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Freedom fighter – Instructor – Professional On becoming an adult educator in Poland

Abstract: The origins of systematic and purposeful training of adult educators date back to 1898. However, it was only in the inter-war period when institutions that trained social workers/adult educators were established. Among the best known schools of that type was, founded in 1925, the Centre for Social and Educational Work of the free Polish University in Warsaw. It was the first Polish educational institution training this kind of professionals at a University level. Thanks to its founder and director, Helena Radlinska (1879–1954), the Centre became an influential school as well as a place where principles of democracy were discussed and developed. The process of the development of adult educator profession in Poland differed from models and solutions present in other Western countries. There were mainly two reasons for this. Firstly, lack of state independence and a need for patriotic educational work for raising national awareness resulting from it. Secondly, it sought its theoretical background in pedagogy (educational work) and not in psychoanalysis. Thus, in Poland a concept of socio-cultural work, alongside with charitable work, contributed to the formation of a new profession that required a commitment to preserving national identity and became an agent of social development. At first, an activist, who can be called a *freedom fighter*, carried out the tasks. In the first years after 1918, when Poland regained its independence, a *freedom fighter* became an *instructor*, and then, after 1925, a *professional*.

Introduction

In the Polish tradition an educational and cultural activity aimed at adult population bore a name either of adult education or – when literally translated into English – of social work.¹ Eventually, especially after the World War II a split in the focus, field of study and theoretical perspectives took place. Two academic disciplines were established at the Polish universities – adult education (andragogy)

¹ This is not whatsoever a satisfactory term in English. It focuses too directly on a currently practised field of activity and the existing profession called „social worker”. Neither, does it properly fit Polish phenomena of the 19th and 20th centuries.

and social pedagogy. However, by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century this distinction was not yet established. Thus, in this paper we use the notions of *adult education* and *social work* synonymically.

Educational, cultural and social work aimed at the development of individuals, social groups and whole communities is a sphere of activity of state authorities, non-governmental organizations as well as local administration. Such activity grew up from a natural and spontaneous habit of supporting people whose lives were in danger. At the very beginning religious and secular ideas of philanthropy served as its bases. Eventually it became the professionally carried work as well as the field of research and training.

The origins of systematic and purposeful training of social workers/adult educators date back to 1898, when the "Adam Mickiewicz" People's University (*Uniwersytet Ludowy im. Adama Mickiewicza*) was opened in Cracow. In 1916 a Department of Voluntary Work at the Higher Courses for Women in Cracow was founded (Radlinska 1925, 1961). However, it was only in the inter-war period when institutions that trained social workers/adult educators were established. Among the best known schools of that type was, founded in 1925, the Centre for Social and Educational Work of the Free Polish University in Warsaw; it was the first Polish educational institution training this kind of professionals at a University level. Thanks to its founder and director, Helena Radlinska (1879–1954), the Centre became an influential school as well as place where principles of democracy were discussed and developed (Orsza-Radlinska 1925; Radlińska 1928; Brodowska 1958; *Słownik biograficzny pracowników społecznych* 1993; Theiss 1985; Theiss 1996).

The process of the development of social worker/adult educator profession in Poland differed from models and solutions present in other Western countries. There were mainly two reasons for this. Firstly, lack of state independence and a need for patriotic educational work for raising national awareness resulting from it. Secondly, it sought its theoretical background in pedagogy (educational work) and not in psychoanalysis. Thus, in Poland a concept of socio-cultural work, alongside with charitable work, contributed to the formation of a new profession that required a commitment to preserving national identity and became an agent of social development. At first, an activist, who can be called a *freedom fighter*, carried out the tasks. In the first years after 1918, when

Poland regained its independence, a *freedom fighter* became an *instructor*, and then, after 1925, a *professional*.

