

“De’ Walefer Médecher”: strike at the LBA*

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“And so it came about that, in the tiniest of countries, the biggest strike imaginable was mounted; [...] A glowing spark of freedom was seen to flare up, not least in the *Normalscho'l* [teacher training school] in Walferdange.”

With these lines, the primary school teacher and national poet Théodore Wies introduces the central theme of his epic poem “*De’ Walefer Médecher*”, completed in January 1947, a literary contribution intended as a fitting tribute to those who participated in the strike that took place in the teacher training school, the *Lehrerinnenbildungsanstalt* (LBA), located in the Château de Walferdange, as part of the general strike mounted from August to September 1942. The 17 six-line verses were printed in the journal *Rappel* (Rappel 1947: 38-41) published by the *Ligue Luxembourgeoise des Prisonniers et Déportés politiques* [Luxembourg League of Political Prisoners and Deportees] with the following subheading: “According to an article in ‘*RAPPEL*’: Marienthal Education Camp, by Josette Manternach” (Manternach 1946: 22-26).

Manternach’s account and testimony, together with the poetic treatment afforded by Wies to the events that took place, have prompted us to cover, in the framework of our occasional series of articles about the Walferdange neighbourhood of “Neidierfchen” during the Second World War, the strike mounted as a gesture of solidarity on 2 September 1942 by the female trainee teachers, and the repressive measures taken to counter it by the CdZ, Chief of Civil Administration.

The general strike and the Walferdange school strike, August-September 1942

One year after the end of World War II, and four years after the anti-Nazi strikes that took place in the late summer of 1942, the young teacher Josette Manternach described, in *Rappel*, the part played by her in the Walferdange school strike and her detention, by way of punishment, in the education camp at Marienthal an der Ahr. She states in her introduction: “It was the 2nd of September 1942. In the teacher training school in Walferdange, defiant, embittered faces were everywhere to be seen.” In the scene that followed, which unfolded before the class in the presence of the German principal of the LBA, Alois Brocher, Manternach once again highlights the defiant demeanour of the students: “He can see the answer in our faces: ‘Enough is enough! You have struck deep in the heart of our poor little homeland. But now the time has come for us to rise up against you as never before!’” (Manternach 1946: 22)

These facts, as recalled by the former LBA student, are conveyed in emotionally charged language reflecting the patriotic *Zeitgeist* of the immediate post-war period; it is not until the very end of her account, with the words “martyrs of the strike”, that she mentions the general strike mounted from 31 August to 4 September 1942 as a protest against the national socialist occupation policy implemented by the Chief of Civil Administration. In contrast to Manternach, Théodore Wies, known for his “patriotic lyricism” (Claude Conter, *Autorenlexikon*), addresses in his narrative poem the central theme of the trainee teachers’ strike, by referring first of all to the general strike but without stating, in so doing, the causes or motivations underlying the strike action: “And so it came about that, in the tiniest of countries, the biggest strike imaginable was mounted”.

In his narrative poem, Wies apparently prefers to focus on meta-causal indications evincing a small-state nationalism fortified by religious faith. As an example of this, his first stanza contains the following words:

“In the year forty two, in Walferdange, a class of stalwart girls, their hearts filled with a righteous, sacred hatred, proudly sacrificed themselves for the Luxembourg cause.” (Wies 1947: 38)

In contrast to Manternach’s account, or Wies’ poem, it appears to us essential, in the context of our micro-historical study, to briefly address the motivations behind, and the course taken by, the general strike (*Rappel* 1972; Dostert 1985; Hohengarten 1991; Büchler 2017).

When, on “Fouersonndeg”, i.e. the Sunday of the annual national fair, 30 August 1942, the Gauleiter of the Moselle region and Chief of Civil Administration in Luxembourg, Gustav Simon, announced at a mass rally in the Limpertsberg exhibition hall “general military conscription in Luxembourg together with the conferment of German nationality” (Dostert 1985: 175), this introduced a system of de facto compulsory recruitment of young Luxembourg males, applying initially to those born between 1920 and 1924 and subsequently also to those born in 1925, 1926 and 1927 (Büchler 2017: 15-16).

These announcements did not come as any great surprise. Already on 23 August the *Reichsgesetzblatt* [Reich Law Gazette] had published a decree concerning the conferment of German nationality on Alsatians, Lorrainers and Luxembourgers. And on 25 August and 29 August respectively, the introduction of compulsory military service was proclaimed in the two other regions in which the Nazis had imposed a civil administration, namely Alsace and Lorraine. By order of Gauleiter Simon, all possible steps were taken to stop news and information in this regard from flowing out of those two regions and over the border into Luxembourg, and to prevent the law on the compulsory conferment of German nationality throughout the *Gau Moselland* from being published until 30 August (Dostert 1985: 175; Büchler 2017: 16).

