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The Issue of Girls' Education in Warsaw Ideological Magazines for Women (1907–1918)¹

Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the issue of girls' education in Warsaw ideological magazines. The press titles selected for analysis were "Ster" (1907–1914), "Przebudzenie" (1909–1912), "Ziemiańska" I and II (1908–1918; 1910–1918), and "Pracownica Polska" – "Pracownica Katolicka" (1907–1918). The article attempts to answer the questions: What issues related to the education of girls were raised in individual women's periodicals? How were these topics described? What function did the press publications have?

The analysis was qualitative. In this text, historical-pedagogical and press research methods were used. The article indicates and discusses the main issues of girls' education published in selected women's periodicals until the end of the First World War. The women's publications represented various ideological positions. They are presented in order from most conservative to most progressive.

Keywords: pedagogy, girls' education, journalism, Kingdom of Poland.

Problematyka edukacji dziewcząt na łamach warszawskich czasopism ideowych dla kobiet (1907–1918)

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie problematyki edukacji dziewcząt w warszawskich czasopismach ideowych. W niniejszym tekście przeanalizowano: „Ster”

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Article Received: February 1, 2020; Accepted: March 20, 2020.

¹ The publication was financed under the programme of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the name "Paths to Independent Poland" in 2018-2023 project number 01SPN 17 0020 18 funding amount PLN 751 222.

(1907–1914), „Przebudzenie” (1909–1912), „Ziemiankę” I i II (1908–1918; 1910–1918), „Pracownicę Polską” – „Pracownicę Katolicką” (1907–1918).

Artykuł jest próbą odpowiedzi na pytania: Jakie zagadnienia związane z edukacją dziewcząt podnoszono w wybranych periodykach? Jak je opisywano? Jaką funkcję pełniły te wypowiedzi prasowe? Analiza ma charakter jakościowy, zastosowano metody badań historyczno-pedagogicznych i prasoznawczych. Wskazano i omówiono główne zagadnienia edukacji dziewcząt publikowane w warszawskiej prasie kobiecej do zakończenia Wielkiej Wojny. Omawiane periodyki reprezentowały różne opcje światopoglądowe. Zaprezentowano je w kolejności od konserwatywnych po najbardziej postępowe.

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika, edukacja dziewcząt, czasopiśmiennictwo, Królestwo Polskie.

Introduction

Magazines were an important means of providing information and shaping public opinion at the beginning of the 20th century. They are an interesting source that allows historians of education to recreate important issues and educational problems. The dynamic development of the press market after 1905 resulted in a rise in the number of titles and increased its segmentation (Kmieciak 1976: 44–56). Most popular were socio-cultural periodicals, among them women’s magazines. Jerzy Franke divided the women’s press appearing in Warsaw until 1918 into two groups: magazines and ideological writing (Franke 1988: 5; 1999; 2000). This text analyses those that, according to the author, were distinguished by journalistic and programmatic messages, such as: “Ster”, “Przebudzenie”, “Ziemianka” I and II, “Pracownica Polska” – “Pracownica Katolicka”.

The issue of girls’ education on the eve of the First World War aroused the interest of journalists and educators. Institutional education of girls in the Kingdom of Poland at the beginning of the 20th century was limited. Revolutionary actions brought significant changes, increasing the liberalization of education and the number of private institutions (Moszczeńska 1905; *Nasz walka...* 1932; Staszyński 1962). The education of girls was also transformed – salaries for females on various programmes and levels were organized, open and secret forms of teaching were undertaken. Young women had increased access to secondary and higher education (Miąso, Poznański, Kulpa 1984: 9–24; Winiarz 1992). Analysing press publications, attention was drawn to multidimensional activities and processes for the upbringing and education of girls. In addition to educational issues, the issues of adolescence, socialization, inculturation and collectivization were highlighted.

In historical and pedagogical research, the issue of girls’ education in women’s magazines has been discussed on the basis of numerous press titles (See Kalinowska-Witek 2011; Dobkowska 2016). Among the periodicals analysed in

scientific studies are "Ster" and "Ziemiańska" (Dormus 2000: 87–100; Domarańczyk 2016; May 2017). So far in educational historiography no analyses have been conducted on other magazines. In this article, they are discussed individually in order to present in detail the ideas of their programme and outline the ways in which each of them undertakes educational issues.

