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## SELECTED PROBLEMS OF CHILD CARE AND UPBRINGING PRESENTED DURING THE 1<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL CHILDREN’S CONGRESS IN 1938

**S u m m a r y:** The article describes selected problems of child care and upbringing presented during the 1<sup>st</sup> National Children’s Congress, which took place in Warsaw on 2–4 October 1938. The congress was an important event for all circles of the Second Polish Republic who wanted to improve the situation of Polish children. The economic crisis, Poland regaining independence after many years of captivity, the syndrome of the young Polish state and the maturing democracy brought many neglects and deficiencies in the care and upbringing of children and young people. The congress became an opportunity not only to highlight them but also to take countermeasures.

**K e y w o r d s:** child, care, upbringing, congress

### Introduction

This article aims to present selected problems of child care and upbringing discussed during the 1<sup>st</sup> National Children’s Congress in Warsaw in 1938. The interwar period in Poland was characterized by intense changes in both social life and actions taken to improve the economic situation of a society that was still strongly stratified and affected by the global economic crisis of the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> This problem largely concerned

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<sup>2</sup> “During the crisis that lasted from 1930 to 1935, the outflow of foreign capital from Poland began. It was caused primarily by financial difficulties experienced by all capitalist countries [...]. If we compare data for the years 1924–1937, [...] it turns out that the outflow of capital exceeded its inflow. The average

the situation of children.<sup>3</sup> Hence, various types of actions were taken at that time by both institutions of the Polish state and various types of non-governmental organizations to improve this situation.<sup>4</sup> Among the important moments uniting these activities in the area of intellectual reflection was the 1<sup>st</sup> National Children's Congress, which took place in Warsaw on 2–4 October 1938.<sup>5</sup> The congress was held on the initiative of the Association of Participants in the Fight for Polish Schools.<sup>6</sup> Its primary goal was, on the one hand, to assess the current situation of children and, on the other, set new, appropriate directions for social, legal and organizational activities to address the needs identified. This analysis concerns the issues of care and upbringing. It covers both their historical aspect – the history of education and upbringing, as well as their systematic aspect (methods, forms and means) of care and upbringing. Here, care and educational (social<sup>7</sup>) pedagogy are understood as pedagogical subdisciplines.<sup>8</sup> The basic research method is the

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annual burden on the Polish economy due to foreign capital activities was at least half a billion Polish zlotys. We realize the importance of this number when we state that from 1934 to 1939 the annual state budget amounted to PLN 2 to 2.5 billion on average. [...] It is obvious that the outflow of capital weakened the Polish economy, as it deepened the shortage of funds for investments. This was one of the main factors inhibiting the development of the industry." Zbigniew Landau, Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Trudna niepodległość. Rozważania o gospodarce Polski 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1978), 138–139.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Dziecko w historii. Sytuacja dziecka w odrodzonym państwie polskim, eds. Elwira J. Kryńska, Agnieszka Suplicka, Łukasz Kalisz (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Łucja Kabzińska, Krzysztof Kabziński, "Wybrane aspekty zagrożonego dzieciństwa w dwudziestolecie międzywojennym". *Warmińsko-Mazurski Kwartalnik Naukowy* 4 (2012): 11–43; also: Agnieszka Suplicka, "Inicjatywy Rodziny Kolejowej w zakresie opieki nad dziećmi w wieku przedszkolnym w II Rzeczypospolitej". *Przegląd Pedagogiczny* 1 (2021): 179–192; also: Marian Balcerk, *Rozwój opieki nad dzieckiem w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Warszawa: PWN, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Wiesław Jamrozek, "Ogólnopolski Kongres Dziecka z 1938 roku – niedoceniane wydarzenie pedagogiczne Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej". *Przegląd Pedagogiczny* 1 (2012): 63–71; Maria J. Żmichrowska, *Pierwszy Ogólnopolski Kongres Dziecka: 2–4 X. 1938* (Częstochowa: Częstochowskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> The Association of Participants in the Fight for Polish Schools was established by the decision of the Government Commissioner of the Capital City of Warsaw of 8 March 1933, No. BS II-3/18II, issued on the basis of Article 21 of the Law on Associations of 27 October 1932 (*Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* No. 94, item 808), was entered into the register of associations and unions of the Government Commissariat of the City of Warsaw at No. 22. Association (union) under the name 'Association of Participants in the Struggle for Polish Schools'. Among its aims was to: maintain ideological communication between the participants in the fight for Polish schools; promoting the demands of Polish schools based on national tradition; acting in defence of Polish youth against denationalization in endangered areas and cooperating with organizations with related goals. Cf. Marian Głowacki, "Walka o szkołę polską w latach 1906–1914 w Częstochowie i późniejsza aktywność jej uczestników". *Ziemia Częstochowska* XLII (2016): 17–18.