Yet despite these measures, news got through to Luxembourg. Thus, on 27 August 1942, it proved possible for a copy of the *Reichsgesetzblatt* of 23 August, destined for the Magistrates’ Court in Wiltz, to be intercepted and copied in the post office. All in all, it may be assumed that notwithstanding the paucity of information, the dissemination of rumours, together with a targeted whispering campaign concerning suspected plans of the Civil Administration, helped to generate, amongst the Luxembourg population, deep mistrust with regard to the announced mass rally, to be held in Limpertsberg (Hohengarten 1991: 16).

These occurrences were enough, in terms of their import, to provide the momentum needed to trigger the swift, multifarious and manifold reactions that arose within Luxembourg society in response to the introduction of general military conscription. Already on the evening of Sunday, 30 August, a couple of hours after the announcement of compulsory military service, “strikers all over the country coordinated their reaction, deciding on a gesture intended to express, in the coming days, their opposition to the new decrees” (Büchler 2017: 16). And on the following day, 31 August, there commenced a wave of protests and various strike actions which were to continue until 4 September.

According to the historian André Hohengarten, those actions intensified, spreading to all parts of the country and assuming “various different forms, such as work stoppages, closure of businesses, milk strikes, strikes by students and teachers, the handing in of VdB [Ethnic German Movement] membership cards, refusal to wear the VdB badge, the singing of prohibited patriotic songs, and refusal to adopt the German form of greeting” (Hohengarten 1991: 19). The last of the forms of protest listed by Hohengarten represented an act of defiance that became widespread as the general strike gathered pace, and one which occupies an initial and central place in our micro-historical study concerning the strike mounted by the trainee teachers at the LBA in Walferdange.

The course taken by the trainee teachers’ strike

Aside from Wies’ poem, and also Josette Manternach’s memoir, originating from the immediate post-war period, published initially in 1946 in *Rappel* and subsequently republished, with two omissions, in 1972 in the special edition of that periodical entitled “*La Grève de 1942*” f.[The Strike of 1942] (Manternach 1972: 408-412), there exists a further source to which we can turn, in the form of an eye-witness account of the strike action taken by the students in the Château de Walferdange. This is the document entitled “*Streik in der Lehrerinnenbildungsanstalt Walferdingen*” [Strike in the Walferdange teacher training school], composed in German and published by the schools inspector and former trainee teacher at the LBA, Jeanne Schneider, in 1993 in the anthology “*Wéi wann et eréischt haut geschitt wier!*” [As if it had just happened today!]. Already one year earlier, she had recounted, in the Special Supplement to the *Luxemburger Wort* entitled “*50 Joer Zwangsrekrutierung 30. August 1942*” [50th Anniversary of the introduction of compulsory military service 30 August 1942], her recollections of the strike in the Walferdange teacher training school (Schneider 1992: 14; 1993: 99-103).

Schneider kicks off her memoir of the strike mounted 40 years earlier in the teacher training school at the Château de Walferdange by recounting the following pivotal scene: “Suddenly the door of classroom II^e B flew open. Brocher, the German principal, entered the room. He gave the Nazi salute. We stood up,

remaining silent. Then the principal said: 'I am now going to ask each of you individually whether you are prepared in future to give the German salute and to submit to the German order.' The answer given by each of the students in our class was: 'No.' The principal immediately informed us of his decision: 'As far as I am concerned, you are summarily dismissed. You will no longer be admitted to study in any other teacher training institution. I am now going to hand the matter over to the Gauleiter.'" (Schneider 1993: 101)

It is appropriate at this point to supplement Schneider's testimony, dating from the early 1990s, with the account given by her classmate Josette Manternach, dating from the first year of peace following the Second World War: "Twenty seven times he received the answer 'No'. – 'All right then, I'm going to give your names to the security police. You are required to vacate the school by two o'clock at the latest!' – In the first-year class he received the same rebuff. We were thereupon excluded from the 'community'. Some of the *Preisen* [the Boches] looked at us with eyes full of hatred, others sneered at us, and yet others sought to pity us. But they were no longer of any concern to us.

