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## Education and Socialization of Polish Children During World War II – Sources, Methods and the Areas of Activity of the Historians of Education

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**Education and Socialization of Polish Children During  
World War II – Sources, Methods and the Areas  
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The tragedy of World War II has been the subject of researchers' debate for years. They have been discussing various aspects of this traumatic period of history and the result of their research is of significant social and existential impact. The meaningfulness of military, political, economic, social, demographic and cultural issues facilitated interdisciplinary scientific research. It also allowed to search for new sources and new methodological developments. Although literature on this subject is comparatively rich, it is easy to point to the areas which are marginal and neglected. One of such realms is the concept of childhood influenced by war and its consequences. The article draws attention to the issues connected with the situation of a child which became the subject of interest of Polish historiography concerning the history of education. Another important issue, if not the most important, is the analysis of absent problems. The author will discuss the issues connected with a child and childhood during World War II which seem to be significant from the point of view of modern methodological concepts and have not been analysed by the representatives of history of education.

The aim of the article is to state the categories of sources which are important for the research of living conditions, education and socialization of children and the youth during World War II. It is also significant to point to the main scientific areas of exploration which are meaningful for the issues mentioned in the title and to represent the aspects which should be analysed comparatively and have not been so far researched.

During 1960s, 70s or 80s numerous monographs were devoted to the problem of children and youth during occupation. A number of the monographs remarks on the issue of educational policy of the occupant and underground education<sup>1</sup>. In scientific literature the authors concentrated mostly on the situation of education in the area occupied by the Third Reich. Never before 1989 was the issue of education in the area of the Soviet Union discussed. Much attention in the textbooks was paid to the history of education in the 20-th century, and exactly between 1939–1945. Nevertheless, hardly ever was the latest state of research taken into consideration. Therefore, some of the textbooks did not mention or describe the situation of Polish education in the area occupied by the Soviets<sup>2</sup>.

The issue of analysis of most of the academic works, which are obviously read by a bigger number of people, was mostly the situation of Polish schools and educational centres and legal regulations introduced by the occupant. While discussing the situation in the area annexed to the Reich it was often written that all the traits of Polish nationality were destroyed – social organizations, schools, institutions, street names, signs. The introduction of German as the official language and the opening of German schools was to denationalize the Poles who were also displaced<sup>3</sup>. In the area of General Government universities, secondary schools and the centres of teachers' education were closed down. Only general education was available. Nevertheless, education of children was limited and history, Polish language, geography and modern history were not to be taught at schools at all. Children and teachers were to give back maps, books, and portraits. Schools and vocational courses were to exist but general subjects were under restriction. Theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> C. Wycech, *Z dziejów tajnej oświaty w latach okupacji 1939-1944*, Warszawa 1964; M. Walczak, *Wielkopolska konspiracja oświatowa 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1972; A. Massalski, *Szkolnictwo na Kielecczyźnie w okresie okupacji 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1975; T. Jałmużna, *Tajne nauczanie na Ziemi Łódzkiej 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1977; J. Krasuski, *Tajne szkolnictwo polskie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1977; J. Draus, R. Terlecki, *Oświata na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939-1945*, Wrocław 1984.

<sup>2</sup> K. Bartnicka, I. Szybiak, *Zarys historii wychowania*, Warszawa 2001, p. 203-204.

<sup>3</sup> J. Krasuski, *Jaune i tajne szkolnictwo w okresie okupacji*, [in:] *Historia wychowania. Skrypt dla studentów pedagogiki*, ed. D. Drynda, Warszawa 2006, p. 207-208.

knowledge was limited and only practical syllabus was accepted<sup>4</sup>. The latest sources on history of education emphasize very negative consequences of political and ideological indoctrination in the area occupied by the Soviet Union<sup>5</sup>. The authors draw attention to numerous trials to evoke and deepen national conflicts. Education became one of the areas used by the Soviet authorities to antagonize the relations between the Poles and the Ukrainians, as well as the Belarusians. Polish culture and education were destroyed, new syllabuses and subjects were introduced and they were to serve ideological purposes<sup>6</sup>.

Much attention in the historical and educational research was paid to the attitude of Polish teachers and the repressions of the authorities towards teachers. Nazi authorities, being aware of patriotic influence of schools, from the beginning of occupation controlled teachers. In the memorial entitled *The Issue of Treating the Inhabitants of ex-Polish Areas from Racial and Political Point of View* issued on November 25, 1939 by dr Erhard Wetzel and dr Gerhard Hecht it was written: *Since a Polish teacher, especially a female teacher can be an outstanding propagator of Polish chauvinism, which can be dangerous from political point of view, they cannot be allowed to stay in school. (...) Polish female teachers must be immediately removed from schools as they influence, to a much bigger extent than male teachers, students as far as their political education is concerned*<sup>7</sup>. The losses among the workers of education and numerous deportations were described. Hitler's and Russian activities concentrated on teachers aiming at extermination of Polish social elites.