<sup>7</sup> Helena Radlińska wrote about the specific identity of social pedagogy as a subdiscipline of pedagogy at its beginnings: "Social pedagogy uses materials and methods of many sciences: theoretical, historical and applied, which deal with people, culture and social life from various positions. However, it already has its own points of view and specific applications of research methods." Helena Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego. Szkice z pedagogiki społecznej* (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1935), 10–11.

<sup>8</sup> As Balcerk notes: "Helena Radlińska, the creator of the Polish school of care pedagogy, played a unique role among social pedagogues. In the interwar years, educators gathered around her. They were particularly interested in child care issues and fought for children's rights to education and upbringing. Attempts to undertake research in the field of care pedagogy were made in the interwar years at the Free

analysis of source documents (preparatory documents for the congress, speakers' speeches and post-congress demands) as well as studies concerning both the congress itself and the state of child care and upbringing in the interwar period.<sup>9</sup> It should be emphasized that even in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as knowledge about a human being developed, there was a turn in pedagogical sciences towards an in-depth analysis of the situation of children. As Albin Kelm writes, referring to the period of creation and development of care pedagogy in Poland, reflections on the experience in the field of child care occurred in the following areas: shaping the motivation for caring activities; creating forms of child care according to care environments; creating and modifying the operation of institutions and organizations undertaking care tasks; analysing child development conditions and identifying care needs; specifying the professions of educator and caregiver; as well as educating and developing staff employed in child care. Kelm also specifies the concept of 'child care' and its components, which have been developing since the creation of care pedagogy as a subdiscipline of pedagogy. He defines the very essence of the concept (a threat situation, a child's own state of strength), the object of influence (a person aged 0–18 years old), the entity influencing the care process (individuals, family, state institutions, local government, social organizations) and the content (measures and activities).<sup>10</sup> These components were reflected in the speeches and discussions made during the congress.

## Assessment of the state of child care and upbringing in the introductory speeches of the congress

As it was realized that the area that needed to be considered was extremely extensive and complex, a special Organizing Committee was established that included representatives of both the government and numerous non-governmental organizations

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Polish University, and were also carried out by the Institute of Social Economy and the Institute of Social Affairs, and in the field of care for disabled children – by the State Institute of Special Pedagogy. Research work was undertaken by a relatively large group of practitioners gathered in the Polish Children's Aid Committee and operating in the Polish Teachers' Union, primarily in the Child Care and Special Education sections. The most significant achievement in this field was the collective work prepared under the supervision of H. Radlińska entitled *Spoleczne przyczyny powodzeń i niepowodzeń szkolnych* [Social Causes of School Success and Failure] (1937); Balcerek, *Rozwój*, 8–9.

<sup>9</sup> Krystyna Ablewicz writes about the specificity of historical research in pedagogy, rightly concluding: "For a pedagogue, historical research is not purely descriptive, reconstructive and factual. The pedagogical perspective encourages a researcher to look for messages, conditions for the transformation of thought and practice, and to reveal, above all, anthropological threads, concepts of man, and interpersonal relations that characterized the processes of upbringing and education." Krystyna Ablewicz, "Recenzja. Stanisław Palka, *Metodologia. Badania. Praktyka pedagogiczna*". *Horyzonty Wychowania* 6 (12) (2007): 204.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Albin Kelm, "Pedagogika opiekuńcza". In: *Pedagogika opiekuńcza. Przeszość-Teraźniejszość-Przyszłość*, eds. Elżbieta Jundziłł, Róża Pawłowska (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Harmonia, 2008), 19–25.