Freedom fighter

Since the late 1860's Poland (*i.e.* the Polish lands) has experienced profound social and economic changes. Illegal adult education is often seen mostly as an example of society's resistance against the occupying powers' policies of depriving Poles of their national identity. However, at the a time of the split of old social structures such educational activities can, and should, be treated also as a form of protest against social discrimination, poverty and dependence. It is legitimate to state that illegal adult education was also an agent of social changes. With its often liberal, open-minded and Scientism-oriented ideas adult education organizations enter into a conflict with the clergy and find a formidable foe in the Roman Catholic Church.

Women, even those born into wealthy families, were excluded from universities and usually deprived of an equal education even when privately tutored. Nevertheless, at the end of the 19th century many of them began to challenge their prescribed roles. Their fight began with education through which, they believed, women's chances for and means of self-reliance would increase. Unlike working-class women, who could find employment in industry, the middle-class women were bound to secure their economy by 'proper' marriages; those who 'possessed' intellectual interests were expected to run a 'literary salon'. There were an increasing number of women to whom none of those two prospects appeal-ed as acceptable. The educational activities were usually of an 'informal' character – reading and discussion circles, public lectures; later on – even extension of formal instruction. Unlike similar activities in Western Europe and in the USA, study-circles in Poland were able to provide female participants with necessary and expected confidence and knowledge. This was due to their illegal character and the presence of leading scholars among the lecturers. The frequent imprisonment or exile of the menfolk in a family left women in positions of great responsibility for its survival, and their participation in conspiratorial and even guerilla activities (*e.g.* Emilia Plater, 1806–1831) tended to place them on an equal footing with men. As a result, they were voicing views and demands on the subject of sexual equality and freedom that were not heard in England or France until after the First World War.

The Tsarist authorities were anxious to destroy everything that

was Polish – language, culture, even people's identity. As a reaction, the extended and effective network of independent, underground activity of various kinds was built to preserve 'Polishness' and put it into operation. The alien character of school instruction determined the types of subjects studied at illegal courses, which almost in every case began with the Polish history and literature. Within the study-circles movement organized among and by secondary school students three phases according to their topics and forms can be distinguished: in the years 1871–1882 the focus was on history of Poland and on its literature; years 1883–1897 were characterized by such topics as society's needs and planning for the future; during the years 1898–1905 more ideological (left-oriented) topics were discussed (*cf* Targalski 1965; Tomaszewska 1987). Two intellectual movements of the second part of the 19th century were most influential: Scientism and Positivism. Education played a significant role in their social philosophy. Courses in the Polish language and history, publication of booklets and their distribution, public (although illegal!) lectures were organized. All those activities were aimed at raising the educational standard of a population as well as social awareness and (or) national consciousness. Self-learning activity was organized at all levels, namely, from literacy courses to University studies.

A phenomenon of an endurance of engagement became very common, namely from being a student to becoming an organizer and teacher of other study-circles as well as keeping active participation despite different set-backs and failures. Often the same institution or organization, after being disclosed and stopped by authorities almost immediately started under a new name. As a Polish historian asserts:

Polish society ... continued to think as a society in control of its own destiny, and reality did not deter it. ... The Poles continued to consider themselves as being wholly responsible for the fate of their society. This was ultimately why the nation continued to function as an entity..." (Zamoyski 1987:327).

The political movements established on Polish territories in the 1880s, especially farmers' and workers' movement, began to abandon reconciliatory Positivist slogans and take up ideas of more active struggle for social and national independence. Radical (leftist, even socialist) ideologies among educated social strata started to grow. For early activists, like Bronisław Limanowski, socialism was not a means for class struggle but rather for awakening the mass population and to raise its national consciousness. One of the newly

raised social strata was intelligentsia (a very Central-European feature!) which by its quantitative growth and, especially, by its social engagement built up its position as a distinctive social stratum. It was on this stratum on which independent and even illegal educational work began to depend.