It is often emphasized in literature that during occupation a number of educational centres, for instance centres of resocializa-

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<sup>4</sup> J. Draus, R. Terlecki, *Historia wychowania*, t. II, *Wiek XIX i XX*, Kraków 2010, p. 294-295.

<sup>5</sup> The authors of thesis published before 1989 while describing the situation of education in the areas occupied by the Soviet Union from September 1939 did not describe this period. They presented legal situation of Polish education and conspiracy activity of Polish society from June 1941, i.e. from the moment when the area was occupied by Hitler's army after they had attacked the Soviet Union.

<sup>6</sup> J. Krasuski, *op. cit.*, p. 209-210; S. Możdżeń, *Historia wychowania 1918-1945*, Kielce 2000, p. 205-208.

<sup>7</sup> *Historia wychowania – wiek XX*, ed. J. Miąso, Warszawa 1980, p. 221.

tion for the youth, were closed down<sup>8</sup>. Many young people did not have any protection and their educational problems became more serious. Similarly, the pedagogical protection of small children worsened. W. Bobrowska-Nowak described a horrible situation of kindergarten education, quoting Zofia Żukiewiczowa and kindergartens in Warsaw. Numerous buildings were destroyed in September 1939. The ones which survived could not have been used in a normal way as there was a constant threat of being bombed or burnt. Kindergarten rooms were placed in basements. During the occupation most of Warsaw kindergartens were closed down. Only some of them could function, including kindergartens under nuns' protection, private kindergartens and nurseries conducted by the Central Welfare Council<sup>9</sup>. The children were protected, educated, food was provided and parents supported. In spite of difficult conditions kindergartens tried to create *normal* situation and offer safety to children. Unfortunately, only a small number of children attended kindergartens.

Within the last years of academic historical and pedagogical research much attention was paid to protection of orphaned or abandoned children. The researchers concentrated mostly on organization of children protection after the war. The process of rebuilding the educational and protective system by the country became the main point of interest. The number of children in a difficult situation was so big that it became impossible for the protective centres (church organizations) to take care of all of them. The authority tried to centralize the protective system and indoctrination of education. At the same time the basic needs of children with traumatic experiences were neglected<sup>10</sup>. Institutional sources do not give any information about negligence of children or violence between them.

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<sup>8</sup> M. Kalinowski, J. Pelka, *Zarys dziejów resocjalizacji nieletnich*, Warszawa 2003, p. 222.

<sup>9</sup> W. Bobrowska-Nowak, *Historia wychowania przedszkolnego*, Warszawa 1978, p. 555–558; *Walka o oświatę, naukę i kulturę w latach okupacji 1939-1944. Materiały z terenu m. st. Warszawy i woj. warszawskiego*, ed. S. Dobraniecki, W. Pokora, Warszawa 1967, p. 325-328.

<sup>10</sup> A. Kolakowski, *Rozwój systemu opieki całkowitej nad dzieckiem w województwie gdańskim w latach 1945-1956*, [in:] *Opieka nad dziećmi i młodzieżą. Studia z dziejów oświaty w XX wieku*, ed. S. Walasek, Kraków 2008, p. 149-199; E. Zieja, *Organizacja opieki nad dzieckiem osieroconym na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945-2000*, [in:] *Opieka nad dziećmi i młodzieżą...*, p. 201-252.

One of the most significant issues connected with Polish education during war time was the organization of underground education. From the beginning of the occupation teachers started to organize underground education in two possible forms – by passing to students prohibited knowledge during official lessons in legal schools and by organizing underground education in private houses at children's or teachers' places. As for organization, the underground education was subject to the Education and Culture Department of the Government Delegation for Poland. Underground education was also organized by the Polish Teachers' Union which at the beginning of occupation accepted the name of the Secret Teaching Organization (TON)<sup>11</sup>.

While discussing the underground education many researchers concentrated on conditions of teaching, the situation of teachers and teaching aids. In monographic researches the reality of educational conspiracy was described. The list of people involved in underground teaching was made but also the lists of places where the teaching was conducted. The documents of the Commission for the Prosecution of Hitler's Crimes were used but also archive materials (which are kept, for instance, in national archives or in the Jewish Historical Institute), numerous field researches were conducted, mostly questionnaires or interviews with teachers active during the occupation. Numerous articles concerning this topic were published in periodicals describing the history of education, among others „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” („Historical and Educational Review”) published by the Polish Teachers' Union, especially in 1960s and 1970s<sup>12</sup>. As a result, numerous materials

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<sup>11</sup> S. Możdżeń, *op. cit.*, p. 297-298.