'Tomorrow, as if suffering from an almighty hangover, they'll come to regret their actions,' said Brocher. 'I can already see them lying in pools of their own blood'.'" (Manternach 1946: 22)

Both Schneider and Manternach, in their own respective ways, place the refusal to give the German salute, and the related repudiation of the National Socialist order in occupied Luxembourg, at the centre of the events that took place at the teacher training school in Walferdange. And both of them, as witnesses to those events, recall the threats uttered and the repressive measures that were immediately applied by the Nazi-minded principal, who was a native of the German Reich and who had been in charge of the school since the spring of 1942.

Schneider even slips into her account the following statement, which is difficult to verify: "The Gauleiter was apparently minded to have the rebellious students shot. However, it is said that our German educational science teacher, Herr Reißner, interceded on our behalf, drawing to the Gauleiter's attention the consequences that would follow from such a step being taken: 'If you shoot children, the entire country will rise up in revolt'.'" (Schneider 1993: 101)

Fortunately, the Chief of Civil Administration refrained from bringing the striking students, who were minors, before the summary military tribunal, which between 2 and 9 September condemned to death twenty "ringleaders" who had taken part in the general strike. However, striking students ran the risk of being taken into custody by the "*Stapo*" (State police).

A copy document dated 1 September 1942, which was in all probability produced at the behest of Hans Lippmann, the superintendent of schools and head of the Civil Administration's education department, and intended for the "*Einsatzkommando* [deployment group] of the Security Police and the SD [Security Service], contains the following instructions: "I request that the following students in Luxembourg be arrested" and: "I further request that the following teachers be arrested" (ANLux, CdG-028, 0040).

The names of the students and teachers are listed and categorised according to the respective secondary schools concerned. It is noteworthy in this regard that the copy document also gives the names of six female students attending the teacher training school in Walferdange. However, one unexpected aspect of the document in question is the fact that it was not drawn up after the Walferdange strike, which happened on 2 September, but on the day before, that is to say, on 1 September. Could it have been, perhaps, that the planned six arrests represented a repressive measure designed to punish protest actions at the school which already occurred on 1 September?

A further point worth highlighting is that, although Jeanne Schneider's name did not feature in the copy document dated 1 September, she was nevertheless arrested following the strike at the school. Fifty years after the general strike, schools inspector Schneider returned to the events of September 1942: "Aged 16, I spent a night in the prison in Esch. Early the next morning, guarded by two police officers, I was taken to the Carmelite convent in Luxembourg, from which the nuns had been evicted and in which the Hitler Youth had installed itself. There I came across my fellow students, who had been brought to the convent by means of a massive operation bringing them all together by bus from everywhere in the country" (Schneider 1993: 101).

Schneider's schoolmates, who headed back home after being ordered to vacate the school by its principal, included Josette Manternach. She describes in detail the eventful developments experienced by her during the first two days following the strike at the school: "We had already spent one day back home. [...] At about seven o'clock in the evening two police officers arrived, asking after me. They said that I had to leave with them straight away, taking enough clothing to last for three weeks. A quarter of an hour later I found myself sitting in the offices of the gendarmerie." The young student, originating from Grosbous, goes on to describe the further course of her detention as follows:

"After two hours, a large bus came to a halt in front of the gendarmerie. There were two police officers sitting inside it, together with one of my comrades. We then travelled from one gendarmerie in the Ösling to the next. At each police station, we were joined by two or three more! The roads were being watched. The vehicle was stopped some fifteen times. From Troisvierges we travelled via Hosingen, Diekirch and Ettelbruck to Luxembourg City." In this context, Manternach slips the following scene into her account: "One of the policemen – there were two Luxembourgers – whistled: '*Nu stinn ech hei op ganzem frieme Buedem*' [Now I find myself standing on utterly foreign ground]." It is interesting to note that this incident was omitted from the text when it was published a second time in *Rappel* in 1972 (Manternach 1972: 409).