dealing with children's issues. The organizers' idea was for these meetings to be permanent and cyclical, not just occasional and accidental. The congress was opened by Stefan Hubicki, the president of the Executive Committee of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Congress of Children and former Minister of Social Welfare.<sup>11</sup> In his speech, he emphasized the importance of the meeting and its subject, which was the situation of children who, after the partitions of Poland, came under special care of the state only in the Second Polish Republic. Hubicki pointed out that it was necessary to support both families and institutions supporting families so that the needs of children were fully met from both their individual perspectives and that of the development of the state and society. In the individual dimension, it was primarily about the proper spiritual and physical development of children, and from the social perspective, it was about preparing children to live a responsible social life and find their place in it. Above all – as the speaker emphasized – the atmosphere of raising children was extremely important. It was vital to give them a sense of security and belonging. Hubicki also appealed to the congress to inspire as many institutions and organizations as possible to make efforts to improve the situation of children in Poland.<sup>12</sup>

Marian Zyndram-Kościałkowski, Minister of Social Welfare and a representative of the then government,<sup>13</sup> was the next speaker of the congress. He cited the actions taken by the government to improve the fate of children. He supported them with appropriate figures.<sup>14</sup> He also pointed to a significant increase in the number of various types of educational and care institutions, such as schools, kindergartens, counselling centres, community centres and so on, which were financed by the state.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, as he noted, there was a high awareness of the need for actions to improve the situation of children in Poland, particularly those concerning

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jacek Piotrowski, *Generał Stefan Hubicki. Żołnierz, polityk, lekarz* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo GAJT, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski Kongres Dziecka". *Życie Młodych* 11 (1938): 355.

<sup>13</sup> Jacek Goclon, "Rząd Mariana Zyndrama-Kościałkowskiego 13 X 1935 – 15 V 1936. Pierwszy gabinet powołany w dobie obowiązywania Konstytucji kwietniowej". *Krakowskie Studia z Historii Państwa i Prawa* 9 (4) (2016): 547–566.

<sup>14</sup> "Overall, 580,000 children participate in the summer campaign, summer camps and summer play centres, including 76,000 in rural kindergartens, and 800,000 children receive winter meals. This action is coordinated by the Social Committees for the care of children and youth, established by the Minister of Social Welfare. Assistance in obtaining school textbooks, assistance for families and care for orphans are widely provided. The state keeps 42,000 children in care facilities and 10,000 in foster families. There are more and more children's gardens and playgrounds, various types of clinics, kindergartens and schools". "Ogólnopolski" 11, 356.

<sup>15</sup> "The last three years of the Second Polish Republic brought some improvement in the education situation thanks to a better economic situation in the country and a slower growth rate in the number of school-age children. The increased amounts allocated to education in the state budget allowed for the financing of additional teaching positions [...]. School construction also made significant progress, thanks to an increase in the share of local government funds and the efforts of the Society for the Support of the Construction of Public Schools, which at the end of the 1930s contributed annually to the construction of schools in amounts that similar to the state funds allocated for this purpose". Stanisław Mauersberg, "Oświata". In: *Polska odrodzona 1918–1939*, ed. Jan Tomicki (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1982), 582.

poverty and child malnutrition.<sup>16</sup> He also emphasized the value of the multiplicity and diversity of entities that were involved in the preparation and organization of the congress, which proved that there was a common will to work to improve the situation of children.