<sup>12</sup> C. Wycech, *Z działalności tajnej organizacji nauczycielskiej. Wspomnienia i przyczynki do historii tajnej oświaty*. „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1961, nr 3; idem, *Z dziejów tajnej organizacji oświatowo-kulturalnej (Departament Oświaty i Kultury)*. „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1962, nr 3; W. Polkowski, *Nauczyciele i młodzież pow. węgrowskiego w latach II wojny światowej*. „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1962, nr 3; A. Bochnak, *Z dziejów tajnego nauczania w powiecie tarnowskim w latach 1939-1945*. „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1966, nr 3; A. Piotrowska, *Z dziejów tajnego nauczania w czasie I wojny światowej*. „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1966, nr 4; F. Januszek, *Niektóre problemy tajnego nauczania na Białostoczczyźnie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej*. „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1976, nr 1; J. Turonek, *Okupacyjna polityka szkolna w Okręgu Białostockim 1941-1944*. „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1976, nr 3; A. Zawadzka,

were gathered on methods and forms of educational work, organization and financing the underground education, its contents, and most of all, the involvement of teachers, their views and opinions and often dramatic events in their lives. Spontaneity of the teachers is worth emphasizing. Even if there was no coordinator they were active and willing to work. *“The feeling of teachers’ obligation, love to children and profession, as well as the awareness that the Germans will not stay here forever, and children must be taught in their own language, and finally, the children should not lose the years of education at wartime so as not to lose their opportunities in life as a result of war motivated and helped to organize in a massive way the underground teaching”*<sup>13</sup>. The underground education helped also to preserve Polish culture and science. Emphasizing those elements, obviously well judged from ethical and content-related point of view, marginalized the situation of the pupils. Historical sources concentrated mostly on the situation of those who were involved in conspiracy teaching and dramatic events in life of many teachers became the basic direction of the research for many years. In such a situation, the position of children became, in a way, a background of the events.

Many authors emphasized that school became, just like a family home, the place of patriotic education, shaping positive attitudes, preventing demoralization of young people. Additional lessons completed syllabus accepted by the occupational authorities which provided a very law and general level of culture. *An important conspiracy role of school meant that it was able to gather and show the right direction to thousands of children and young people. During occupation it was an extremely important task as young people living in towns were easily influenced by alcoholism and by the enemy’s propaganda. Underground education was a perfect antidote to the fascists’ propaganda*<sup>14</sup>. One of the books draws attention to the fact that one of the reasons for the success of the underground education was responsible attitude of young people who were aware of danger. Except for additional knowledge the students learnt re-

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*Tajne nauczanie w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939-1944 w szkołach średnich ogólnokształcących w Siedlcach*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1976, nr 3.

<sup>13</sup> F. Januszek, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Historia wychowania – wiek XX...*, p. 276.

sponsibility for each other, independence and building relations based on common trust<sup>15</sup>.

Not many researchers of historical and pedagogical issues paid attention to the phenomenon of denationalization of children in the area of war activity. Within the area of Poland the phenomenon of germanization concerned the children of various nationalities. Just after the war people started to collect documents and photographs which would allow to estimate the problem and claim the return of the children who had been taken to Germany. Unfortunately, most of the documents were destroyed. We know that tens of thousands of children from the area of the Reichsgau Wartheland and General Government were taken to Germany. Orphans and the children who were taken away from their parents were subject to race examination. There existed in Łódź a separate race camp for children opened in the convent building at Sporna street<sup>16</sup>. The children who fulfilled Nazi race conditions were taken to Germany, to foster families, orphanages, Hitlerjugend and Bund Deutscher Mädel. There was an exhibition organized by the Institute of National Remembrance devoted to that problem entitled *Germanization of Polish children during World War II*. Displacement and denationalization policies in the area taken by the occupant at Zamojszczyzna region were presented there. Individual fates of Polish children who were germanized were depicted. From the point of view of a disturbed socializing process, the issues of limited contact with society, national culture, tradition and language seem to be inadequately researched. A question appears: what were the consequences of brutal destruction of family and social ties, not only in case of Polish children but also other children (e.g. Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Jewish) ripped from their families and placed in institutions which not only took care of the children but also indoctrinated them. An important work which draws attention to the situation of children of Jewish origin who were hidden by Roman Catholic nuns' orders is the dissertation by Ewa Kurek-Lesik.

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<sup>15</sup> J. Draus, R. Terlecki, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> A. Felchner, C. Jeśman, *Los dzieci w obozach wysiedleńczych i przesiedleńczych na terenie Łodzi i okolic*, [in:] *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie wobec dzieci i młodzieży Łodzi oraz okręgu łódzkiego. Materiały z sesji naukowej zorganizowanej 12 VI 1979 w Łodzi*, Łódź 1979, p. 77-82; J. Wasiak, *Zniemczanie dzieci polskich w Łodzi*, [in:] *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie wobec dzieci...*, p. 149.

The author presented, among others, identity problems of the children which resulted from the necessity of separation from their roots, religion and tradition, and denial of their past, heritage and even their name and surname<sup>17</sup>. It is a valuable example of analysis of losing one's national and cultural identity danger evoked by war conditions. It was obviously the source of suffering and caused psychological and emotional disorders in life.