In her memoir, Manternach also touches upon the short stop made on the way at the headquarters of the Gestapo in the city centre: "The vehicle pulled up in front of the Villa Pauly. One wouldn't have thought that it was around four o'clock in the morning: there was a constant stream of vehicles driving up and driving off... with the aim of spread unhappiness and misery throughout the country. Our vehicle brought us to the Carmelite convent in Cents." After a short lie-down, the students were instructed "to wait in the chapel of the convent for the arrival of the *Bannführer* [rank of the Hitler Youth, british equivalent to colonel]. He called out our names. Then he told us that our parents no longer had any legal guardianship over us or entitlement to bring us up. From now on, he said, this lay in the hands of the Hitler Youth. The last thing we needed!" (Manternach 1946: 23). The *Hauptbannführer* [rank of the Hitler Youth, british equivalent to brigadier] of the Hitler Youth in Luxembourg, Karl Felden, lost no time in addressing a letter to the parents of the students, in which he informed them that their daughter "[had] taken part in a school strike". He went on to relay the following to the parents: "For that reason, the Gauleiter has withdrawn your entitlement to bring up your daughter and transferred this right to the Hitler Youth. Your daughter has today been assigned to a Hitler Youth education camp in the Reich. She will remain in that education camp for an indefinite period of time, and the duration of her stay will depend, in essence, on your daughter's conduct" (MnR 2017: 64-27).

Even though the letter cited above was addressed to the parents of a secondary school pupil in Esch, it may be assumed that a similar written communication was sent to and received by the parents of the LBA students.

By the time this news came to their knowledge, their daughters would already have found themselves in the Marienthal education camp. Josette Manternach briefly records her transportation from Luxembourg to the Ahr Valley as follows: "We were then taken from Luxembourg City to the *Preiseland* [Boche-land] in two buses. We crossed the border at Echternach, and continued our journey via Bitburg to Adenau. The pupils from the schools in Esch that had also gone on strike were quartered in Adenau. At around five o'clock we arrived in Marienthal." (Manternach 1946: 23)

Causes of the strike at the Walferdange teacher training school

The Chief of Civil Administration refrained from bringing the LBA students who had participated in the protest action before the summary tribunal convened in the context of the general strike, or before any special court or tribunal. Yet it is clear from the nature of the punitive and educational measures implemented that they were dictated by a strategy the broad lines of which had already been laid down before the outbreak of the protest actions at the LBA and at other secondary education establishments in Luxembourg. This is illustrated by the fact that, already one week before the commencement of the emerging school strike, the Civil Administration issued the "Decree of 25 August 1942 on the Hitler Youth training camps".

This Decree stipulated inter alia the following: "§1. (2) The registration and enlistment of young people for participation in training camps shall be organised by the Hitler Youth Command Post in Luxembourg"

(AN-Lux, CdG-028, 0035). The principal reason for these education and training rules may well have been the widespread anti-German sentiment prevailing amongst Luxembourg's students, provoked by the Nazi occupation regime.

This reflects a political circumstance which can be verified by way of an example, in the context of our micro-historical study, by reference to a three-page report drawn up on 10 June 1942 by Alois Brocher, the principal of the LBA in Walferdange, at the request of the Chief of Civil Administration. That report, cited by Camille Kieffer in his study "*Von der Normalschule zur Lehrerbildungsanstalt*" [From normal school to teacher training school], describes in clear language a prevalent political and ideological attitude amongst the trainee teachers which represented, for the National Socialist occupiers and the policy of "enforced conformity" of the Luxembourg education system that they had sought to apply root and branch since the autumn of 1940, a total fiasco:

"The Hitler salute elicits scarcely any response. Crucifixes hang in classrooms. Nearly all the girls wear religious medallions or badges. Before meals, the girls get together and pray. Upon the raising of flags, stony faces and scarcely any effort to sing along with the German national anthem or the Horst Wessel song. Refusal to join the BdM [League of German Girls]. Absence from BdM training activities on Wednesdays. [...] Students demanded from me leave of absence to attend daily Mass, pleading freedom of conscience [...]" (Brocher 1942; cited by Kieffer 1996).

It seems that Brocher's assessment and evaluation of the political attitude of the trainee teachers must have alarmed Dr Münzel, *Regierungspräsident* [chief executive of an administrative district] and permanent representative of the Chief of Civil Administration, as well as Gauleiter Simon: "anti-German 80 %, lukewarm 15 %, useful: not even 5 %." The assessment of the political situation at the LBA appears in turn to have prompted its principal, a native of the German Reich, to reach the following conclusion: "Disorganised. Obstacles placed in the way of values. Passive resistance amongst the employees and, despite every kindness being shown, amongst the teaching staff too. Time needed to straighten things up: at least half a year" (Brocher 1942; cited by Kieffer 1996).

Sobering though the effect of Blocher's report may have been on those in charge of education policy in the Civil Administration in Luxembourg, the political situation at the LBA cannot have come as any great surprise to them. Since the introduction of the Civil Administration regime in Luxembourg in August 1940, the *École normale* ["normal school"], housed since 1930 in the Château de Walferdange, had undergone a process of enforced conformity with National Socialist ideology which was met with widespread displeasure not only amongst the teaching staff but also amongst the students themselves, leading to the expression of anti-German sentiments, both verbal and written.

