation of a pure *Aryan race* as God-given, to rule the world and affirm Germany as the world's leading country and the German people as the most sublime in every respect. Education-related activity in the Nazi Germany period was based on the *fascist pedagogy* created in the 1920s in Italy. In addition to some German pedagogues who lived at that time, the education character and goals for German children and youth were mostly determined by Nazi ideologues. That is why education in the period of Nazi Germany was based on eugenics, ideological and extremely nationalistic bases, but also on cultic, militaristic, alchemical racist, anti-Semitic, theosophical and mythological aspects. A significant role in the education of German children and youth was played by the secret state project *Lebensborn* (Milenović 2020) and the state youth organization with its two branches: The League of German Girls and Hitlerjugend, which was considered a Nazi paramilitary formation (Milenović and Rajčević 2021; Benecke 2019).

#### IDEOLOGY OF NSGWP AND NAZI GERMANY AS A BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION DURING THE NAZI GERMANY PERIOD

After the fall of the Weimar Republic, the NSGWP and the Nazis, gathered around their leader Adolf Hitler, came to power in Germany. At that time (from 1928 to 1934), Germany was hit by the greatest economic crisis ever and affected one of the world's most modern countries. The causes are numerous and are mostly related to Germany's previous defeat in the World War I, the destruction of its large economy and financial system, unemployment, poverty and hunger, and the great political crisis that gripped Germany. This led to numerous civil disturbances and demonstrations. In addition to objective causes, Adolf Hitler and the Nazis accused Jews and other peoples who did not belong to the Aryan race as the key reason for this situation in Germany, and above all the main culprits of Germany's defeat in the World War I and the crisis that hit Germany. After that, Germany was significantly strengthened economically (Becić 2019), which the Nazis used to realize their extremely inhumane and inhuman ideas.

In the period of Nazi Germany „... *Anti-Semitism* was especially pronounced” (Kleg 1995: 334). A special state program, the *Holocaust*, was adopted, which,

among other things, meant "... complete disenfranchisement of Jews" (Rich 2019: 51), and as it later turned out, "... their deportation to death camps" (Milenović, 2015:565) and physical extermination embodied in "... the *final solution* of the Jewish question" (Whitaker 1981: 192). In the Holocaust, Jews were not the only victims, but also "... communists, homosexuals, people prone to various addictions, mentally retarded people, Roma, Slavs, especially Russians and other peoples" (Friedman 1995: 339). All this can be presented in a certain chronological order. After the *Crystal Night*, in 1933, the *Nuremberg Laws* were passed "... which gave the Germans too many civil rights" (Đorđević, Pirner 2019: 49). This was followed by persecution, mainly of Jews, but also of other peoples who did not belong to the *Aryan race* (Fallace 2018) in several phases (*Persecution, Ghetto, Deportation, The Final Solution and Their Life after Liberation*) (Milenović 2015).

In his book *Mein Kampf* (2019), Adolf Hitler presented his program for the recovery of Germany and its economy, and the return of Germany to the world stage as a great economic, cultural and, above all, military power. In spreading this fanatical ideology, Adolf Hitler was assisted by numerous Nazis, primarily the ideologue of Nazism, Alfred Rosenberg. The ideology of the NSGWP and Nazi Germany, in addition to Nazism, included occultism, occult racism and the philosophy of evil. It implied both magic and alchemy, but also tectonic and *Aryan* mythology (Zortman 1971). According to Alfred Rosenberg's ideology, Nazi Germany originated long before World War II, even before the Great Flood and ice age. Alfred Rosenberg attributes Nazi Germany to the secret *Thule Society*, and connects it with *Atlantis*, which turns tectonic mythology into Nazism.