It seems, however, that in historiography of history of education not enough attention is paid to the situation of children in wartime. Not only the condition of adults was influenced by poor living conditions, worsening material situation, uncertain future or undernutrition. The attitudes of children were influenced to the same or even bigger extent by reality. The children lacked the support of adults and basic feeling of safety. Occupational reality influenced emotional, intellectual, moral and physical development of children. The trauma of war childhood, the interrupted development of socialization and poor health of young generation is the implication of war which is hardly ever noticed although it influences life of an individual and social relations after the war.

The issues were being discussed at conferences in Zurich in 1945, in Paris a year later and in Warsaw/Otwock in 1948. Institutionally war implications in the context of young generation in 1940s were discussed by the State Institute of Mental Hygiene in Warsaw and Social Pedagogy Department at Łódź University. Unfortunately, in the following years political and ideological situation did not facilitate the continuity of this research. The issue was taken up anew by Wiesław Theiss who, in his work *Zniewolone dzieciństwo*<sup>18</sup>, analysed the process of socialization and education of children and the youth in totalitarian systems. The work is divided into three basic parts. The first one is devoted to the situation of children deported during World War II to the Soviet Union. The second one describes the process of growing up in the times of Stalinism. The last one discusses the issues of socialization taking place under political condi-

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<sup>17</sup> E. Kurek-Lesik, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939-1945*, Kraków 1992.

<sup>18</sup> W. Theiss, *Zniewolone dzieciństwo. Socjalizacja w skrajnych warunkach społeczno-politycznych*, Warszawa 1996.

tions of early 1980s. For our discussion, therefore, the most significant is part one.

The author depicted the state of the research concerning the situation of *wandering children*, the organization of care and educational institutions, schools, vocational courses and other health care forms. He also paid much attention to the problem of depersonalization of children and the youth in institutions which were supposed to bring up war orphans and the children taken away from their parents. The dramatic consequences of indoctrination were emphasised. Polish children were indoctrinated in Stalin orphanages, they were deprived of memory of their own family, knowledge of their past and identity. Many *wandering children* were deprived of full awareness of their roots which is so important and educational as far as identity and existence of each human being is concerned. Krzysztof Pomian's remarks are worth quoting at this point of discussion. He claimed that a man gathers and preserves the stories told by the ancestors which allow him to enlarge the area of his own existence and his memory *embraces the far away past which precedes the man's birth. It allows the man to identify with his ancestors: it equals what he had heard with what he noticed himself, it takes over the memories which were subjectively selected by the ancestors, with their perspective and hierarchy of values*<sup>19</sup>. In W. Theiss' opinion, deprivation of Polish children in Russian care institutions of the memory and perspective was the evidence of violence, the tool used for indoctrination and denationalization.

W. Theiss' work is one of the few which deeply analyse social consequences of the Soviet Union aggression towards Poland during World War II. It also analyses the influence of the direct and indirect extermination activities and ideological violence in the context of the situation of Polish children. W. Theiss pointed to many issues connected with the war and its impact on children, orphanage, psyche development violence, physical, emotional, intellectual influence on children and the youth. It obviously does not mean that all the aspects connected with education, socialization, inculturation of the young generation were deeply analysed. It was not the intention of the author who emphasised the necessity to continue both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research of the issue of *constraint childhood*. He claims that the representatives of various sci-

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<sup>19</sup> K. Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci*, Lublin 2006, p. 146.

entific humanistic and social disciplines such as history, pedagogy, psychology and sociology should participate<sup>20</sup>. W. Theiss drew attention to similar problems in his other publications. Some of them were also published in German<sup>21</sup>.

While analysing the situation of children and the youth during wartime the researchers did not pay much attention to problems resulting from the deprivation of the children of their right to intimacy, which consequently led to disorders, for instance, in the area of sexual health. The experience of war made a negative and significant impact on the young generation in this matter. There is also no mentioning of escalation of sexual violence during war which was often witnessed and experienced by the children. It is a kind of taboo in scientific research. The same tendency can be traced in wartime memoirs. This topic appears in novels and reports by Hanna Krall, for instance.

It seems that not enough attention was paid by the representatives of various scientific realms to the problems of every day existence of children and the youth. Their problems were mostly connected with the radical and sudden change of family life rituals or relations with children of the same age (including, for instance, necessity to put limits or to part company with colleagues of German or Jewish origin). It is also visible in the context of pedagogical and historical research. The historians were also interested, to a small extent, in reality of every day life of children: not only in education but also in culture, entertainment, free time activities and paid work practised by many young people from various societies. The problems of hygienic conditions or health were not described in those works but they obviously influenced the intellectual potential. Some authors took up the issue of accelerated growing up and its consequences after the war – changes within a family, contacts with adults of the same age, social activity and subjectivity to various ideologies. W. Theiss paid attention to the meaningfulness