„Przebudzenie” - „Pracownica Katolicka” conservative writing for servants²

The main goal of periodicals was to shape the views of readers, less importance was attached to satisfying their interests (Maciejewski 1975: 100). The publications referred to the virtues and values of Christian ethics, consolidating conservative thinking about the role and tasks of girls. A significant role was played by messages describing women reconciled to their fate, naturally accepting family and professional responsibilities. In the periodical, despite numerous thematic sections, the issues of girls' education were rarely discussed. These issues were usually complementary to other topics or a secondary thread in literary texts (M. K. 1910a: 5; 1910b: 5–8; 1910c: 3; Kaczkowska 1911: 2).

The magazine was an organ of the Association of Servants. It included reports on the activities of women's organizations, at the same time indicating their work for the education of girls. An interesting example was the activity of the Association of Catholic Servants organizing religious-moral, educational and professional talks (*Bilans...* 1913: 38). However, no details were given regarding the frequency of meetings or topics raised. The activity of the Kielce Association of Catholic Servants of St. Zyta, among the tasks of which was the conduct of free courses for illiterate students, a cooking school and courses for ironers was described (*Stowarzyszenie...* 1910: 10–12). The notes pointed to women's educational institutions. Thus, for example, correspondence from "Zorza" was reprinted in which the activity of a school in Pszczelina was reported. There were reports after "Gazeta Świąteczna" about the opening of a classroom founded by the Catholic Union in Maciejowice. Future housewives could gain skills there in weaving, cutting, cooking and hygiene (L. K. D. 1909: 12). The main purpose of these short press reports was only to disseminate information on the functioning of the facilities.

Texts on the education and socialization of girls in "Pracownica Polska" focused on the roles of mother and wife. Educational publications were aimed at developing specific attitudes. Numerous articles were devoted to the tasks of future mothers. Young readers were persuaded: "Marriage is the foundation of a family in which children are to be raised, as the next parents, the future of the nation, the

² "Pracownica Polska" (Polish Worker) was a continuation of the magazine "Dobra Służąca" (Good Servant), published in Lublin in the years 1906–1907. From 1907 it appeared in Warsaw. From 1914 it changed its name to "Pracownica Katolicka" (Catholic Worker), (*Bibliografia historii...* 2000: 368).

support of a troubled homeland” (*Luźne uwagi...* 1915: 220; *Rady dla...* 1913: 172). Parental and marital responsibilities could be disturbed by the dangers that threatened readers. Particularly important were those which aroused social anxiety. This meant trafficking girls and prostitution (*Strzeżmy się...* 1913: 266; *O moralności...* 1913: 52). The moralizing tone of the articles warned against these and was aimed at raising girls’ morals, encouraging them to live in abstinence. Only one point of view was promoted, messages did not encourage young readers to reflect, they could even be said to limit their autonomous choices. The paternalistic tone of the press statements clearly outlined their life paths, trying to steer and influence their actions.

Although the importance of education was emphasized in the main slogan of the journal, it was not really given a significant place. It was declared: “Take care of education, because it leads to the improvement of your quality” and “Let’s get ready for education! Education, based on religion, is the basis of our better future” (*Pracownica Polska* 1913a: 50, 1913b: 317). The quoted slogans indicate that education was considered important, but, in fact, these issues were dealt with in the journal to a minimal extent. One of the few activities was the popularization of general knowledge. Most issues contain materials with advice and tips (See *Z higieny...* 1912: 13; *Dział Rady...* 1912: 10; *Pogadanka...* 1914: 56–58; *Z Nauki...* 1913: 61). They raised issues of experiments and scientific discoveries, practical advice, and principles of hygiene. Frequent reading was encouraged, and its benefits discussed. The value of reading skills and the need to develop them was emphasized. Harmful newspapers and books were warned of as the “worst enemies”. To influence the selection of appropriate literature, listings of publishers and guidelines for readers were printed.

