

MILITARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ACADEMIC LEGION: A PILOT PROJECT

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Abstract

The paper presents assumptions about the new model of military training for students within the framework of the Academic Legion. It also discusses the traditions of military training of students and graduates in the Second Polish Republic and following the transformations of 1989, with special focus on the tradition of the Academic Legion. Furthermore, it examines assumptions about the pilot project of military training of students that was implemented in the academic year 2017/2018 and highlights the training curriculum for the theory course and for the practical military drills during holidays.

Keywords: Academic Legion, military training, reserve training

Introduction

The occupation of Crimea by Russia and the conflict in eastern Ukraine triggered a discussion in Poland on the need to enhance the national security system of the Polish Republic, especially the defence system. The hybrid war waged by Moscow against Ukraine, and also other countries of the region, is a test for the capacity of response and solidarity of member states of NATO, the European Union and the entire international community. The view that ‘there will not be any war in our region’, recently advocated by the leaders, is now falling to pieces.

It was based on such an erroneous assumption that the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland were professionalised in 2009 and the system of universal military training was abandoned. The army that was created was only based on professional operational formations able to take part in international allied operations, aimed at stabilisation and crisis management. However, one fundamental task of the army was forgotten, and that was the defence of the territory and sovereignty of the state. It is, above all, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty defining the principles of cooperation in fight against an armed attack that was invoked, while Article 3 obligates member states of NATO to develop their individual capacity to resist armed attack.

The Ukrainian experience has shown that a professional army deprived of territorial defence and an efficient system of reserve training is not capable of facing the challenges of contemporary armed conflict. Discussions are taking place in Poland and actions are being undertaken aimed at rectifying these errors. Since 1st January 2017, a Territorial Defence Force has been recreated. Much effort is being devoted to finding ways of incorporating 'pro-defence' and the so-called 'uniformed classes' at secondary schools into the territorial defence and the reserve training system. In order to rebuild the ranks of officers and non-commissioned officers, the pilot project of military education for students, the 'Academic Legion', was launched in the academic year 2017/2018. This paper is devoted to that latter issue.

Traditions of students' military training in Poland

Students' military training in the period of the Second Polish Republic was harmonised with the state programme of a 'nation at arms' that included universal defence preparation of the public with the participation of the army, schools and paramilitary organisations (cf. Kęsik 1998).

In the late 1920s, suggestions were made regarding restoring the Academic Legion, i.e. the military formation established in November 1918 and composed of students. It took part in battles for independence. Unfortunately, this project was discontinued in 1932 due to low interest.

Another attempt at introducing military training at universities was undertaken towards the end of 1937. In January 1938, the Ministry of Military Affairs appointed leaders of the Academic Legion organisations in all academic cities and approved the rules and regulations. The Ministry of Military Affairs and the Ministry of Religious Confessions and Public Enlightenment prepared curricula for army training at universities. Academic Legions were formed in all Polish academic cities. They were commanded by a regular army staff officer and reported to the commander of the relevant regional corps (territorial military authorities) concerning the matters of service, and to the Commander of the Academic Legion concerning matters of substance and organisation. The administrative and economic supervision was exercised by the State Office of Physical Education and Military Training.

The objectives of the military training within the framework of the Academic Legion were:

- military preparation of academic youth with regard to mental, moral and physical aspects;
- developing a sense of individual and collective responsibility for matters of defence and the military power of the state as well as disciplined and devoted work on improving its power;
- preparation of people from all civic walks of life capable of effective and active cooperation with the army;
- maintaining overall dexterity and extending military knowledge among junior reserve commanders as well as preparation for war tasks for all who did not serve in the army including people exempted from the obligation to perform military service.

The activities of the Academic Legion focussed on military drills at barracks, lectures at universities and physical exercises at various sports facilities. The main task was to ensure the defensive preparedness of the Polish intelligentsia. This was intended to include both the basic preparation and maintaining the reservists' capabilities. The instruction staff were trained at a central summer camp in Lidzbark Welski. Each of the Legions organised three-day training camps. Furthermore, the Infantry Training Centre in Rembertów offered an information course for reserve officers who were involved in the activity of the Legion. Legion trainees were uniformed following the army pattern. The distinguishing element

for them were the initials 'LA' worn on the epaulettes as well as a shield with the crest of the university and occasionally the crests of the faculties. The functionaries also had ornamental cords. Members of the Academic Legion received uniforms for the time of service and kept them at home. All political activity was banned within the Academic Legion.

As of 1st of September 1938, the Legion was incorporated into the National Defence (territorial defence) force as a supplementary service. The activity of the Academic Legion towards the end of the Second Republic was of great importance for students' military preparedness and had a direct impact on the level of training of the cadre of officers and non-commissioned officers of the reserve. It also shaped the positive attitude of the intelligentsia towards national defence (Dziemianko, Łagodowski 2010, pp. 50-54; Wywiał 2014, pp. 159-168).