Among the oldest such educational activities one can count clandestine study circles for women (1882), which laid a ground for established in 1886 the so-called Flying University (*Uniwersytet Latający*). It was named so because faculty and students had to move from one apartment to another to avoid surveillance by the Russian political police.

Its initiator was Jadwiga Szczawińska-Dawidowa (1863–1910), who made her apartment in Warsaw available for illegal meetings for women, during which they studied Polish language, literature and history. After her marriage, she found a committed ally in her husband Jan Władysław Dawid (1859–1914), an experimental psychologist and educationist. In their apartment they organized courses preparing young women for University studies. Women were at that time prohibited to enter University education. One should remember that in 1880's women still have been deprived not only access to higher education, but often also to other meaningful participation in the political life. Very soon, courses were organized in several private apartments throughout Warsaw. Jadwiga Szczawińska-Dawidowa succeeded to establish even quite a considerable scientific library.

Both women and men attended lectures given by leading scholars in humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. All courses were given in Polish, while all the official schooling organized by Tsarist authorities used Russian as a language of instruction. The alien character of school instruction determined the subjects studied in illegal courses. Almost all such activities began with Polish history and literature.

The importance and the role of the illegal study-circles movement in Poland in that time is shown by the fact, that they contributed to educating two generations of the most conscious and socially and politically active Poles. Many of those who organized, thought or participated in study-circles become eventful and event-making citizens.

Two of many students of the Flying University became well known outside Poland. One was an only scientist awarded twice the Nobel Prize, namely Maria Skłodowska-Curie (1867–1934). Upon finishing

her secondary schooling, she undertook courses in anatomy and biology, being able to conduct even some experiments at her uncle's laboratory at the Museum of Industry and Agriculture. She also studied sociology. She kept her contacts with Flying University even after returning from Paris where she obtained her first University degree at Sorbonne.

Another was Henryk Goldszmit (1878–1942), known under his pen-name Janusz Korczak, a doctor, paediatrician, and a writer. He was the one who refused to be rescued from the nazis; instead he shared the fate of Jewish children from his orphanage in Warsaw in gas chambers in the death camp Treblinka. At the Flying University he attended lectures by Jan Wladyslaw Dawid, who presented Wilhelm Wundt's and North American research and ideas on child development and child rearing.

Many graduates of the Flying University got involved in illegal educational and cultural activities of their own. In the first years of the 20th century, with growing tensions preceding 1905 revolution, were established several organizations that dealt with education and social work addressed to young and adult population; among them in 1903 the Educational Society (*Towarzystwo Pedagogiczne*), 1904 The Tutors' Circle (*Kolo Wychowawcow*), 1905 the Association of Mutual Aid Societies (*Zwiazek Towarzystw Samopomocy Społecznej*), 1905 University for Everyone (*Uniwersytet dla Wszystkich*). In 1906 the Flying University surfaced from its underground existence and started to give courses openly; it took a new name: Society of Scientific Courses (*Towarzystwo Kursow Naukowych*). Among the leaders were such different personalities like: Natalia Gasiorowska (1881–1964), historian, student of L. Krzywicki, active in illegal study-circles for women (together with S. Sempolowska), teacher at the „University for Everyone”, active in the Association of Courses for Adult Illiterates, the Polish Culture Society, and after the WWI at the Polish Free University since 1918 (including classes during the Nazi occupation 1939–1944); Kazimierz Czapinski (1882–1941), a democratic socialist, co-founder of Workers' University Association (*Towarzystwo Uniwersytetu Robotniczego*), active in anti-clerical debates; or Antoni Boleslaw Dobrowolski (1872–1954), co-organizer of illegal study-circles for Warsaw students, professor of geophysics and education, polar explorer discovering a *halo* phenomenon, teacher at the Polish Free University

Also in other University cities, and even in smaller towns, similar associations devoted to educational and social needs of adults were

established. Among the first and most active in preparing specialists in adult education/social work was already mentioned "Adam Mickiewicz" People's University in Cracow. Among the persons active in the People's University there were Zofia Daszynska-Golinska (1866–1934), economic historian, demographer and politician; Henryk Elzenberg (1845–1899), lawyer, editor, translator and journalist; Helena Radlinska (1879–1954), educationist, historian, founder of social pedagogy as an academic discipline, participant and – eventually – organizer of a numerous educational initiatives and institutions..