Other ideologues of Nazi Germany also discussed the ideology of Nazism. Nevertheless, there are not many papers talking about the ideology of Nazism. Some works only partially mention some phenomena of the ideology of the Nazis and Nazi Germany (Jevtić 2000). According to the same source, one of them is Karl Haushofer, who was a member of the lodge of the *Thule Society*, and whostudied geopolitics and ideology based on the power of the pure *Aryan race*. An important mention is also Guido von List, who studied the ideology of *Theosophical Nazism*, mainly studying the ancient German *Runes*. The ideology of Nazism was also imbued with *astrology*, which was what Karl Ernst Krafft studied. A particularly important ideologue of Nazism was Rudolf von Sebottendorf. He was an occultist and the founder of the *Thule Society*. The name of this society comes from mythology, from the land of *Thule* or *Hyperborea*, which is considered the homeland of people who survived the great flood of Atlantis. Rudolf von Sebottendorf connects *theosophy and mythology*, which combined, represents *occult racism*. In addition to the above mentioned, an important ideologue of Nazism is Dietrich Eckart, who differed from other ideologues of Nazism in that he combined *occultism* with science and technology. The ideologues of Nazism published their teachings and works in the magazine *Ostara*, founded by Adolf Lanz (Bedürftig 1994).

In search of the descendants of the surviving people from Atlantis, the *Ahnenerbe* Society was founded with the main goal of researching German archeology and history (Paddock 2016). In 1934 and later, under the auspices of the NSGWP and SS Commander Heinrich Himmler, the *Ahnenerbe* Society organized several scientific expeditions to Tibet. Heinrich Himmler, although a high-ranking officer and official of Nazi Germany, was the greatest Nazi occultist. One of his ideas was for Nazism to become the new religion of Germany. For the seat of his occult rites, he chose Wewelsburg Castle, where, obsessed with medieval mysticism, he planned the darkest crimes in the World War II. For this reason, this castle was called Naziland among critics.

The Nazis attached great importance to propaganda in achieving their goals. This was especially true of *educational propaganda films* (Bostock 2011). In Kosovo and Metohija, propaganda was especially conducted by the Italians. It started in the interwar period, and was especially pronounced during the World War II. It first began in Albania, and then in Kosovo and Metohija, and lasted until 1943, when Italy capitulated (Slović 2012).

All ideological understandings in Nazi Germany were applied in other occupied European countries. Under the influence of idolatrous notions of inferior and superior peoples, the Jews, as inferior, were ruthlessly expelled, first to the ghettos, and then to the camps, where the vast majority of them were later executed. There were such examples in the former Yugoslavia, primarily in Croatia (then the Independent State of Croatia - NDH), where Serbs suffered the most, and then Jews and Roma, as inferior peoples. There were such examples in Serbia as well, where, under the influence of the minority German people, primarily in Banat, "... inferior and superior peoples" were discussed (Malović 2008: 79).

The situation was especially complicated in the area of Kosovo and Metohija. After the capitulation of Yugoslavia, Kosovo and Metohija was divided between Germans, Italians and Bulgarians. the Balli Kombëtar also had a significant influence in Kosovo and Metohija (Tančić 2010). In addition to the Germans, who mainly controlled the area of Kosovska Mitrovica and the Italians (Aleksić 2017), the terror was carried out by Bulgarians and the Balli Kombëtar. Numerous sources of the Orthodox Diocese of Raska and Prizren (Stojković 2019) and the then Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Slović 2012) testify to this.

## EDUCATION IN NAZI GERMANY

By critically analyzing some pedagogical studies of recent date that discussed the Nazi Germany period, some characteristics of education in Nazi Germany can be presented. It has already been emphasized that education in Nazi Germany was focused on a certain practical activity. It further implied the education of a *self-chosen race* - pure Aryans. This kind of education was directed

towards educating only one race, with the aim of its members accepting themselves as *superhumans*, who are superior in every sense and chosen to rule the world, who should be obeyed by other nations that are considered lower race. In such an approach to education, their unconditional obedience to accepting themselves as a lower race was expected, which, after all, was largely defined according to the Nuremberg Laws (Brickman 1985).