After the Second World War, military training for students was introduced in 1949. In 1954, military faculties were established at civilian universities. Military training was compulsory for all students who were fit for military service ('health category A'). Theory classes were held during the academic year, with training courses at military units during holidays (up to 45 days). Students who successfully completed such a programme were transferred to the reserve. They could receive the lowest officer rank after completing some additional courses. Female students could also take part in military training at universities but they were not called up for training at military units. In 1967, the period of military training was extended from 45 days to three months.

In 1973, a new system of military training for students and graduates was introduced and this provided for training during studies as well as post-graduate service at Reserve Officer Schools and military units. Students of academies of medicine had military training during four terms with a post-graduate two-month training camp; students of maritime schools had military training during 6-7 terms; other university students had training at military faculties during 2-3 terms with a post-graduate one-year military (6 months at a Reserve Officer School and 6 months of practical training at military units). Furthermore, both male and female students who were exempted from the obligation to perform military service had classes in defence training.

A number of changes were introduced in 1980 when Reserve Officer Cadet Schools were established. Initially, university graduates were mustered for 12 months, and in the late 1980s for 6 months. After the systemic changes, in 1991, military training at civil universities was discontinued and enrolment at the Reserve Officer Cadet Schools was limited; these schools were closed down soon afterwards (Chmieliński 2015, pp. 281-293).

In the 1990s, university graduates were virtually never called up for military training, which neglected the need for reserve personnel training but was also a nuisance to the graduates themselves, who were not in compliance with the obligation of military service until they reached the age of 28. Instead, at the threshold of the 21st century, citizens' initiatives appeared with regard to solving this problem and introducing voluntary military training for students of private colleges (e.g. the Academic Legion, Academic Officer Training Corps) but they were not included in the reserve training system (Zegan 2000, pp. 91-94). A new form of military training for students was introduced in the academic year 2003/2004. Volunteer students had classes in defence training at colleges and then they could choose to be called up for a 6-week military training during holidays, and upon completion, they were transferred to the reserve. Graduates who did not receive such training would be called up for three-month training.

After the so-called "professionalisation" of the army, military education of young people, including university students, for the benefit of the armed forces reserve system was discontinued. This resulted in a break in the supply of young reserve cadres. Only some could take part in courses as part of the preparatory service for the National Reserve Forces or other training. One of the bonds connecting the army and society was broken, and the youth - including academic youth - was deprived of the possibility of fulfilling the constitutional duty of defence. A certain answer to this situation was the activity of students in the ranks of pro-defence organisations, such as Związki Strzeleckie (cf. Wywiół 2009), Legia Akademicka (Legia Akademicka KUL 2015, pp. 18-19) or Stowarzyszenie Ruch na Rzecz Obrony Terytorialnej ObronaNarodowa.pl.

Assumptions about the new model of military training for students

As mentioned in the introduction, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland are facing the urgent task of replenishing the ranks of reserve personnel to ensure a greater influx of younger reserve soldiers, in particular officers and non-commissioned officers. In order to make up for the many years of negligence, the Ministry of National Defence, in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education launched a pilot programme of voluntary military training for students under the name 'Academic Legion' in the academic year 2017/2018.

On 26th June 2017, the Secretary of State in the Ministry of National Defence, Michał Dworczyk, presented the 'Concept of military education of students within the framework of the Academic Legion.' Modelled after the 2003-2008 solutions, training is to be divided into a theory part, taught at universities and colleges during the academic year, and a practical part implemented at military units and centres during holidays.

Soon afterwards, on 13th July 2017, the Minister of National Defence, Antoni Macierewicz, signed Decision No. 146/MON on implementation, of the pilot programme of military education for students within the framework of the Academic Legion from 1st October 2017. According to this regulation, students who successfully complete the theory classes and notify their wish to take part in military drills will be called up for practical military training.

The monitoring of the course of implementation of the theoretical part of the pilot programme and supervision over the implementation of the practical part was entrusted to the Secretary of State in the Ministry of National Defence, Michał Dworczyk.

The Decision of 13th July 2017 also specifies the tasks of the Chief of the General Staff, the Commander-in-Chief and the Commander of the Territorial Defence Force with regard to carrying out the practical part of the military training for students at training centres and military units (Decyzja nr 146/MON Ministra Obrony Narodowej z dnia 13 lipca 2017 roku w sprawie wdrożenia programu pilotażowego edukacji wojskowej studentów w ramach Legii Akademickiej).

The voluntary training of students will be taking place pursuant to relevant provisions (Art. 100(1) and (1a)) of the Act of 21st November 1967 on the universal obligation to defend the Republic of Poland, which specify that the obligation of military service for reserve soldiers during peacetime consists in taking part in military drills and performing temporary military service; for persons transferred to the reserve and not being reserve soldiers, this obligation consists exclusively in taking part in military drills.