Another institution in Cracow which dealt with training social workers and adult educators was already mentioned Department of Voluntary Work within the institution named Higher Courses for Women. The Department gave courses in civics, pedagogy, psychology, history of education, teaching methods, physical education for children and their safety, hygiene of everyday life, biology and anatomy, librarianship and accounting.

Organizers of these groups were mainly committed activists of a younger generation. Nevertheless one can find quite many familiar names which have already been seen among leaders of organizations from the past; e.g. Jadwiga Dziubinska (see below), Stefania Sempolowska (1870–1944), teacher, writer, radical socialist; Wladyslawa Weychert-Szymanowska (see below).

Those and other initiatives were supported (emotionally and practically), although from different ideological positions, by the 'old masters' – Edward Abramowski (1868–1918) and Ludwik Krzywicki (1859–1941).

Abramowski, a sociologist and philosopher, is best known as an ardent proponent of co-operative movement. During the 1905 revolution he advocated the need to fight against the Tsarist government. However, revolution, to be successful, should be preceded by "moral revolution". Thanks to it people will grow such moral virtues as brotherhood and solidarity. Only then citizens have a possibility to obtain "new consciousness". The most effective means to achieve this goal should be voluntary associations as well as co-operatives active in the field of education, economy, or social aid (Abramowski 1986).

Krzywicki had had a great impact on adult education/social work since early 1880s until his death. He was a scholar of broad education – mainly sociologist with University training in mathematics, medicine, philosophy, anthropology and ethnology;

obtaining his education at universities of Warsaw, Cracow, Leipzig, Paris, Berlin, Lwow. As an ardent democratic socialist and proponent of co-operative movement he devoted much of his time and intellect to various educational, cultural and social initiatives addressed to adult population (Bron-Wojciechowska 1985). He was initiator, or influential organizer, or an influential teacher of several organizations, institutions, or *ad hoc* initiatives.

Among a group of most famous adult educators/social workers of that period were women such as Jadwiga Dziubińska and Władysława Weychert-Szymanowska.

Jadwiga Dziubińska (1871–1937) is a good example of a Polish life course – from *freedom fighter*, through *instructor* to a *professional*. She was a 'graduate' of the 'Flying University' where she studied during 1893–1897. At the same time she worked (unpaid) at the Department of Free Reading Rooms of the Warsaw Charitable Society. Even before attending the courses at the 'Flying University' she taught in an illegal school in a village. In two illegal folk high schools she ran courses in civic education, the Polish language and history despite the explicit ban by the Russian authorities. Together with L. Krzywicki and S. Sempołowska, she was active in the Polish Peasants' Union. When the Union was dissolved by Tsar's government J. Dziubińska joined the S. Staszic Agricultural Circles. In independent Poland she was active in raising educational and cultural standards of the peasantry – being a Member of Parliament or as a teacher of, then operating legally, folk high school. She was one of organizers of the Staszic Institute of Education and Culture and co-founder of the Agricultural Schools Teachers' Union.

Władysława Weychert-Szymanowska (1874–1951) attended lectures at 'Flying University' and took part at study-circle run by Drużewski brothers (both democratic socialists), at the same time she was teaching the Polish history and literature at illegal grammar schools. She was active in Educators' Circle (1905) of the Polish Teachers' Association and in the Association of Courses for Adult Illiterates (1906). She was a member of its board; she also wrote handbooks and organized courses and lectures addressed to social workers and teachers of adults. Among people engaged in these organizations were those, who have been active in other, already mentioned educational initiatives, e.g. Dziubińska, Gasiorowska, Korczak, Kosmowska, Krzywicki, Radlińska, Sempołowska. In independent Poland she gave lectures i.a. at the Staszic Institute of Education and Culture; was a co-founder of the Democratic

Education Society *New Tracks*; and published extensively on education and social needs of the under-privileged.