## A child towards a family and adults

These two introductory speeches were followed by the plenary session of the congress, during which three speeches were given. The first of them, entitled "A Child and an Adult," was delivered by Stanisław Dobrowolski, the vice-president of the Congress Executive Committee.<sup>17</sup> In his speech, he pointed to the special position and sensitivity of children. On the one hand, children are dependent on the world of adults and, on the other, each of them is distinct and individual as each child's world. Although dependent on the world of adults, children want to pursue their own life paths. They have rights specific to their developmental age, which should be considered and not omitted in the relations between the worlds of adults and children. The community of children and adolescents is an important social group that is quickly replacing the generation of adults in society. It is therefore important to properly prepare the youngest generation to take on future social responsibilities.<sup>18</sup>

The next speech during the plenary session was entitled "A Child in the Family." It was delivered by two speakers: Wanda Szuman<sup>19</sup> and Czesław Babicki.<sup>20</sup> Szuman compared the effects of raising children in natural family conditions and in institutional care conditions. She pointed out the consequences of a child's deficiencies and developmental delays resulting from institutional upbringing compared to a child growing up in a natural family. This disproportion, according to the speaker, concerns physical, mental and social development. To sum up, she stated that even the best care and educational institution would not replace a family, even one that functions imperfectly. In turn, Babicki focused on the educational role of a family. He called on educational institutions and various types of counselling centres to support families in raising children. A family should be protected as a source of moral education for the nation and society.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> According to statistics, in 1937, the Action for Aid to Children and Youth, following an order of the Minister of Social Welfare of 27 August 1935, carried out a feeding campaign for children and youth in Poland covering 652,776 people. *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny* (Warszawa: GUS, 1938), 280.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Stanisław Dobrowolski, "Przygotowania do Kongresu Dziecka". *Opiekun Społeczny* 5 (1937): 1–4.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski" 11, 356.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Agnieszka Wałęga, "Wanda Szuman (1890–1994) – Zarys życia i działalności pedagogicznej". *Biuletyn Historii Wychowania* 17/18 (2003): 22–32.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Danuta Marzec, "Poglądy Józefa Czesława Babickiego na wychowanie". *Prace Naukowe. Pedagogika* 5 (1994): 171–177.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski" 11, 356.

## A child and the diverse contexts of their life

The plenary part of the congress was followed by speeches introducing the sessions of individual committees. The the first speech, entitled “A Child in Polish Family Legislation,” was delivered by Stanisław Gołąb. He pointed out the need to separate and specify family legislation from the general (universal) code. The law should not replace a family, but support it and interfere where neglect in family life has negative consequences for a child and society. The speaker pointed out the need to enforce alimony and equalize the rights of illegitimate and legitimate children, as well as enabling paternity tests and designating family property as matrimonial property.<sup>22</sup>

In turn, in her speech entitled “A Child’s Right to Play and Have Holidays,” Anna Walicka-Chmielewska pointed out the value of organizing various forms of recreation for children and young people in the educational process. She stressed the importance of all forms of recreation, such as children’s holidays, summer camps and summer play centres.<sup>23</sup> This results from the natural laws of child development: children need movement, contact with nature and peers, as well as various forms of both free and organized play. Therefore, qualified teachers, educators and financial resources are needed to organize such forms of recreation for children. The speaker pointed out the need to differentiate the organization of recreation for rural and urban children. In the next speech, entitled “A Child’s Right to School,” Helena Radlińska emphasized that universal compulsory schooling for children and young people was included in the legislation, which was important, particularly in the rural environment.<sup>24</sup> Thanks to this universality, in Radlińska’s opinion, society can have a real influence on the upbringing and education of children. At that time, however, the law was not reflected in practice. Many children and young people were still illiterate and lived outside the school system on a daily basis, or used it only occasionally or seasonally.<sup>25</sup> This situation was primarily influenced by

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 356–357.

<sup>23</sup> According to statistics, in 1932 the number of children and adolescents participating in summer camps and summer play centres in Poland was 138,000. In the following years, this number gradually increased. In 1935, there were as many as 237,300, in 1936 – 323,500, and in 1937 – 417,300 children and adolescents were included in such recreation. *Mały Rocznik*, 281.

<sup>24</sup> “Despite the long-term shortage of teachers and the housing problems of primary schools, one-third of which were located in rented rooms in rural areas, mostly unsuitable for school purposes, a beneficial evolution of the organizational structure of primary education took place in the interwar years. If in the 1922/1923 school year only 30% of rural students were educated in more organized schools (with three or more teachers), and as many as 70% were educated in schools with one or two teachers, then in the 1929/1930 school year more organized schools already covered 49% of students from rural schools. In later years, this process was slowed down owing to the economic crisis, but then the situation improved and in the last pre-war 1938/1939 school year, 45 students were educated in first-cycle rural schools (with one or two teachers), while 55% of students from rural areas attended second- and third-cycle schools, which expanded the possibilities of further education for peasant youth.” Mauersberg, “Oświata”, 583.