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<sup>20</sup> W. Theiss, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, *Die junge Generationen der Polen in der Zeit des Totalitarismus und der totalitarne Paedagogik*, [in:] *Zwischen Zwangsarbeit, Holocaust und Vertreibung. Polnische, jüdische und deutsche Kindheiten im besetzten Polen*, ed. I. Behnkn, J. Mikota, Weinheim 2007, p. 55-62; idem, *Kindheit im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Übersicht über die polischen Forschungen aus den Jahren 1945-1989*, [in:] *Zwischen Zwangsarbeit, Holocaust und...*, p. 79-86; idem, *Sieroctwo wojenne polskich dzieci (1939-1945). Zarys problematyki*, „Przegląd Pedagogiczny” 2012, nr 1, pp. 79-95.

of war experiences for accelerated growing up of children. W. Theiss analysed the fate of children deported to the Soviet Union. *Tragic childhood – the loss of relatives and homeland, illnesses and hunger, deportation and travelling made the children and the youth grow up socially. They were mentally precocious, they had vivid imagination and curiosity of the world, they were also oversensitive*<sup>22</sup>.

It is therefore important to take up such issues as the research would allow to reconstruct many aspects of *war childhood*. The areas of everyday life of a child during the war, the changes concerning the access to space or things can be valuable areas of the research. The materials gathered by the museums seem to be of particular interest. Many of the materials were open to the public view as a part of temporary or permanent exhibitions. An interesting trial was the exhibition in the Warsaw Rising Museum (which included also toys) or the exhibition entitled: *My happy childhood was over on September 1, 1939* organized in the Museum of Toys and Play in Kielce (open from October 7, 2011 to April 29, 2012). In spite of simplification suggested by the title of the exhibition (the usage of simple dichotomy deforming reconstructed past and dividing it into simple realms: happy and successful childhood, safe home, good world before the war opposed to the chaos and destruction of war) it is an interesting view of the world of children. One can find there the toys made by the camp prisoners (e.g. Auschwitz), the toys taken away from children (e.g. in Majdanek concentration camp), the toys from Kazakhstan<sup>23</sup>. Each of the toys belonging to the *war children* is an impressive and thrilling memory from occupation times evoking emotions, just like the exhibition in the Warsaw Rising Museum<sup>24</sup>.

Such scientific realms should be categorized and systemized, the pedagogical and anthropological aspects should be linked together. The methods allowing to conduct the research of material and spiritual culture, so called new humanistic, should be used

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<sup>22</sup> W. Theiss, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> [www.muzeumzabawek.eu](http://www.muzeumzabawek.eu).

<sup>24</sup> It is also worth remembering the board game created in 1943 entitled „Raising animals”. It was created by the mathematician, professor Karol Borsuk, who wanted to entertain his friends' children in the occupied country. As the board game was successfully sold it supported the family budget. The game was produced by Granna company again in 1997 under the name of „Super farmer” and is very popular among children and experts.

to research the toys from World War II as artifacts. Ewa Domańska presented an interesting methodological discussion of *turning to objects* topic<sup>25</sup>. Complex methodological cooperation is very valuable in various aspects of the discussed problem. In case of the issue of war toys and games it is even more significant because these issues are not only a meaningful realm of scientific observation but they are also particularly interesting for the wider group of people.

The experience of *war childhood* which is widely researched by European historians should become the object of analysis as far as history of education is concerned. One needs to treat the subject in an interdisciplinary way and to use, so called, social concept of history of education. One needs also to research the subject taking into consideration phenomena from collective life of people<sup>26</sup>. According to this concept, education is a social fact and phenomenon, the element of both individual and collective existence of a human being. An important aim, taking into account the cultural and civilization aspects and conditions, is the explanation of the processes of passing norms and values, which are the most important factor of human existence. Social concept of history of education quotes, for example, the assumptions of postmodernism, a modern realm showing new areas of the past research, including the division into *historical* and *non-historical* problems but also mainstream and marginal issues. Continuing the direction of every day life research suggested by *Annales* school, the historians quoting postmodern paradigm suggest the research of private life, mentality, personal emotions. It is important that not only massive experiences should be researched but also the experiences of an individual.

The perception suggested by postmodern historiography leads to the analysis of changeable and feeble impressions and subjective views as objects. Such a research needs to introduce epistemological reorientation and application of new categories of sources, e.g. evoked or audiovisual sources. It is a truism to claim that in all scientific research the available sources and their exploitation are a prerequisite for taking up the topic of study. In case of the research

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<sup>25</sup> E. Domańska, *O zwrocie ku rzeczom we współczesnej humanistyce. (Ku historii nieantropocentrycznej)*, „Rocznik Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych” 2005, t. 65, p. 7-23.

<sup>26</sup> D. Drynda, *O koncepcjach historii wychowania – jako dyscypliny naukowej w Polsce II połowy XX wieku*, [in:] *Historia wychowania. Skrypt...*, p. 15-23.

of World War II, when it is possible to get the direct information from those who participated in the war, it is very important and justified to preserve their account and memories by using so called *oral history* technique (therefore, for instance, the Warsaw Rising Museum created a body called the Oral History Archive which collects and preserves the interviews with the participants of the Warsaw Rising<sup>27</sup>). It is worth mentioning that the phrase *oral history* is used in Poland in three basic meanings: oral storytelling, interview and the spoken source<sup>28</sup>.