To the same generation of devoted educators and social workers belonged also Józef Grodecki, Stanisław Kalinowski, Stefania Sempołowska. Later they, and many many others, were called "generation of unsubdued". In their work they were guided by such values, as patriotism, respect for the dignity of every human being, work for the sake of community, common good. Those values formed an ethical code of the "unsubdued". This was the ethics of non-conformism and concordance of words and action (Cywinski 1996; Mencwel 1990).

It was especially the mass illiteracy among adult education that posed a problem for many adult educators and social workers. In 1874 Konrad Prószyński (1851–1908; known under his pen name Kazimierz Promyk), organized a campaign against illiteracy in villages of the Russian Partition. The following year he published his first primer.² In 1879 it appeared in a revised and enlarged edition. His *Illustrated manual for reading and writing for use at schools, at home and for self-learners* [Obrazowa nauka czytania i pisania do użytku szkolnego, domowego i dla samouków] was, in total, printed in 1,310,000 copies. He was a co-founder of an illegal Society of National Education (Towarzystwo Oświaty Narodowej) – an organization which undertook a task of combating illiteracy among adult population. In 1878 he opened in Warsaw a bookshop specializing in popular scientific books.

Helena Radlińska, one of the youngest representatives of the "unsubdued", was explaining that they differed from earlier generation of social-romantics by the fact that their complete devotion to others was replaced by the task of reaching out for human strength. It meant abilities and skills of individuals, groups and whole communities to express themselves in creative and mindful activity. According to Radlińska (1908) the potency existing in people could, and ought to, be used to create a new social deal.

Looking for and awakening people's "sleeping strength" was not a cliché for those *freedom fighters*. The most common form of this activity, i.e. clandestine educational eventually was being transformed according to new needs, opportunities and historical circumstances. Since 1905 it has been mainly the participation in

2 The first Polish primer for adult illiterates appeared already in 1812. Authored by Z. Rościszewski and entitled *Nauka czytania i pisania polskiego* [Manual for reading and writing Polish] was used for teaching Polish soldiers of Napoleon's army.

anti-Russian strike, thus a clear, open and direct struggle with the oppressing state.

It was not different a few years later, when insurrectionist political and military organization led by Jozef Pilsudski was established. Then, educational work was accompanied by military actions and training soldiers. A letter from Radlinska to a well-known social activist Bronisław Wyslouch (1855–1937; he was a peasant movement leader, co-founder of Association of Education's Friends [1890, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Oświaty])) from July 24, 1915 describes this vast activity:

In the [Polish] Kingdom cultural work has begun now on a broader scale. We must use every opportunity and every moment to raise national consciousness in people and awake understanding of civic duties. One of the means is to set up pro-independent libraries, which are to be created in vast numbers soon... (List H. Radlinskiej... 1915).

A still different area of social work of those years (1914–1920) in unveiled through activity of Jadwiga Dziubinska in Russia. She was travelling to Poles in far away Siberian prisons and POWs camps in order to bring words of support and consolation, keep their spirit and organize safe return home. Her mission, as well as other rescue actions, she described in a publication *On a bloody track of incarceration* (1923). Dziubinska is also known of being a co-founder (along yet another committed woman – Zofia Kosmowska) of the first folk high schools of the Danish type on Polish territories.