<sup>25</sup> According to statistical data, in Poland in 1921, 33.1% of the total population over the age of 10 could not read or write, and in 1931 this percentage in a comparable group was only 23.1%. *Mały Rocznik*, 28.



parents' low awareness of the need to continue their children's education, the lack of family financial resources<sup>26</sup> and the insufficient number of teachers employed in the school system.<sup>27</sup>

In the next paper, "Child Health," Emil Godlewski described the situation of sick children and their place in both the social welfare system and the education system. The speaker pointed out that no child should be excluded from access to treatment and education owing to their health condition.<sup>28</sup> This applied particularly to children treated for chronic diseases for many years, such as tuberculosis and trachoma.<sup>29</sup> The problem was to find financial resources to place such children in hospitals and sanatoriums, where they would not only be subjected to treatment but would also be included in the education system. In the final speech, entitled "A Child as the World's Concern," Wanda Wójtowicz-Grabińska showed the situation of children from the perspective of global socio-economic changes. The industrialization process, the migration of people from rural areas to large urban agglomerations, the economic uncertainty of the labour market and consequent frequent social unrest put children in a very unfavourable situation at that time. Children who were not yet able to take care of their socio-economic situation were especially susceptible to various types of social shocks (e.g. the great economic crisis of the 1930s), in which they participated willingly or unwillingly without being at fault. Therefore, it was necessary to provide children with opportunities for safe development. Their health and dignity should be provided with special care and protection. In this context, it was particularly important to prepare both educators and social workers to implement this social mission in both institutional and non-institutional forms.<sup>30</sup>

The content of individual speeches was later referred to by the committees, which discussed the topics of the introductory speeches in the plenary sessions. Speakers such as Aleksander Kamiński, Maria Dzierzbicka and Bronisława Bobrowska took

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski" 11, 357.

<sup>27</sup> This situation was not improved even by the fact that, according to statistics, the number of teachers increased every year throughout the country. Thus, in the 1928/29 school year, the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment budgeted financial resources for 73,407 full-time positions, in the 1937/38 school year, there were 83,998 full-time positions, and in the 1938/39 school year – 89,122. *Mały Rocznik*, 306.

<sup>28</sup> As statistics show, from 1931 to 1936, the number of child care units in health centres was constantly increasing. Thus, in 1931 there were 135 such units. In 1932, there were already 146 of them, in 1935 – 227 and in 1936 – 292. As of 31 March 1936, there were 6,491 foster families in Poland, where the state commissioned the care of minor children and youth, numbering 81,173 people. *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> A similar increase in the number of tuberculosis and trachoma treatment units was recorded in Poland in those years, from 1931 to 1935. In 1931, there were 193 anti-tuberculosis wards in Poland, and in 1936 there were already 366 of them. A similar increase was visible in the number of anti-trachoma wards opened. In 1931, there were 186 of them and in 1936 there were already 362. As of 31 March 1936, there were 6,491 foster families in Poland, where the state commissioned the care of minor children and youth, numbering 81,173 people. *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski" 11, 358.

part in the discussion on the issue of the relationship between a child and an adult. It covered a wide variety of topics, including the specificity of caring for rural children and the role of magazines in the upbringing of children and young people. The debate focused on the issue of a child functioning in a family. The debates focused on the role and function of a family in upbringing. The deficits and shortcomings of family education were pointed out, as well as the need for the state to support families. The issue of the overload of mothers taking up paid work was raised. Several dozen speakers took part in this committee. The next committee, which debated "A Child's Right to School," gathered several hundred participants. During the committee's deliberations, the following speeches were delivered: "Forms of Compulsory School Attendance and Their Coordination" by Bronisław Chruścicki, "title needed" by Maria Grzywak-Kaczyńska, "School in the Life of a Rural Child" by Zofia Koterowa and "Possibilities of Using the Child's Age between 14 and 15 Years" by Stanisław Godecki. During the discussion, many problems were raised, mainly related to the implementation of compulsory schooling for children and young people. There were proposals to extend the duration of primary school education to eight years. In addition to continuing general education, this additional year would be devoted to preparing young people to enter the labour market: practical training, courses and workshops so that they obtain at least the basic, necessary tools and skills for employment or self-employment. It was pointed out that children and adolescents should be provided with psychological care and career counselling during their education at schools. Moreover, attention was drawn to the lack of universal access to special education. Only children from large cities were provided with this form of educational support, while children from rural areas and small urban centres were deprived of it.<sup>31</sup>