In spite of the opposition towards the usage of *oral history* at professional work, A. Paczkowski claims, that in the research of World War II a historian *is obliged to use it* [the research based on oral history – A.B.] *and he should take it into account as far as factual, interpretative and contextual level is concerned*<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, the analysis of interviews with people mentioning their war time childhood is an indispensable step in historical and pedagogical research of the situation of *war children*. It seems that one of the reasons for exposing the factors connected with children, in the context of educational activity with marginalization of a family, the conditions of socializing the children, values and norms passed to new generations, is to support the knowledge with many sources without the sources based on *oral history*. The analysis of the account of the participants of the events describing their war experiences – exile, displacement, orphanhood, famine, illness, persecution, death, fear, homelessness – allows to reconstruct what the child remembers rather than the reality of those times. Nevertheless, it helps to mark a new research area which seems to be so important because of its place in social life<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> The interviews are available on the Internet site [ahm.1944.pl](http://ahm.1944.pl).

<sup>28</sup> D. Kałwa, *Kozetka historyka: 'oral history' w badaniach życia prywatnego*, [in:] *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność. Dzieje rodziny polskiej w kontekście europejskim. Zbiór studiów*, ed. D. Kałwa, A. Walaszek, A. Żarnowska, Warszawa 2005, p. 181-189.

<sup>29</sup> A. Paczkowski, *O osobliwościach badań nad historią najnowszą*, [in:] *Historyk wobec źródeł. Historiografia klasyczna i nowe propozycje metodologiczne*, ed. J. Kolbuszewska, R. Stobiecki, Łódź 2010, p. 166.

<sup>30</sup> K. Ruchniewicz, J. Zinnecker, I. Behnken, J. Mikota, *Zwischen Zwangsarbeit, Holocaust und Vertreibung: polnische, jüdische und deutsche Kindheiten im besetzten Polen*, Weinheim-München 2007.

Since in Polish and foreign libraries, archives and foundations there is much material and a huge collection of recollections from World War II childhood it is even more reliable to use the direct account of the participants of the war. It can be a bit more difficult to conduct the research if somebody does not know the methodology of gathering and collecting the memories. Nevertheless, they are still priceless source material. The recollections collected by the foundation called „My wartime childhood” are of particular value. The foundation was created to collect documents and memories concerning the fate of children of war<sup>31</sup>. The statutory aim of the foundation is to publish the gathered materials. As a result, 220 memories of *wartime childhood* have already been published in 18 volumes. The materials were also digitalized and they are available on the Internet site of the foundation. An important area of activity is to popularize the information concerning the injustice and hurt done to children and the youth during wartime. The members of the Council and Board of the Foundation are all volunteers. Most of them remember from their own childhood the disaster of war and its victims who experienced many tragic situations. They know from their own experiences the problems of orphanage, hunger, wandering, pacification, concentration camp. Dramatic memories should be researched methodologically and scientifically, and the cooperation of the representatives of various scientific disciplines can be helpful in stating how the trauma of the war influenced the personalities of children and the youth and their way of remembering the past.

Many memoirs describing World War II were published in print due to private initiative, often due to the authors’ support. The rich collection of the published and available memories creates a meaningful source of knowledge for a historian. Many institutions and organizations collected various kinds of materials, memories and objects from World War II. The source publications which are not widely popular but were published locally are also worth mentioning. The example of such a publishing is for instance a volume of Łowicz Siberian deportees. The materials were collected by the students belonging to history circle in the Jan Chełmoński secondary school in Łowicz<sup>32</sup>. Many similar initiatives were conducted in the whole country. They were important for two reasons.

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<sup>31</sup> [www.mojewojennedzieinstwo.pl](http://www.mojewojennedzieinstwo.pl).

<sup>32</sup> *Wspomnienia łowickich Sybiraków*, Łowicz 1993.

First of all, they became a part of national heritage and historical education, secondly they are very important for documenting the fate of the people during the war. The childhood recollections are a significant element of the gathered materials. Polish ethnographers also collected childhood memories from the wartime. The materials are available in libraries and the archives, and they create a priceless and valuable category of sources which can be used for the research of history of education.