By concretizing the general goal of education in Nazi Germany, other education goals can be defined as well. On the one hand, it implies education in the spirit of nurturing love, faith and respect for one's own - German (Aryan) people, and on the other hand, the hatred and intolerance towards all other peoples. Such pedagogy, which can also be called the pedagogy of political fanaticism, further implies the education of children and youth in the spirit of Nazi Germany and unconditional loyalty to their leader Adolf Hitler, which is partly contrary to education in Sparta, which aimed at educating brave and strong warriors to wage wars in the interest of the state of Sparta (Karasoy 2018). This certainly meant self-deprecating even the personal interests of each individual, who were brought up from an early age to serve Nazi Germany and that, beyond that, their lives had no other purpose. This kind of education, characteristic of training and/or a drill, was significantly different from the military drill, because the way in which it was conducted was not characteristic of man and his values. It was not the idea of the extreme Nazi pedagogues of that time (Alfred Baeumler, Ernst Chain and Theodor Litt), but exclusively the idea of the ideological creator of the Nazi ideology, Alfred Rosenberg and his followers (Benecke 2019).

The most important aspect of education in Nazi Germany was physical education. It was given primary importance (Dichter 2012). The youth of Nazi Germany, organized within *The League of German Girls and Hitlerjugend*, were educated that they need to be constantly physically active, because health is the most important thing in life, and youth as such is most useful to their people and their country. This would not have been a problem if the pupils had not been presented with the fact that all this is necessary for them to be brave, loyal and good warriors for Nazi Germany when the time comes. All that is contained in the official documents of Nazi Germany, which were mentioned earlier.

Intellectual education was not of primary importance within education in Nazi Germany. This was especially true of higher education, which was the privilege only of the most prominent members of Nazi Germany (Meseth, Proske 2010). In the beginning, only the healthy, strong, educated and pure Aryans were chosen for the elite units of Nazi Germany. From the aspect of education, higher levels of education were not required, only general education was necessary. Learning in schools for most children and youth was not their preparation for future life and work, but preparation for serving the interests of Nazi Germany and for impeccable discipline and obedience. Great attention was paid to

extracurricular activities. Joint gatherings were organized, with the goal of depriving German children and youth from leisure time and making it impossible for them to engage in any other activities, outside of those organized by the Nazis.

Moral education in Nazi Germany was also based on eugenics, nationalism, racism and militarism. Its special dimension is reflected in anti-Semitism. This kind of moral education referred somewhat more to German boys than to German girls. Racially pure German girls were brought up to be destined by God to give birth to and nurture healthy offspring and a pure *Aryan race*. On the one hand, this approach to moral education denied socially acceptable moral qualities and values that determine a family. On the other hand, in order to realize this idea, they were not considered immoral and socially unacceptable behaviors, even polygamy, which as such, even today is not seen as socially acceptable behavior, except in certain cultures, and mainly in radical Islamic states of the Middle East (Yusof, Esmaeil 2015).

As part of the education during the Nazi Germany period, work education and aesthetic education were conducted. The goal of work education was to train German youth to do jobs in the field of agriculture and industry. Education was also directed towards creating awareness of the importance and need for strict order, work discipline and work at any cost and regardless of earnings. Aesthetic education had an extremely unethical dimension. German children and youth were taught that they were the descendants of a long-extinct race from Atlantis, who were the most beautiful, strongest and most intelligent people on the planet.

Spiritual education in Nazi Germany was not given much importance. Educational work and educational activities in schools during the Nazi Germany period, were completely different from the basic provisions contained in the *education model* from the period after the creation of the Weimar Republic, which always referred to religion and religious instruction. They were considered public primary schools at the time. The ideology of Nazism, embodied in the occult, also denied the existence of the official religion and the German Church. They believed that Nazism was a new religion of the future powerful and strong German state and the sublime German people and its culture.

## CONCLUSION

As a social and categorical pedagogical concept, education has always been a powerful tool for achieving social goals. Historically speaking, it has played such a role throughout all historical epochs. In recent history, there has been a tendency to bring education closer to the pupil and his needs, but even then, no matter how much freedom in education was sought, it was socially conditioned. The most striking example of social conditioning and determination of education is education in Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945, which was largely based on the principles of *Fascist pedagogy* created in the 1920s in Italy, but with

much more extreme goals, principles and methods. The topic of education in Nazi Germany was mainly studied by some of the German pedagogues, members of the NSGWP, primarily Alfred Baeumler, Ernst Chain and Theodor Litt. However, the foundations of education in Nazi Germany were laid by the main ideologue of Nazism, Alfred Rosenberg. Other Nazi ideologues, Karl Haushofer, Guido von List, Karl Ernst Krafft, Rudolf von Sebottendorf and Dietrich Eckart, also made significant contributions. Their teachings were based on the principles of eugenics, nationalism, ideology, occultism, militarism, racism, anti-Semitism, alchemy, astrology, and extremely inhumane and anti-human principles.