The committee dealing with child health also gathered a large group of specialist speakers, including doctors Władysław Szenajch, Jan Lubczyński and Szymon Starkiewicz, educator Czesław Wroczyński and psychologist Kazimierz Dąbrowski. They presented various aspects of and perspectives on child health in their speeches. Szenajch referred to the issue of hospital care for children, Starkiewicz discussed the problem of child care in sanatorium treatment, Wroczyński reported on research on physical defects in school children, Dąbrowski touched upon the issue of mental hygiene in raising children and adolescents and Lubczyński discussed the problem of caring for mothers and so-called illegitimate children. Speakers pointed out the need for wide availability and dissemination of medical treatment to people from the lowest social classes, particularly poor children and adolescents.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski Kongres Dziecka". *Życie Młodych* 12 (1938): 392.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 393.



## Conclusions and demands arising from the congress

At the end of the congress, each committee presented the most important conclusions and demands resulting from the discussions.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the committee dealing with the topic "A Child and an Adult" put forward the demand that a child's interests be considered in every area of life and the family situation be improved, particularly in terms of economic and housing aspects. They proposed to open libraries and reading rooms to promote reading in both cities and the countryside.<sup>34</sup> They also suggested opening and popularizing access to vocational and agricultural schools. The priority was to protect children and young people from demoralization, also in the press and publications. It was proposed to limit access to such publications for children and adolescents. In turn, the committee dealing with the topic "A Child in the Family" considered supporting the family, the best and safest educational environment for a child, a priority for both the state and non-governmental institutions. The value of religious upbringing in a family and the system of values that such upbringing brings were emphasized. A family was identified as a kind of national asset. The state should support the family also in institutional and educational dimensions. It was proposed to establish a work fund that would provide subsistence support for families. Children without families should be taken care of by foster families<sup>35</sup> and educational institutions<sup>36</sup> that would ensure appropriate conditions for their development.<sup>37</sup>

The committee devoted to the topic "The Child in Polish Family Law" advocated a deep reform of Polish family law. Among the demands they formulated were: repealing the ban on searching for paternity, enabling the adoption of minor children to foster families, depriving, in special cases, parents of parental authority,

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<sup>33</sup> The Polish Teachers' Union presented their own demands, including "1) The Congress demands that the state and public unions establish kindergartens and develop the principles of their organization in Poland in legal, pedagogical and didactic terms; 2) Taking into account that several hundred thousand children did not find a place in schools, the Congress demands, in order to protect Poland from the flood of illiteracy, to provide all children with compulsory education from the age of 7 to 15 inclusive, and additional education for young people up to the age of 18 ... ; 14) The Congress considers it necessary for local governments to provide schools with playgrounds and to include gymnasiums and showers in the construction of schools." "Wnioski Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego zgłoszone na Kongres Dziecka" *Głos Nauczycielski* 7 (1938): 112.

<sup>34</sup> According to statistical data, in 1931, there were 23,604 public libraries, including school libraries. There were also so-called educational libraries: mobile and permanent. Thus, in the 1935/36 school year there were 122 central and 2,841 local libraries (central branches), and in the 1936/37 school year there were 135 central and 4,197 local ones. Their number therefore increased significantly. Similarly, in the 1935/36 school year there were 442 permanent libraries and in 1936/37 there were 669. *Mały Rocznik*, 332.