The process of "secularisation" of the Luxembourg school system, implemented by the Civil Administration from the end of September 1940 and concluded by February 1941 (Dostert 1985: 142), brought about a far-reaching organisational and ideological upheaval within the teacher training school in Walferdange, which until then had been strongly marked by the presence of the nuns. The removal of the principal, Sister Emilienne Toussaint, and of the other nuns from the school's staff triggered unease amongst many of the girls studying there, who for the most part came from a rural background heavily influenced by traditional Catholicism.

In that connection, there can be no doubt that the integration of teachers from the "old Reich", and the introduction of students from Germany, into what had been transformed into a "*reichsdeutsche*" teacher training school reinforced the feelings of indignation and aversion to the radical policy of Germanisation amongst the Luxembourg students. Thus, despite the threat of punitive measures, open displays of anti-German resentment were seen, as in the case of Félicie Gloden. On 8 January 1941 she made the following statement, on oath, concerning her behaviour in relation to three members of the *NS-Frauenwerk* [National Socialist Women's Association] in Walferdange:

"At around 4.30 yesterday, Tuesday, 7 January 1941, during the break, I was standing before the open window in the first-year class when I saw three ladies, whom I took to be members of the German *Frauenschaft* [Women's League], walking along the path [...]. I said to my classmate, Eugénie Kuffer, who was just walking towards the waste-paper basket located next to the window: '*Do kommen de preisesch*

Lo'dern ['Here come the German bitches']. I swear on oath, however, that contrary to the accusation levelled against me, the word wh... did not fall from my lips." (ANLux, CdZ-A-5291, 0209)

One week later, Gloden was taken into custody by the "Stapo" for ten days, "on account of anti-German utterances" (ANLux, CdZ-A-5291, 0217, 0218). For the next five months, she was banned from school lessons, since she continued to attempt to evade membership of the VdB or the LVJ [*Luxemburger Volksjugend*], a far-right extremist Luxembourg youth movement (ANLux, CdZ-A-5291, 0221-0222). Camille Kieffer, in his study cited above, states that it was not until 9 July 1941 that Gloden was re-admitted to the LBA in Walferdange (Kieffer 1996).

The author further refers to other politically motivated incidents, in relation to which he states as follows: "After a period of relative calm – during which, however, the schoolgirls Margarete Demuth and Margarete Birsens very nearly fell into the clutches of the Gestapo but were apparently spared that fate thanks to the intervention of Siekmeier [*Regierungspräsident* and representative of the Chief of Civil Administration] – the trainee teachers were the first to revolt as early as the beginning of 1942" (Kieffer 1996).

In our opinion, this so-called "revolt" represents a somewhat complex incident which can be explained, primarily, by the transgressions committed by W., the principal of the school in Walferdange from the end of September 1940 until the spring of 1942, and the reactions thereto on the part of the teachers and students. In our study, we refer in particular to the "inadmissible conduct" (Kieffer 1996) of the ex-schools inspector formerly employed in the Luxembourg education system, in relation to a couple of trainee teachers whom he summoned to appear before him "in his office" outside school hours, indeed at a late hour in the evening.

In his note dated 12 March 1942, the permanent representative of the Chief of Civil Administration, Siekmeier, highlights the following incriminating statements made against W. in the "M. case": "Asked why [M.] had tolerated the principal's action, she stated that the principal [W.] had held her under duress and, indeed, that she had been found to have on her person a notebook containing a poem about the former Grand Duchess expressing a hostile attitude towards the Germans. [W.] stated to her from the outset that the poem in question could be very dangerous for her; and on the pretext of wishing to discuss the matter with her, he repeatedly – certainly 5-6 times and maybe more – summoned her to come and see him [...]" (AN-Lux, CdZ-A-5169, 0025-0026).

W. subsequently applied to be transferred to a teacher training institution in the *Altreich*. i.e. the "old Reich". He was replaced by the above-mentioned German principal, Brocher. Thus, prior to the latter taking up his duties, there had already been a series of politically motivated incidents characterised primarily by manifestations of anti-German sentiment.

When, on 2 September 1942, Brocher found himself faced with the refusal by 43 Luxembourg students in the LBA in Walferdange to give the German salute, he decided, as its National Socialist principal, that those refusing to make the salute must be immediately punished.