On 21st August 2017, the Secretary of State in the Ministry of National Defence, Michał Dworczyk, and Vice Minister of Science and Higher Education, prof. Aleksander Bobko, signed the *Agreement between the Minister of Science and Higher Education and the Minister of National Defence on implantation of the pilot programme of the concept of military education for students within the framework of the Academic Legion*.

Pursuant to the agreement, the theoretical part of the voluntary student training will be organised by the rector of the university, where the process of military training will take place.

The theoretical training curriculum comprises 30 class periods. The instruction will be in the form of lectures. After passing the theory part, the volunteer student will submit an application to the military authorities and will be called up to military drills, i.e. the practical part of the programme, which will take place at selected military units, military training units and military centres of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland during the holiday break, in two rounds, each lasting 6 weeks. Each round, in turn, consists of two modules:

- the module of elementary training, lasting 21 days, followed by an examination and taking an oath;
- the module of training of non-commissioned officers, also lasting 21 days, followed by an examination and appointment to the rank of reserve corporal.

In late August and early September 2017, an action was carried out in order to recruit potential lecturers in the circles of pro-defence organisations and reserve soldiers. Afterwards, they attended a course in teaching methodology.

The training programme is open to any student of a state or private college or university with Polish citizenship. On 12th September 2017, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education sent information and an invitation to join the pilot

programme to 94 state schools of higher education. Finally, 59 schools joined the programme, 54 state civilian and 5 military ones (*Lista uczelni uczestniczących w programie "Legia Akademicka"*).

In the autumn, some promotion activities for the project were undertaken, including shows and meetings at the schools concerned as well as activity in online media.

The Ministry of National Defence earmarked PLN 220m for the Academic Legion programme in 2018.

Course curriculum for theoretical military training of students

On 12th September 2017, approval was granted to the *Programme of training for the implementation of military education of students within the framework of the Academic Legion – theoretical part of the elementary module and the non-commissioned officer module*.

As stated in the *Programme of training*, the chief objective of the training of students of higher education is to prepare them, at the basic theoretical and practical level, for performing tasks related to infantry activities in private and non-commissioned officer corps.

The theoretical part of the training was planned to be accomplished during one or two terms according to the following schedule:

- theoretical part – elementary (30 hours);
- theoretical part – squad leader (20 hours);
- theoretical part – instructor (15 hours).

This model was to end with the awarding of credits.

The main training tasks included in the elementary module are:

- providing learners with general information related to the defence system of the Republic of Poland as well as with the functioning, organisation and activities of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland;

- familiarising learners with the basic terms and conditions of military service stemming from the applicable legal acts;
- imparting the theoretical knowledge on the principles of tactical operations to learners;
- developing a system of values and attitudes, such as responsibility, discipline, involvement, care for the equipment entrusted and attachment to the traditions of the Polish army (Program szkolenia do realizacji Edukacji wojskowej studentów w ramach Legii Akademickiej – część teoretyczna modułu podstawowego i modułu podoficerskiego 2017, p. 5).

The objectives in the elementary module include:

- theoretical background of the basics of combat behaviour and individual actions, depending on the situation and the manner of enemy action;
- theoretical background for implementing the basic fire tasks using regular small arms;
- theoretical background for the principles of a soldier's conduct;
- preparation for developing physical fitness on one's own;
- mastering the basics of combat, logistics and medical training (Program szkolenia 2017, p. 6).

In the elementary module of the theoretical course, volunteer students take part in classes in the following sections:

- Rudiments of civic and military education (subjects: Rules and regulations, Civic education, Prevention and military discipline);
- Combat training (subjects: Tactics, Firearms training);
- Logistic training (subjects: Design and operation of weapons and military equipment, Logistics support);
- General training (subjects: Legal training, SERE – Survive, Evade, Resist, Extract, Medical training).

The main training tasks in the non-commissioned officer module include:

- familiarising learners with the basic terms and conditions of service in junior non-commissioned officer corps;
- imparting the theoretical knowledge and practical skills associated with commanding a squad in combat subunits and skills relating to commanding an infantry squad in tactical operations;

- imparting the theoretical knowledge and practical skills associated with methodology of military training.

The objective of the training in the theoretical part of the non-commissioned officer module is to impart military knowledge on:

- commanding a squad in tactical operations;
- squad fire control in defence and attack;
- preparing combat documentation and issuing operation orders;
- acting in the role of an instructor;
- serving the function of an educator to the soldiers in the squad;
- handling communications at the squad level (Program szkolenia 2017, pp. 7-8).

In the non-commissioned officer module, as part of the squad commander training, trainees were to receive classes in, inter alia, commanding; the role of squad commander in commanding, training in educating; military commanding in a small group; breakdown and principles of preparing combat documentations; squad commander's activities in the battlefield (leading a march under protection, defence, attack).