As a result of the competition entitled *Everyday life in Łódź in 1939-1945* many significant materials and recollections were collected in Łódź. The materials which were sent to the authorities are placed in the Scientific Archives of the Ethnology and Culture Anthropology Institute of Łódź University. A meaningful part of the materials are the recollections from *wartime childhood* period in Łódź. The reports of the authors describe in detail the behaviour and fate of the dwellers of Łódź, and the changes in functioning of the city. Personal recollections are placed in the background of changes of social relations, everyday culture of the dwellers of the city and city landscape. The authors themselves noticed that the changes in their lives were parallel to the changes taking place in the whole city. The authors who had spent the first years of their lives in multinational and multi religious Łódź emphasised how difficult and painful it was to cut off the relations among Polish, German and Jewish people. They drew attention to the fact that there was a special area reserved only for the Germans and a ghetto for the Jews. Much attention was paid to the fact that the previous contacts among the Poles, the Germans and the Jews who used to be good neighbours were irreversibly destroyed in *the times of contempt*. It is easy to notice that it is one of the most frequently mentioned consequences of the war. The event was as significant for children as for the adults. It resulted from the fact that even in the situations of conflict between various groups of people the distance between the adults was not equivalent with the distance between children of the city. Children and the youth preserved the contact with their colleagues, regardless of their nationality or faith: streets, playgrounds, common playing joined together young Poles, Germans and Jews. Emotions connected with brutal destruction of the relations had a stronger influence on children than on the adults. One of the Łódź dwellers said: *We suddenly noticed*

*a new division of equal so far society. It turned out that instead of a good neighbour we now had a German neighbour who did not allow her children to talk to us, and the shoemaker who had repaired our shoes for ages was now a Jew so a member of the society the fate of which was now apprehended*<sup>33</sup>. The authors mentioned also the necessity to take up new duties, work, often a dramatic battle for survival, as wrote a woman who was born in Łódź in 1932 *in the adult life of a child*<sup>34</sup>.

While emphasising the value of the collected materials from the occupation times one must pay attention to the necessity of deep analysis of the circumstances of writing them down. The recollections which were printed and gathered by the libraries and the archives before 1989 did not give any information on the acts of violence and theft of Polish possessions by the Russian army. The frequent acts of rape on Polish women and girls were also not mentioned. Therefore, the influence of ideology on the content of recollections, some taboos introduced for political reasons are an important research mistake which should be analysed in detail.

While analysing the dramatic consequences of the *war complex* of the children and the youth one must pay attention to the fact how difficult it was to overcome the war experience. The war often had such an influence on their personalities that the war trauma influenced also the childhood of their children who were born many years after the disaster. The pain and injuries experienced in the wartime childhood prevented the people from proper existence in their adult life and the fulfilment of parental roles. The drama of the emotionally hurt people who were not able to live in a post war reality influenced also the generation of their children. Such problems are more and more often the core of interest of contemporary humanist studies. A meaningful area of reflection became also literature. The theme of the consequences of war appears, for example, in a famous novel which was nominated for the Central Europe Literature Prize Angelus. Magdalena Tulli's *Włoskie szpilki* is an autobiographical work. The protagonist is an ex-concentration camp prisoner's daughter. She experienced the trauma of a child who was brought up by a cold, psychologically hurt mother who, as a result of tragic ex-

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<sup>33</sup> The Scientific Archives of the Ethnology and Culture Anthropology Institute of Łódź University, sign. B 3693, c. 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, sign. B 3702, c. 6.

periences, became unable to show feelings and empathy. M. Tulli tries to convince the reader that the consequences of the war are still present in the space of children who were born after the war. The memories come back in the recollections of the adults who cannot forget their childhood and youth stigmatized by violence and contempt. War rhetoric is ever present in their everyday life many years after the war, therefore the children in kindergarten who got wet heard *they should be burnt*<sup>35</sup>.

*The banality of evil* experienced at wartime by children and the youth which dehumanized the conditions of growing up makes us ask new questions about the war consequences for processes of education and socialization of the young generation. New methodological solutions should be searched for and various categories of sources should be used, including literature. Literature, after hermeneutic interpretation and critical reading, can become a valuable source of materials for historical research. Another interesting source category (also as far as the popularization of knowledge of World War II and its meaning for historical education are concerned) are the war recollections for children and the adults described in a light way<sup>36</sup>. The example of such a book is *Asiunia* by Joanna Papuzińska. The war recollections addressed to children are written in a moderate way and describe the war reality and traumatic experiences of a child without emphasising violence. The author writes: *Because it is war, because it is war, because it is war – I repeated to myself in my thoughts. The people used to say that whenever there was something wrong and they could not explain it. (...) the war does not only come to your house but it can even take it away*<sup>37</sup>. It is worth reminding that J. Papuzińska had published her wartime recollections in *Darowane kreski*<sup>38</sup>. In spite of tragic experiences, including the author's mother's death by shooting for helping Jewish children, the dominating element of the novel is the loving and supporting family. Such works create an interesting area for popularization of knowledge concerning family life

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<sup>35</sup> M. Tulli, *Włoskie szpilki*, Warszawa 2011; D. Nowacki, *Wyzwolenie, ukojenie*, „Tygodnik Powszechny” 2012, nr 43, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g.: R. Jędrzejewska-Wróbel, *Halicz. Na podstawie wspomnień Henryka Kończykowskiego*, Warszawa 2006.

<sup>37</sup> J. Papuzińska, *Asiunia*, Łódź 2011, p. 6-9.

<sup>38</sup> Eadem, *Darowane kreski*, Warszawa 1994.

and childhood in wartime reality. In this way the works profoundly enrich contemporary Polish historical culture.

