

Women's Defense Education at Summer Training Camps – Elements of Practice in Poland

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Abstract— The history of women's planned defense education in Poland goes back to the early 20th century. Initially, it was conducted solely by social organizations. With time, however, the rights of women to defend their country and receive military education were recognized. Nowadays, women can serve as professional soldiers in the army, although not all those interested will find employment there. In the past, an important element of defense education used to be summer training camps. The author of the research believes that summer camps continue to play a vital role in defense education of the society and future military staff. This is mainly because, in addition to their educational function, they constitute a true test of strength for female candidates to military service.

Keywords— women's defense education, paramilitary training camps, military education, military service, summer camps, specialist training.

I. INTRODUCTION

Summer training camps have been organized across the territory of Poland since 1922. The two first camps: an academic camp in Gdynia and a scout camp in Turkowice were voluntary. The instructors there were: Maria Wittek, Janina Kowalska and Maria Podhorska. Summer camps were a valuable supplement and reinforcement of winter season's theoretical work. Experience gained at the first camps (considered pilot camps) was used at further camps, although the initiative had formal support of neither state nor military authorities.

Since 1925, preparatory military training camps for women have started to be gaining in popularity among the society and central military authorities. The latter started to provide food supplies and instructors to the camps still run by social organizations. It was then that the summer training camps were first recognized as the key form of defense education for teenagers and young adults.

The relevant literature on the subject is: Malgorzata Wisniewska [1] and Anna Marcinkiewicz-Kaczmarczyk[2].

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II. PROBLEM FORMULATION

The summer defense education camps were not only to develop practical skills in the field of the military and physical education knowledge acquired during theoretical classes, or to develop practical habits, but also to give the camp participants some basic insight into civics and the ability to live in a community.

The analysis of camp reports demonstrated that the conclusions were that female camps were to be located far away from the cities: if the camp was close to a locality, it would be exposed to various types of guests and visits. There were also comments suggesting that male supervision at camps should be provided. This is mainly because, in addition to their educational function, they constitute a true test of strength for female candidates to military service.

2.1 SUBSECTION

In 1929, an Instruction regarding women's preparatory military training summer camps was published. Even though the Instruction legally sanctioned this form of education for women, it was treated only as a preparation for the ancillary military service. It was an adaptation of the instruction issued for men.

It was advised that the camps be organized on state (public) lands, relatively on local authority lands, whereas private lands were to be given the least preference. The following conditions of the camp's location were also set forth:

- a) hygiene and climate:
 - dry surroundings and surface,
 - drinking water available on the spot,
 - water for bathing available nearby,
 - healthy neighborhood with no signs of epidemics,
 - land separated from residential and farm buildings;
- b) location:
 - terrain suitable for field practice, sports grounds;
- c) convenient rail and road connection;
- d) ability to restock food;
- e) ability to secure camp equipment in the off season.

The above conditions were verified by specially appointed boards [3].

All staff was under the supervision of the Female Camp Commander. She was responsible for the entire training, discipline, and camp management.

Camp candidates were to be in good health condition, have no contagious diseases, as evidenced by a medical certificate, have the parent's consent in the case of minors or a personal obligation in the case of adults to cover any potential costs of early termination of the camp training and to pay any adequate fees set for each camp individually.

2.1.1 SUB-SUBSECTION

Another goal intended to be achieved through camp participation was to shape certain moral values. It was easier to attain because of the staff's ability to influence the candidates over a course of several days. It was proven to the campers that a collective life and the need to comply with others and be subordinate develops comradeship, solidarity, the feeling of responsibility for the whole, and one's appreciation of the value of organized work.

Educational work in harmony with nature played a significant role in the camps. "It is oftentimes the first time for the girls from the cities to see the sunrise when doing the night shift, to hear the pleasant sounds of the birds waking up, to listen to the silence of the night with awe. It is with great interest that they observe caterpillars feeding on leaves, or ants carrying an disproportionately large loads (crumbs) to their anthill" [4].

Furthermore, the camps, taking advantage of the emotional factor, developed patriotic values. "The raising and lowering of the national and small-arms flag on the mast. The rifewomen are deeply moved when standing with their eyes fixed on the slowly lowering or rising small-arms colors".[4]

As far as entertainment is concerned, one form of it – having an educational impact – was an evening camp fire accompanied by common singing. "Choral singing unites, reduces tension, gives solace, a feeling of harmony, the joy of life, allows one to forget the hardship of everyday life" [4].

The program of the female camp defense education for school students set forth the following learning outcomes:

- general knowledge about the organizational structure and tasks of the army;
- orientation in the women's role in the national defense system;
- moral vigor and discipline;
- good physical fitness;
- shooting practice.