“Ziemiarki” – conservative magazines devoted to education, prosperity and social development³

Two periodicals under this title appeared coherently representing the Catholic worldview with a pragmatic face (Franke 2000: 29). Articles on home education occupied a significant place in these titles. Attitudes of faith, sacrifice, humility towards fate and work were instilled in young Poles. The future of the girls was described: “(...) let her read a little and let her do all the farm work, that’s enough for her” (Roguska 1918: 135). More attention was paid to practical skills than to mental development. Raising girls sensitive to the needs of the environment and conducting actions to improve the economy of the village was considered a priority.

³ “Ziemiarka” was the organ of the United Landladies’ Association (ZKZ), edited by Maria Rodziewicz. The article uses the division into “Ziemiarka” I and “Ziemiarka” II. The first of these was the association’s internal bulletin, it came out irregularly and was published in 1908–1919. The other was a biweekly for rural women and was published in 1910–1921 (*Bibliografia historii...* 2000: 552).

In both the *'Ziemiarki'* the attitudes of young Polish women were shaped, attributing to them specific features and behaviours. One of the ideals created was that of "a good daughter" (Sędzina 1912: 242). Her duties included: "to help and assist her parents according to her own strength", as well as to look after them in sickness and be ready for sacrifices (Ibid. 1912: 242-243). Incomplete implementation of these tasks was considered a grave sin and a reprehensible example for subsequent generations. The measure of good manners was the courtesy and respect with which others were treated (Życzliwy 1912: 53-56; Ziemiańska 1918: 74). Referring to examples from England, Germany, the United States and Australia, the importance of raising girls was emphasized (*Po świecie...* 1911: 1; *Szkoły gospodarskie...* 1912: 10). This was compared to the situation in the Kingdom of Poland, highlighting shortcomings in this respect. Preparation for performing the roles of a "rational mother" and wife was considered particularly important, as well as making girls aware of the selection of a suitable husband and the need to protect motherhood (*Po świecie...* 1911: 1). It was regretted that young Polish women did not carry out these tasks responsibly.

The issue of institutional education was much more often described in "Ziemiańska" I. In the reporting part of the periodical, references were made to the meetings of the Pedagogical Department of the United Landladies' Association, which discussed the issue of the organization of schools, the state of education, and the basics of the curriculum and their modernization (*Posiedzenie...* 1912: 1-4; *Posiedzenie...* 1913: 1-7; *Zawadzki* 1914: 1-7; *Wisznicki* 1912: 1-4). References to papers by Florian Znaniński on educational ideals and Lucjan Zarzecki describing educational errors are interesting examples (*Sprawozdanie...* 1912: 21-24; *Znaniński* 1913: 1-7). It seems that these considerations were only suggestive, because in the rural environment a stereotypical understanding of the tasks and role of girls still prevailed, and the majority of articles were dominated by the image of the "woman - housewife". One pupil spoke about the situation of girls' schools. In the letter she wrote: "We have schools where daughters of the farm are educated as exemplary housewives" (*Potoczówna* 1911: 12). The activities of educated girls were seen as an opportunity to modernize the village. However, the lack of understanding and acceptance of older generations for "new" skills and knowledge was highlighted. Moreover, young landladies had to face the belief that "women do not need education" (*ibidem* : 12).

In "Ziemiańska", the educational prospects of young girls focused on practical professions - teaching and midwifery (*Co słyhać...* 1912: 187; *Szkoła...* 1911: 14). It was emphasized that people from the "enlightened classes" traditionally had practically no non-degrading choice other than governess-teacher. Readers were also offered: home economic courses (*Holder-Eggerowa* 1917: 155-157; *Sprawozdanie...* 1914: 57), traveling cookery courses (*MH* 1912: 357; *Kalinowska* 1917: 126-128) and education in the described educational institutions and associations (*Mirosławice...* 1914: 8; *Co słyhać. Nowa placówka...* 1917: 116-117;

Co słyhać. Ruch oświatowy 1917: 138; Kalinowska 1913: 353–356). Among numerous reports and notes from completed courses, which in the opinion of the journalists had always been very popular, subjects related to social, family and professional responsibilities of landladies were mentioned (Karczevska 1911a: 9–10).