Psychohistory created a new methodological perspective for the studies of socialization processes and education of the wartime generation. When one researches the war consequences using the practice of history, psychology and pedagogy it facilitates the process of deeper analysis. In this way it is easier to analyse the war and its impact on children and the youth's personalities both individually and in social context. One of the most significant aspects of psychohistorical approach to the childhood is analysis of the relation between the child's experiences and his or her psychosocial development, and correlation between child's experiences and his or her later behaviour in adulthood<sup>39</sup>. It seems obvious that the wartime experiences of a child had a huge impact on shaping of his or her personality. One should remember that social history concentrates on relations between social and historical conditions and norms of upbringing children. In psychohistorical approach it is mostly about subjective experiences of a child, emotions evoked by them and psychological state. Such an approach became the basis of the most radical concept of psychohistorical history of Lloyd de-Mause's childhood<sup>40</sup>. In spite of huge differences between the scientists' views who used the methodology suggested by psychohistory there is some compromise as far as basic problems of childhood history are concerned. Having conceptualized psychohistorical research of childhood one drew attention not to the forms of family life but to the quality of the parents-children relations<sup>41</sup>. In relation to the problem discussed in this article it also means paying attention to often ignored perspective, that is the trial to preserve *normality* of family life during the war. The people also tried to preserve stable, emotional ties in the face of outside world destruction. Such issues are worth discussing and the questions about *heroic* family attitudes and the size of pathology of family relations in wartime reality are worth asking. It is also important to discuss and think about the drama of difficult choices.

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<sup>39</sup> T. Pawelec, *Dzieje i nieświadomość. Założenia teoretyczne i praktyka badawcza psychohistorii*, Katowice 2004, p. 177.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 246-247.

The tragic experiences of war time childhood, individual and generational consequences of the trauma force the historians to deep research reflection. In the face of meaningful problems – extermination of people, displacement, economic destruction, political changes – the problem of socialization of young people frequently was not noticed. Modern historians should emphasize the tragedy of children, especially the victims of the war who had not had the possibility to express their feelings and traumatic experiences. One should also pay attention to the danger of sophistication (present in numerous historical researches, especially those describing such dramatic issues) of the problem, apologia of the children's and youth's attitudes, mythologizing by exposing heroism and altruism or martyrdom. The fear of demythologizing can influence the selection and reduction of the report which does not fit the accepted pattern. Nostalgic idealization can blur the fact that each of the children was a victim, even the child who was forced to independence, or who was forced to fight for his or her existence. Those children accepted the attitude of cynicism and cunning and they became demoralized.

The research of the past conducted in such a context can help to create more reflexive social attitude towards the events of World War II. It can also help to understand better the transformations taking place in social life after the war, the relations between society and authority or even mental transposition. Formulating a few introductory thesis and being aware of subjectivity of my remarks I would like to draw attention to the meaning of the research of the child's situation and the reality of childhood during World War II. It is an extremely important issue, not only from the perspective of history and history of education, but also sociology, pedagogy, psychology, demography etc.

### **Streszczenie**

#### **Wychowanie i socjalizacja polskich dzieci w czasie drugiej wojny światowej – źródła, metody i obszary badań historyków wychowania**

Tragiczne doświadczenia dzieciństwa przeżywanego w warunkach drugiej wojny światowej, przebieg socjalizacji młodego pokolenia, indywidualne i pokoleniowe konsekwencje traumy są istotnym

problemem badawczym dla historyków. Celem artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na to, jakie zagadnienia związane z sytuacją dziecka były przedmiotem zainteresowania polskiej historiografii z zakresu historii wychowania; równie istotne jest określenie kwestii, które pozostawały dotychczas poza zainteresowaniem badaczy. Omówiono orientacje metodologiczne i kategorie źródeł wykorzystywanych w opracowaniach. Jednocześnie przedstawiono kilka uwag o charakterze postulatycznym, wskazując na możliwości wynikające z włączenia w badania nad *wojennym dzieciństwem* propozycji metodologicznych tzw. nowej humanistyki oraz potencjalne, niewykorzystywane dotychczas źródła. Omawiając znaczenie badań nad dzieciństwem w realiach wojny, zwrócono uwagę na groźbę uwznioślenia badanego problemu, apologizowania postaw dzieci i młodzieży poprzez eksponowanie wątków heroistycznych, bohaterskich i altruistycznych lub martyrologicznych. Obawa demitologizacji może wpłynąć na selekcję i redukcję przekazów nie wpisujących się w przyjęty wzorzec. Badanie konsekwencji wojny dla przebiegu procesów wychowania, edukacji i socjalizacji młodego pokolenia może pomóc ukształtować bardziej refleksyjny społeczny stosunek do wydarzeń drugiej wojny światowej, ale także lepiej zrozumieć przemiany zachodzące w życiu społecznym w powojennych dekadach, relacje między społeczeństwem a władzą, transpozycje mentalnościowe.