It was recommended that during the program the following rules were applied:

- 1/ all theoretical lectures are limited to the essential minimum;
- 2/ mechanical memorization of procedural names of equipment is not required because technical terminology poses great difficulties to campers;
- 3/ memory is not to be overloaded; teaching military rules and regulations is to be avoided;
- 4/ the range of areas covered at lectures and practical classes are to be suited to the level and age of the campers and their physical abilities.

III. PROBLEM SOLUTION

The female camp commanders were advised to follow the below rules when developing detailed schedules:

- a) take into consideration the conditions of the terrain, make sure that camp equipment and class duration is suited thereto;
- b) start the classes on the second day of the camp; conduct the physical fitness trial on day two and three;
- c) exams and the final fitness trial during the last two days of the camp.

The methods to be used when completing the specialist training tasks were to encourage involvement and willingness to work, not to generate physical and intellectual fatigue or weariness, and to allow one achieve best results in a relatively short period of time. Therefore, it was recommended that:

- 1/ the internal structure of the camp and its division into platoons and teams considered the level of proficiency and intellectual and physical development of camp participants;
- 2/ the responsibilities of instructors were set out in accordance with their specialist training, passion and nature;
- 3/ the curriculum took into account the rule of effort gradation both with respect to the working day and the whole camp;
- 4/ the underlying objective of the training was practical exercises;
- 5/ the competitive factor was introduced to rouse personal ambitions and maintain a uniform level of practice;
- 6/ the formal classes were limited to the essential minimum;
- 7/ marching was used as an educational factor through the sightseeing of the places of historical interest located in the camps' vicinity;
- 8/ the camp was completed by an exam sat before a special board;
- 9/ as far as it was practicable, any supervisory bodies and authorities entering the camp premises supervised and visited in a way not interfering with normal camp activities [3].

On the basis of the above described recommendations and experiences, the Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities organized three camps developing defense competencies and analytical skills for female and male students in the years 2016-2019 as part of the Project co-funded by the European Union and entitled "Enhancing the professional competencies of the students of Pedagogics and National Defense of the Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities".

The camps were located near forests and a river, away from any local residents. Camp participants were divided into co-educational platoons, each with its own commanding officer. The Camp Commander supervised the camp. Campers were obliged to follow camp rules. Every camp was five days long, but night training was also included.

The camp program covered the following: the ability to identify and solve problems, the ability to assess the situation, various approaches to the same issue, seeking various perspectives, collecting detailed information, determining key issues which needs to be referred to, such as orientation in space, knowledge about terrain (use of compass), first aid – premedical aid under difficult conditions, the ability to cooperate, and self-discipline.

Upon camp completion, the author of this study conducted a survey among the camp participants.

Table 1. Declarations of women

Types of declarations	Respondents	
	N	%
They would enlist in the territorial defense systems	15	30
They would enlist in the army, as professional soldiers	20	40
They were not fit to become professional soldiers	15	30

Source: Developed based on individual research.

The research revealed that 30% of female graduates declared that they would enlist in the territorial defense systems and 40% - in the army, as professional soldiers. The remaining 30% of participants admitted that they were not fit to become professional soldiers.

Table 2. Opinions of women regarding the camp (multiple answers)

	Respondents	
	N	%
The camp was their greatest experience at the university	45	90
Indicated that the camp taught them practical application of the theoretical knowledge and skills they had.	50	100
The camp taught them to co-exist with others, to take decisions, to be responsible for themselves and for other people	50	100
Wanted to enhance and expand their defense skills in the future at similar camps	50	100

Source: Developed based on individual research.

Ninety percent of female respondents said that the camp was their greatest experience at the university, while 100% of women indicated that the camp taught them practical application of the theoretical knowledge and skills they had. Also 100% of the camp female participants represented that the camp taught them to co-exist with others, to take decisions, to be responsible for themselves and for other people. All women wanted to enhance and expand their defense skills in the future at similar camps.

What is more, the research showed that teenagers/young adults need:

- the ability to self-discipline and create one's own image,
- the ability to manage in every situation without technology,
- in our world of over-consumption, positive competition and cooperation are crucial.

IV. CONCLUSION

Summer training camps as a form of defense education not only meet the above specified needs but also are vital for future military staff. They teach practical application of one's

knowledge and skills, how to co-exist with others, solve problems, make decisions, discipline, how to assume responsibility for oneself and others. Finally, they are a test of strength for military service candidates, which allows them to avoid mistakes when choosing career paths or makes it easier for them to want to join the army. This is mainly because, in addition to their educational function, they constitute a true test of strength for female candidates to military service.

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