The editors encouraged self-study by reading handbooks (*Co słyhać...* 1912: 61). They were of a practical nature, the issues discussed were: sewing, washing, ironing, weaving (Weychert 1912: 13), poultry farming (Karczevska 1911a: 9–10), dairy farming (Iwanicka, 1911: 9) and hygiene rules (MS 1911: 3–4). Lists of publications eagerly read by village residents were also published (Karczevska 1913: 321–325).

The economic situation of Congress Poland meant that the girls were forced to leave home in search of gainful employment. These trips were seen as a danger to young women and an important social problem. Particularly feared for were girls aged 16–18 who, being subjected to bad influences, were threatened with prostitution and unwanted pregnancy (*Ochrona naszych...* 1911: 2–4). Writing about depraved behaviour, the problem was identified and the risks associated with the trip were presented. In contrast, in texts on moral education, the desirable principles of intercourse in the immediate surroundings were emphasized (Podgórska 1914a: 186–187; Podgórska 1914b: 203–204). It can be concluded that the ways of presenting this subject were a manifestation of “moral panic”.

“Przebudzenie” – a pragmatic approach to social work and spreading education⁴

This is another periodical referring to Christian tradition and ethics. Its readers were gathered from conservative Catholic circles (Franke 1999). In Kazimiera Proczkówna’s biweekly, the topics of institutional education at secondary and higher levels, as well as home education, were discussed.

The magazine referred to the roles of women – mother and community member – assumed to be the moral foundation of society. The journal asked: “How to educate them [girls – M.K.] as rational and noble women, into brave social workers and mothers?” (Szpyrkówna 1909: 6–7). It was argued that not only teachers and parents had an educational impact on girls, but also the environment: books, pictures and the conversations of adults.

Education-related issues were often described. The articles and commentaries presented the possibilities of education at the secondary, vocational and academic levels. These messages were informative and opinion forming. Editors most often recalled development paths focused on gaining practical skills. There was

⁴ “*Przebudzenie*” came out in Warsaw in 1909–1913. Kazimiera Proczkówna was the editor and publisher. In 1913 it was renamed “*Głos Narodu*” (*Bibliografia historii...* 2000: 376).

information on, among others, the operation of the home economics institution of Cecylia Plater-Zyberkówna in Chyliczki and the school of child-minding in Węgrów (Kosmowska 1909: 4–5). They taught practical skills and claimed to prepare girls to be “good mothers of future families” (*Kronika...* 1909: 12). It was emphasized that the task of schools is to train women in education, good principles and as pioneers of “Christian civilization”, who know the basics of farming and social work (Kosmowska 1909: 4–5). Practical schools for girls were also supported, and those run by religious orders were considered particularly valuable (Pelczar 1909: 5–6). Representatives of the United Landladies' Association spoke on the education of girls, indicating that secondary schools were not practical enough and did not provide the necessary preparation for life, for performing the duties of a teacher, “citizen of the country”, and “tutor of their own children” (Kosmowska 1909: 4–5). It can be concluded that the ideal woman was considered to be one who, through her work, would “increase the well-being of the family and the country”, and would also implement charitable activities and get rid of petty selfishness (*ibidem*: 4–5).

Columnists taking up the subject of educating girls eagerly described their visions of the future life of young Polish women. These expressed the magazine's ideals and referred to tradition, family respect and religious values. It was right to return to family homes in the countryside to support parents and share acquired knowledge with others. They were persuaded to acquire practical skills, indicating the possibilities: “There are very useful activities for the female on the farm, namely breeding of birds, swine, dairy products”, as well as gardening (Romualda 1909: 5–6). It was proposed to expand the knowledge and interests of peasants through participation in cultural life, including participation in concerts, visiting museums, participation in lectures, theatrical performances, talks and meetings in reading rooms.