Brocher was aware that the strike by the "Walefer Médech" did not represent a single, isolated and spontaneous protest action by the trainee teachers against the National Socialist occupation policy. On the contrary, the strike represented the de facto climax of a series of manifestations of anti-German feeling which had taken place at the teaching institution since the winter of 1940/41. That series of political manifestations came about solely thanks to the courage and will of young women!

Marienthal education camp

A few days after the Luxembourg students had been sent to the education camps in the "old Reich", *Hauptbannführer* Felden informed their parents on 7 September 1942 "about the well-being of the boys and girls". In his written communication, he sought to convince the anxious parents of the LBA students that they were enjoying the benefit of a pedagogically justifiable educational culture in the camp: "The girls will be kept busy, throughout the duration of their stay in the education camps, with handicrafts. The task of the camps is to produce children's toys which can be purchased by parents as Christmas presents at the Hitler Youth Christmas markets in Luxembourg, Esch, Diekirch and Grevenmacher" (AN-Lux, CdG-028, 0067; MnR 2017: 65-28).

The parents, who at this point in time neither knew where their daughters were nor had permission to correspond with them or visit them, could scarcely have found Felden's rose-tinted communications very convincing. In the course of the following fortnight, the *Hauptbannführer* informed the parents, first, of the precise location of the education camps, and then, of the lifting of the prohibition banning letters and visits. In so doing, he continued his efforts to convince the parents that the general atmosphere prevailing in the "girls' camps" was good. Naturally, the information given by Felden bore little resemblance to the reality of the day-to-day existence experienced by the Walferdange trainee teachers in the Marienthal education camp.

Thus, while Jeanne Schneider well remembers the handicraft work, she underlines in her account – by contrast with the gloss provided by the Hitler Youth *Hauptbannführer* – the fact that the girls were given exhausting physical work to do: "In addition to the pursuits cited, we were compelled to carry out strenuous work. Using a hoe, we had to clear the tall weeds from the immediate surroundings of the school of agriculture and from the nearby cemetery in Dernau." But above all, the National Socialist re-education that the Civil Administration strove to impose during the three-month stay in the education camp was met with an attitude of refusal to cooperate on the part of the Walferdange trainee teachers, as Schneider recounts:

"We were subjected to a process of 'education', in the ethnic German sense of the term, though naturally this was wholly unsuccessful. A criticism that I made about this in a letter to my mother prompted an ice-cold reaction on the part of the camp leader. At the end of the meal, the storm broke over me: "You know, don't you, concentration camp is only waiting for you." As in the case of her schoolmates, Schneider's punitive sojourn in the "old Reich" was not limited to her time in the Marienthal education camp: "In November, the older age groups in our class were drafted into the *Arbeitsdienst* [labour service]. The few remaining were required to relocate to the youth hostel in Altenahr" (Schneider 1993: 102).

After three months the "Walefer Médecher" and all the other Luxembourg students were "formally released" from the education camps. This propaganda-driven event, staged and orchestrated by the Civil Administration, took place upon their return on 12 December 1942 in Esch-sur-Alzette. On the occasion of the ceremony, the parents recovered their "legal guardianship over us and their right to bring us up". So saying, Josette Manternach concludes her account with wording that reflects the patriotic Zeitgeist of the immediate post-war period: "We had the great satisfaction of knowing that we had stood alongside the martyrs of the strike, even if only on a modest scale" (Manternach 1946: 26).

The "Walefer Médecher" and the new era

By contrast, Jeanne Schneider concludes her account with the following bitter words: "Our country, for which we had endured so much, had no need for us" (Schneider 1993: 103). She bases this conclusion on her experiences following her return from the Marienthal education camp. After being re-admitted to the Feldgen LBA in February 1943, she completed her teacher training studies, gaining a diploma which was not recognised as such by the Luxembourg State following the liberation of Luxembourg in September 1944.

"Our year", Schneider notes, "– our year of all things – was required, by decision of the newly constituted Luxembourg Education Ministry, to undergo another year of education." After passing the final examinations, Schneider suffered a further disappointment in relation to the advertising of vacant female teaching posts: "Our application form was marked, in the Ministry, with a large 0 (zero), even though we had passed the Luxembourg final exam in 1945" (Schneider 1993: 103).

Following the end of the war, Jeanne Schneider and her fellow students who had taken part in the Walferdange school strike felt that they had been unjustly treated by the Luxembourg State, notwithstanding the official award in 1947 of a "*mention honorifique*" [honourable mention] "on account of their patriotic attitude during the enemy occupation" (Amtliche Mitteilungen 1947: 8).

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