The experiences and examples of educational and social work on Polish territories were collected, systematized and analysed, by the above mentioned "Adam Mickiewicz" People's University in Cracow. The ultimate goal of this was to build solid foundations of education for the future independent Poland. One of the main achievements of that institution was publication in 1913 of a sizeable volume entitled *Educational Work. The tasks, methods and organization* (Praca oświatowa. Jej zadania, metody, organizacja). This collective work contains the history of educational work in Poland, current and future goals, as well as forms of this work. In short, it was the first in Poland theoretical and methodological outline of social work understood as educational and cultural activity. Among the contributors there were: Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska, Jadwiga Dziubinska, Ludwik Krzywicki, Helena Orsza (Radlinska) and Władysława Weyhert-Szymanowska.

Whilst the State (*i.e.* Tsarist authorities), in late 19th century, did its best to prevent creation of modern society, independent/illegal

educational activities apparently rendered it possible. Committed to this work people found often allies in other social groups. For instance several published in Polish magazines propagated for certain human values which should characterize a 'model citizen'. Oddly, although quite typical for Poland's historical situation, those values could be promulgated only through obituaries (even these eulogies had to undergo a censor scrutiny). The common denominator for the commendations was the praise of intellectual work which, in turn, required a certain level of education and professionalism.

The most frequently mentioned virtues were as follows:

- work apprehended for the country's well – thus, the public was encouraged to choose the nation's interests above the individual ones;
- combating poverty, famine and ignorance – an appeal for social tolerance;
- openness for others' needs – egotism and elitism were evil;
- competence and specialization – respect for professionalism based on a prior education;
- endurance and industriousness – important for maintaining social activity in the years of repressions and pessimism and.

Not surprisingly, these virtues were quite similar the content of courses given within adult education/social work. What is more, all those committed people who work in this field represented all the values of a 'model citizen'.

The importance and the role of the illegal study-circles movement in Poland at that time is shown by the fact, that they contributed to educating two generations of the most conscious and socially and politically active Poles. Many of those who organized, thought or participated in study-circles become eventful and event-making citizens.

Instructor

The conditions and needs of social and educational work changed considerably after 1918. The country was getting up from post-war ruins. Everyday life was difficult because of complicated economic situation, social conflicts, starvation and diseases. The country needed organizers of economic and social life: such as professionals, cooperatives' workers and competent local government officials. Committed individuals, non-governmental organizations, educational authorities of a newly re-established state, the army – all were engaged

in organizing courses for adult illiterates and upgrading courses. The newly founded agriculture schools, folk high schools, adult courses, libraries all needed specialists.

Naturally, staff shortages were also typical for establishing then social services and welfare authorities. The task of training those and other staff was taken at once by social-economic and cultural organizations, such as the “Stanisław Staszic” Institute of Education and Culture of the Countryside (Instytut Oświaty i Kultury Wsi im. ks. St. Staszica), the Central Office for Adult Courses (Centralne Biuro Kursów dla Dorosłych), the Department of Education of the Central Board of Agricultural Cooperatives (Dział Oświaty Centralnego Zarządu Kółek Rolniczych), the Educational Department of the Polish Associations of Consumers (Wydział Wychowawczy Polskich Stowarzyszeń Spożyców) as well as the Union of the Polish Librarians (Związek Bibliotekarzy Polskich).

In an independent Poland adult educators and social workers faced new, challenging, task: to contribute to reconstruction and organization of political and social life. The reconstruction was to result in the formation of people’s agency, in raising an awareness of people’s needs and abilities in accordance with the slogan: *by ourselves for ourselves!* The social-educational work was to teach bases of culture and economy, inform, disseminate, explain and show models. The instructor, in his endeavours to raise effectiveness of his/her work, used simple, clear means, e.g. showing examples of model fields and perfect breed, organizing a library, exhibitions, as well as tacking participants to leading cultural or economic centres.

New target groups were older youth, industrial workforce coming directly from the country-side and unemployment adult. A novel, quite progressive, approach to reach these categories of people was implemented. Adult educators and social workers were trained to be able to deal simultaneously with such varied task as teaching humanities (and civics), training students on vocationally oriented courses, being a competent counsellor as well as advising how to spend leisure time. The chief proponent of such an approach was a representative of a younger generation of committed adult educators, namely Kazimierz Kornilowicz (1892–1939).