Articles and notes about girls' academic education were informative. And so, the First Congress of Polish Youth was described, at which, among other things, the issue of the accessibility of the university in Galicia to young Polish women was discussed. The activities of the Polish Women Students' Union in Lviv to increase the academic freedom of their countrywomen were emphasized (M. Ł. 1909b: 5–6). Readers were told: “The urge [to learn – M.K] should not be blocked, but you have to manage it” and people were encouraged to take higher courses (X. 1909: 8–9). In fact, they were encouraged to sign up for a course at the Warsaw facility of the Catholic Union of Polish Women (*Przypisek...* 1909: 2). Women studying in Germany were extensively described, emphasizing their hard work in the field of science, thanks to which they had gained a high position in society. On the other hand, no significant achievements of Polish women in this field were noticed, with reference to foreign examples only: “Is this phenomenon not worthy of envy?” (X. 1909: 8–9). It is significant that no mention was made of Polish female students at universities in Europe or Polish female scientists pursuing international scientific careers (Hulewicz 1939: 226–230; Kolbuszewska 2017: 49).

“Przebudzenie” often presented the dangers of travelling abroad. The fears concerned the girls’ social roles postulated in the publication. One of the landladies wrote:

These higher courses (...) turn young ladies’ heads. I know a few who have graduated from co-educational studies and have left the parental home and even declare that they were not educated in order to get married. And how they arranged their lives – it is hard to remember without regret and shame (Terpiłowska 1909: 1).

The academic excursions were described in a pessimistic tone: “(...) most individuals return from studies abroad derailed, embittered, broken and discouraged” (X. 1909: 8–9). Disappointment with studies was connected with poor knowledge of the language of instruction, too young age, and lack of scientific preparation and a clear plan and purpose. It was suggested that rules be introduced to regulate the trips of girls, one of which was the selection of particularly talented people over the age of 21. It was also pointed out that one should try different educational options and only later decide to go abroad (ibidem: 8–9). Describing academic trips in a negative way was an attempt to discourage girls from travelling, and also expressed the writers’ fear of losing women who would like to stay abroad and pursue a career there.

In addition to concerns about the trip, mention was also made of the increasing level of “moral decay” – the progressive degeneration of the young generation. It was suggested that special attention be paid to the education of female youths (L. G. 1910: 1–3). Mothers were expected to raise the awareness of their daughters about sexual issues. The moral, religious and behavioural degradation of girls caused by pornographic reading was emphasized (Szpyrkówna 1909: 10). Other social threats, such as trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of girls aged 12–15 years were also cited (M. Ł. 1909a: 4–5). The articles were an attempt to draw readers’ attention to the most important problems that the young generation of Polish women experienced at the beginning of the 20th century.

“Ster” – a progressive organ for the empowerment of women⁵

This magazine was addressed to women with higher education, who were employed, students, supporters of full emancipation (Franke, 1988: 28). It describes, like the previous titles, home, secondary and academic education. Issues of the education of girls from all social groups were raised.

⁵ “Ster” was published in Warsaw in the years 1907–1914, it was an organ of the Association for the Equality of Polish Women. The journal was edited in turn by Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit and Józefa Bojanowska, (*Bibliografia historii...* 2000: 454).

“Ster” wondered: “(...) how to remove the old, shallow and ridiculous routine of female education and replace it with a new one, in line with the needs of the time and the destiny of a woman in the family and society” (Neumark 1912: 2). The articles urged readers to reflect on their own educational and professional future. Girls were encouraged to think and ask themselves: “What role will I play best, not as a passive spectator, but as an active participant in a better future for my nation?” (Budzińska-Tylicka 1913: 70). They corresponded to the perception of the young generation at the beginning of the 20th century. They referred to young people as the future of the nation, who should be involved in social affairs (Kuczalska-Reinschmit 1913: 69–70; Pachucka 1911a: 346). In appeals addressed to readers, it was suggested to move away from shaping weaknesses in them (*Ochotniczka...* 1908: 15). It was considered important that women be aware of their own values, undertake social and professional work, develop their own views and broaden their horizons, as well as being aware as citizens. The development and educational possibilities for townswomen, landladies and peasants were emphasized. It was part of the positivist vision of a woman – active in social life (Szwarc 1997: 299–300). At the same time, it was pointed out that behaviours “breaking out” of socially accepted patterns required breaking down moral barriers and often experiencing social ostracism. In opposition to commonly held beliefs, it was pointed out that women’s lives do not have to focus solely on the family home. Numerous articles emphasized the lack of public awareness about the education of girls, which was the reason for focusing mainly on home education. The beliefs of parents and teachers who did not notice the need for equal education for both sexes were mentioned. Models which placed the woman mainly as a mother, housekeeper, wife, and keeper of the home fires were criticized.