Education in Nazi Germany had a lot in common with the education in Sparta. It went much further though, because the goal of education was to create awareness of the importance of the existence of a pure *Aryan race* and the German people as exalted and God-given to rule the world. The primary importance of education in Nazi Germany was given to physical education, followed by moral education. Work and technical education was also seen as important, because it was believed that only with hard work, Germany could get out of the economic crisis and avoid the destruction which was caused by ethnic groups and nations that do not belong to the German people. Intellectual education was not given too much importance, because it was considered that children and youth needed to be educated to a level that would be sufficient to meet the needs of Nazi Germany. The same was true for aesthetic education, which meant symbolism, orderliness, order, work and discipline.

Based on the critical analyzes presented in this paper, it can be concluded that education in Nazi Germany, as an extreme form of already extreme *fascist pedagogy*, operated during the Nazi Germany in the period from 1933 to 1945. Ignoring its (in)humane and (non)ethical side, however, it must be acknowledged that the goal of education in Nazi Germany, especially its concretization, was the most precisely defined compared to any other goal of education in the history of pedagogy before the period of Nazi Germany. This certainly cannot be presented as something positive. Education in Nazi Germany was based on eugenics, anti-pedagogical, anti-moral, anti-humane and, above all, anti-human principles. As such, it left a deep mark and negative consequences in the history of education, the consequences of which are still felt today in many German provinces and European countries.

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Живорад М. МИЛЕНОВИЋ

## ВАСПИТАЊЕ У НАЦИСТИЧКОЈ НЕМАЧКОЈ ОД 1933. ДО 1945.

### РЕЗИМЕ

Након пада Вајмарске републике, у Немачкој је на власт дошла НСДАП и нацисти, окупили око свог вође Адолфа Хитлера. У то време (од 1928. до 1934.), Немачку је захватила највећа економска криза, која је до тада могла да захвати једну модерну државу света. Узроци тога су бројни и углавном се везују за претходни пораз Немачке у Првом светском рату, уништење њене велике привреде и финансијског система, незапосленост, сиромаштво и глад и велика политичка криза која је захватила Немачку. То је довело до бројних грађанских немира и демонстрација. Поред објективних узрока, као кључни разлог оваквог стања у Немачкој, и пре свега главне кривце пораза Немачке у Првом светском рату и кризе која је захватила Немачку, Адолф Хитлер и нацисти су оптужили Јевреје и остале народе који нису припадали *Аријевској раси*. Након тога, Немачка је економски знатно ојачала (Бецић 2019), што су нацисти искористили за остваривање својих крајње нехуманих и нечовечних идеја.

У периоду нацистичке Немачке „...је нарочито био изражен *Анџисемијизам*“ (Клег, 1995: 334). Донет је и посебан државни програм *Холокауст*, који је између осталог подразумевао „...потпуну бесправљеност Јевреја“ (Rich 2019: 51), а како се касније испоставило, и „...њихову депортацију у логоре смрти“ (Миленовић 2015: 565) и физичко истребљење олично у „...конечном решењу јеврејског питања“ (Whitaker, 1981: 192). У Холокаусту, нису једине жртве били Јевреји, него и „...комунисти, хомосексуалци, особе склоне разним болестима зависности, ментално ретардиране особе, Роми, Словени, пре свега Руси и остали народи“ (Friedman 1995: 339). Све ово могло би се представити одређеним редоследом. Након *Кристалне ноћи*, 1933., донети су *Нирнбершки закони* „...који су Немцима дали превелика грађанска права“ (Ђорђевић, Пирнер 2019: 49). Потом је уследио прогон, углавном Јевреја, али и осталих народа који не припадају *Аријевској раси* (Fallace 2018) у више фаза (*Пројон*, *Гетто*, *Дейорџација*, *Конечно решење* и *Њихов животи након ослобођења* (Миленовић 2015).