<sup>35</sup> According to statistics, as of 31 March 1936, there were 6,491 foster families in Poland, where 81,173 people were entrusted with the care of minor children and youth by the state. *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>36</sup> Similarly, as of 31 March 1936, there were 41,975 pupils in Poland staying in 881 comprehensive care facilities for children and youth run by various entities. *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski" 12, 394.

enforcing alimony claims, developing comprehensive legal provisions regarding a child's situation in a family and, consequently, separating a set of provisions regarding the child and the family from general provisions. The "Child Health" committee requested statutory provision of medical care to children up to 15 years of age and, consequently, an increased number of healthcare facilities in both rural areas and cities. They also advocated increasing the network of hospitals and clinics, including mental health clinics and educational institutions for disabled children and adolescents, particularly outside large urban centres. It was postulated to improve the quality of children's nutrition. Educational activities were proposed in this regard. Consequently, as the speakers noted, it was necessary to secure appropriate financial resources for these purposes in the state budget, or possibly establish a special tax from which the funds would be allocated to health care. Another committee that dealt with the subject of "A Child's Right to School" postulated that enough new schools be constructed to ensure proper implementation of the idea of universal education and, consequently, compulsory schooling to increase the availability of educational institutions, particularly in rural environments.<sup>38</sup> It was also necessary to adapt institutions and educational centres for disabled children and adolescents to the type and degree of dysfunction or disorder.<sup>39</sup>

The committee discussing the topic "A Child's Right to Play and Have Holidays" suggested preparing an appropriate number of children's holiday centres to ensure that children rest in appropriate educational and sanitary conditions. Moreover, they indicated that these institutions should be equipped with appropriate tools and means through which the educational process could be implemented. Educators, psychologists and doctors should be specially trained to work in such facilities and children should be allowed to travel free on trains and buses to summer camps. Further, the need to establish Jordan gardens, community centres and children's clubs in places of children's permanent residence was raised, so that the process of developing their skills could be continued throughout the year and they could be provided with the opportunity to carry out tasks related to their free time. The importance of creating libraries and reading rooms adapted to the needs of children's psyche was also emphasized.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This appears dramatically in statistical data, which show that in the 1936/37 school year in Poland, there were almost 62 students per teacher and 66 students per classroom. *Mały Rocznik*, 317.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. "Ogólnopolski" 12, 395.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 396.

## Conclusions

The 1<sup>st</sup> National Children's Congress was attended by all social, governmental and non-governmental circles that saw the need to take urgent action to improve the children's situation. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II did not allow the plans and intentions undertaken during the congress to be fully implemented. However, it seems that the organizational effort of preparing and conducting the congress brought some results. Namely, in post-war Poland, a large group of its active participants – educators, doctors, psychologists and social activists – had the opportunity to implement these plans, yet certainly from a different historical and social perspective and in a different political and economic system. Therefore, the congress was not a fruitless endeavour as its ideas of child care, fighting illiteracy and ensuring proper child development were continued. To sum up, it should be said that the congress was an important event that increased the awareness and importance of raising children in Polish society for decades to come.

*Translated from Polish by Barbara Komorowska*

### Wybrane problemy opieki i wychowania dziecka zaprezentowane w trakcie I Ogólnopolskiego Kongresu Dziecka z 1938 roku

**S t r e s z c z e n i e:** Artykuł ukazuje wybrane problemy opieki i wychowania dziecka zaprezentowane w trakcie I Ogólnopolskiego Kongresu Dziecka, który odbył się w Warszawie w dniach 2–4 października 1938 roku. Kongres był doniosłym wydarzeniem dla wszystkich środowisk II Rzeczypospolitej, którym zależało na poprawie sytuacji polskiego dziecka. Kryzys ekonomiczny, sytuacja odzyskania przez Polskę wolności po wielu latach niewoli, syndrom młodego państwa polskiego i dojrzewającej dopiero demokracji niósł ze sobą w kwestii opieki i wychowania dzieci i młodzieży wiele zaniedbań i niedostatków. Kongres stał się okazją nie tylko do ich uwypuklenia, lecz także do podjęcia środków zaradczych.

**S ł o w a k l u c z o w e:** dziecko, opieka, wychowanie, kongres

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