The articles, notes and accounts of conventions described issues related to the institutional education of girls. The necessity to reform the school system was emphasized because of the high level of illiteracy among women (P. K. R. 1911: 98–99). The discrimination of girls in access to facilities was emphasized. Modernization of courses and schools, introducing new programmes and implementing a co-educational system in the institutions, was suggested (*Kursy naukowe...* 1908: 318–320; *Rolnicza uczelnia...* 1911: 301–302; L. 1907: 72; see also Dormus 2004: 63–64; 72–75). The implementation of legal, political and economic issues as well as the reform of physical education were proposed (Budzińska-Tylicka 1910: 10–12).

The academic education of girls was a frequently described issue throughout the period in which “Ster” appeared. These publications coincided with intense changes, increasing the availability of higher education for women in Congress Poland (Bołdyrew 2018: 95–129; Kondracka 2000: 271–284; Perkowska 1994). Despite numerous changes, the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland experienced economic and cultural restrictions in access to higher education. Due to the socio-political situation, the texts concerned foreign institutions. The articles and short

notes provided information about available faculties, formal requirements, scholarships and student societies (See, among others: Rygierówna 1908: 21–23; Pachucka 1909: 86–89; RP 1910: 243–246; Ciesielska 1910: 291–292; Kijewski 1910: 67–68; Pachucka 1911b: 399–402; Weychert-Szymanowska 1913: 2–3). Among the educational possibilities described, suggestions concerning the organization of higher education for girls in the Russian partition were published.

The subject of peasant education was also discussed in “Ster”. Articles and notes were informative. Readers were acquainted with home economics schools. Specific institutions were promoted by posting reports and describing their activities (See Bojanowska 1910: 97–100; *Przemówienie...* 1910: 103). Presentations of student work and achievements were also used to discuss the curriculum, proposed courses, and admission principles (B. 1912: 4–5). Schools that successfully educated peasant women, e.g. the institution in Kruszynek, were mentioned. The educational emancipation of rural girls was seen as a chance to raise the economic level of households. In the opinion of the columnists, the level of interest in girls in institutional education was still low, which was associated with the poor economic and intellectual development of villagers (Biniekówna 1911: 31). Similar messages were presented in the description of education for landladies. Development opportunities for daughters of “petty landowners, tenants, officials, provincial doctors, lawyers, officials” were presented (Grudzińska 1909: 230). Emphasis was placed on practical skills that were to be socially useful (Karczewska 1911b: 402–405). The readers were persuaded to take up the professions of midwifery, nursing, and child-minding, or to complete home economics courses.

Correspondence and texts sent by readers were also published in “Ster”. The statements of a dozen girls published at one of the women’s rallies form an interesting example (L. 1907: 73–75). They pointed to deep discrepancies between social needs and the education system, which, in their opinion, limited development opportunities. Highlighting these differences could encourage young readers to reflect on their professional and educational plans (*Kim...* 1913: 71–72). As in the other analysed periodicals, the threats to the young generation were repeatedly described in “Ster”. The most serious of these were those associated with health problems and deviant behaviour (*Związek...* 1908: 245; Kon-Feldblum 1910: 370–381, *Reczyńska* 1908: 160–172).

Conclusion

To conclude these considerations, it can be stated that depending on the magazine’s ideology, the issues of girls’ education were presented in various ways. Each of the magazines disseminated a different image of a young woman. In conservative titles, she was associated with the role of mother and housewife; while progressive ones made reference to the ethos of an educated citizen.

In conservative magazines, readers were often persuaded to adopt designated routes, implemented according to a top-down attitudes. Their messages were hermetic to new solutions and development opportunities for women. The purpose of these publications was to shape attitudes, develop an ethical and disciplined adolescent model adopting the worldview defined by the journal.

Various educational scenarios were proposed in more progressive magazines. Development opportunities were emphasized and reflection was stimulated, even encouraged. The resources of the social strength of youth were noticed, also treating girls and boys subjectively. Journalists saw the young generation as a chance for the modernization and reconstruction of the country, which is why they considered the education of girls and the development of their potential to be important.

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