У раду се проучава васпитање у периоду нацистичке Немачке од 1933. до 1945. За остваривање својих циљева, нацисти окупили у Националсоцијалистичкој радничкој партији (НСДАП), су поред бројних закона и државних програма, велики значај видели у васпитању и васпитном деловању. Конкретизација циља васпитања у периоду нацистичке Немачке је подразумевала васпитање деце и омладине на еугенистичким, националистичким, расистичким, антисемитистичким, идеолошким, окултистичким, теозофским, милитаристичким и алхемијским основама с циљем подстицања и развијања свести о значају и потреби стварања и очувања чисте *Аријевске расе*, о немачком народу као најцивиљизованијем и Богом даним да завлада светом, са својом узвишеном традицијом и културом.

Као друштвени и категоријални педагошки појам, васпитање је одувек било моћно средство за остваривање друштвених циљева. Историјски посматрано, оно је такву улогу имало кроз све историјске епохе. У новијој историји, тежило се приближавању васпитања самом васпитанику и његовим потребама, али је и тада, ма колико се тежило слободи у васпитању, било друштвено условљено. Најизразитији пример друштвене условљености и одређености васпитања, јесте васпитање у периоду нацистичке Немачке од 1933. до 1945., које је у великој мери било засновано на поставкама *фашистичке идеологије* настале 20.-тих година 20. века у Италији, али са знатно екстремнијим циљевима, принципима и методама.

Васпитањем у периоду нацистичке Немачке, углавном су се бавили неки од немачких педагога, припадника НСДАП-а, пре свега Алфред Бојмлер, Ернст Крик и Теодор Лит. Ипак, темеље васпитању у периоду нацистичке Немачке поставио је главни идеолог нацизма Алфред Розенберг. Значајан допринос дали су и остали нацистички идеолози Карл Халс Хосе, Видо фон Лист, Карл Ернст Крафт, Рудол фон Зеботендорф и Дитрих Екарт. Њихова учења била су заснована на принципима еугенизма, национализма, идеологизма, окултизма, милитаризма, расизма, антисемитизма, алхемије, астрологије и на крајње нехуманим и античовечним начелима.

Васпитање у периоду нацистичке Немачке, имало је доста сличности с васпитањем у Спарти. Отишло се и знатно даље, зато што је циљ васпитања био и стварање свести о значају постојања чисте *Аријевске расе* и немачком народу као узвишеном и Богом даном, да завалада светом са својом узвишеном историјом, традицијом и културом. Примарни значај васпитању у нацистичкој Немачкој је придаван физичком васпитању, а потом моралном васпитању. Придаван је значај и радно-техничком васпитању, јер се сматрало да само напорним радом, Немачка може изаћи из економске кризе и избећи пропаст, у коју су је увеле етничке групе и нације, које не припадају немачком народу. Интелектуалном васпитању се није превише придавао значај, јер се сматрало да је децу и омладину потребно образовати до оног нивоа који ће бити довољан да одговоре потребама нацистичке Немачке. Исто је важило и за естетско васпитање, које је подразумевало симболику, уредност, ред, рад и дисциплину.

На основу критичких анализа изнетих у овом раду, може се закључити да је васпитање у периоду нацистичке Немачке, као екстремизовани облик ионако екстремне *фашистичке идеологије*, деловало у време постојања нацистичке Немачке у периоду од 1933. до 1945. Занемарујући његове (не)хумане и (не)етичке стране, ипак је потребно признати, да је циљ васпитања у периоду нацистичке Немачке, посебно његова конкретизација, најпрецизније био одређен него било који други циљ васпитања у историји педагогије пре периода нацистичке Немачке. То се свакако не може представити као нешто што је позитивно. Васпитање у периоду нацистичке Немачке је било засновано на еугенистичким, анти-педагошким, анти-моралним, анти-хуманистичким и пре свега анти-човечним начелима. Као такво, оставило је дубок траг и негативне последице у историји васпитања, чије се последице и данас осећају у многим немачким покрајинама и европским државама.

*Кључне речи:* нацизам, Трећи рајх, Аријевска раса, васпитно деловање, еугенизам, идеологизам, окултизам, расизам, фашизам, антисемитизам.