As part of the instructor (methodological) training, learners were to have classes on, inter alia, the principles, methods and forms of military training; the role of leader and instructor in the training process; preparing training documentation; methods of teaching rules and regulations, tactics, firearms training; methods of teaching types of armed forces (Program szkolenia 2017, pp. 28-29).

Eventually, however, implementation of the non-commissioned officer module within the theoretical course was abandoned. The reason for this was most probably the fact that the decision on launching the programme was made too late; also, the fact that the process for schools of higher education to join the programme is very long. All of this caused substantial delays in commencing the theory classes.

Assumptions about military training of students during holidays

According to the assumptions, the students who successfully completed the theoretical module and are fit for military service ('health category A') are entitled to file applications for call up to military training at training centres and military units during the holidays (Glińska n.d.). The elementary module lasts for three weeks and ends with an examination and a military oath. After completion, project participants who did not file applications for the non-commissioned officer module are granted the rank of reserve private. Individuals who complete this module and file applications for the non-commissioned officer module receive two-months' leave and then continue the training in the non-commissioned officer module which is followed by a non-commissioned officer examination, after which they are promoted to the rank of reserve corporal.

The following training centres and military units were selected to conduct military training of students during the 2018 holiday break:

- Artillery and Armaments Training Centre in Torun;
- Aviation Engineering Training Centre in Dęblin;
- Air Force Training Centre in Koszalin;
- 22nd Carpathian Brigade of Mountain Infantry in Kłodzko;
- Land Forces Training Centre in Poznan;
- 41st Base of Training Aviation in Deblin;
- Logistics Training Centre in Grudziądz;
- 100th Communications Battalion in Wałcz;
- Navy Training Centre in Ustka;
- Naval Base Command in Gdynia;
- Engineering and Chemical Defence Troops Training Centre in Wrocław;
- Communications and Information Technology Training Centre in Zegrze;
- Naval Base Command in Świnoujście.

The training will take place in two rounds (in each of them, 2,500 volunteer students are to be trained):

Round I:

- elementary module (1st-20th July);
- non-commissioned officer module (23rd July – 10th August).

Round II:

- elementary module (12th August – 1st September);
- non-commissioned officer module (4th-22nd September).

According to the announcements, this is going to be very intensive training (12 hours daily) with the emphasis placed on practical classes. The programme includes intensive firearms training as well as training in the basics of tactics, battlefield medicine, topography and general military knowledge.

Participants in the training will receive payment. Pursuant to the Regulation of the Minister of National Defence of 13th January 2017 on the rates of basic salary of non-professional soldiers and allowances for the basic salary of non-professional soldiers, each student taking part in the practical part of the training will receive PLN 91.20 for each day of firing-range drills (Pilotażowy program 2018).

Beginning from the next academic year, the Ministry plans to rearrange the training into three modules for future privates, non-commissioned officers and officers of the reserve.

Conclusions

The pilot project *Military education for students within the framework of the Academic Legion* is harmonised with the broader programme of rebuilding the reserve (including the personnel) of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland without having recourse to restoring conscription. The model based on combining theoretical classes at universities and colleges and practical training at training centres and military units is also consistent with the tradition of training of students and graduates dating back to the inter-war period (between the world wars). The advantages of this solution certainly include the relatively low costs of training reserve soldiers and officers compared with stationary training. The personnel can equally well serve in operational forces and territorial defence.

Classes incorporated into the academic year and supplemented with short-term, well-paid holiday training do not imply a 'break in life' but are rather perceived as an adventure, an opportunity to gain experience, the first step on the way

to professional service, and also simply a fulfilment of patriotic obligation. Consideration in this respect should be given to solutions concerning reserve service, opportunities for acquiring additional qualifications and being promoted. With regard to the fact that conscription is not to be restored, there is a need for a system of incentives for volunteers, not just students, who will take part in military training and service in the reserve. These might be e.g. reductions in university fees for reservists, extra points in contests for positions in the administration, or more broadly, in the public sector, attractive wages, additional insurance packets, etc.

The popularity of the pilot project is correlated with the popularity of pro-defence organisations and the so-called uniformed classes, which indicates the existence of a public security potential that must not be wasted. Military training of students also contributes to the positive attitude towards the army and matters related to state security among this group, which is even more important in view of the fact that it is the university graduates that make up the elite of the society and will be creating the policy and development of the state. The voluntary military training of university students as part of the Legia Akademicka programme also helps to rebuild the bonds that should connect society with the Armed Forces and to create a sense of responsibility for security of the country. Participation in it becomes an expression of patriotism and positive civic attitudes. Reserve non-commissioned officers not only strengthen the resources of the army reserve, but also become ambassadors of the army in society.

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