Among adult educators there were also „self-taught activists”. These were professionals, who used his/her professional skills in social work. And thus, a medical doctor, for example, promoted the ideas of health education; an agriculture engineer introduced new ways of farming; a teacher developed parents’ concern for their

children’s school progress. They were real leaders, or – to use Radlińska term – „front men”. That was a name given to an outstanding individual, who, through his/her example, was to invigorate the community.

Professional

A *professional* was, on the one hand, to refer to the experience of the predecessors: *freedom fighters* and *instructors*; on the other hand, was to possess professional competences, based on rational and systematic foundations of theory and methodology of social activity.

The origins of Free Polish University (Wolna Wszechnica Polska – WWP) are quite typical for adult education initiatives of the late 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The WWP is a direct continuation of already mentioned above initiatives: the illegal Flying University (1886–1906), the legally operated Society of Scientific Courses (1906–1910), then as the Free Polish University (1910–³). In independent Poland, after 1918, it became a fully fledged higher education establishment. It was a pioneer in terms in creating research and professional foundations of adult education/social work. It was at this particular University where the College of Social and Educational Work (Studium Pracy Społeczno-Oświatowej WWP), founded by Helena Radlińska, was established in 1925.

Keeping up with its tradition, the WWP gathered outstanding scholars as its own faculty. Courses in the College were given by the leading scholars and professionals, i.a. Józef Czesław Babicki (child care), Józef Chalasinski (sociology), Stefan Czarnowski (history of culture), Marian Falski (librarianship), Sergiusz Hessen (organization of cultural life), Ludwik Krzywicki (sociology), Józef Mikulowski-Pomorski (adult education), Władysław Radwan (adult education). Also representatives of science, culture and art, such as Aleksander Zelwerowicz or Janusz Korczak cooperated with the college (Orsza-Radlińska 1925, Radlińska 1928b).

In accordance with H. Radlińska’s definition of social pedagogy, including cultural-educational work, the College was educating students in the following four specializations: adults’ teaching,

3 The WWP worked throughout the whole inter-war period. It continued its classes illegally during the war and openly, until 1948. Then, it was, parallel to a numerous other associations, institutions and NGOs, closed down by the communist regime. In 1957, during the so-called „thaw period”, the WWP tradition was again revived by creation of the Society of the Free Polish Univ. (Towarzystwo Wolnej Wszechnicy Polskiej – TWWP).

organization of social life, librarianship, mother and child care. Two-years courses were given to those who already had some work experience or studied at/graduated from a college or University. The curricula of the College provided the students with philosophical foundations and the historical background of studied phenomena.

The theoretical foundations of education at the College stem from the concept of social pedagogy defined by H. Radlinska as "*mutual influence of environment and the strength of individuals transforming the environment*" "*wzajemnym oddziaływaniem wpływów środowiska i przekształcających środowisko sił jednostek*" (Radlińska 1935:15). Radlinska believing in agency of every human, sought in people creators of own reality, noticing their abilities, not their shortages; trying to make the strength of individuals and groups more dynamic, involving them into the work on "a better tomorrow". The category "better tomorrow" meant for her fuller, spiritually richer, more comprehensive life and reality based on principles of democracy. It "new" Poland everyone will have a right and real chances of access to culture as well as electing and controlling local and state authorities.

The graduates of the College of Social and Educational Work should – ideally – be the people with close links to their communities, „walking in the crowd, and not in front of it”, interested in both individual matters of a person, as well as general problems of the community; brave and non-conformist. They ought to be aware of necessity to continue their studies, to constantly update their competences. To do so, they were encouraged to participate in research projects. The latter requirements was an innovative element in their professional education.

According to Radlinska's ideas, adult education/social work would not constitute a separate profession, but it rather be a core of various social and educational professions. Unlike their predecessors, adult educators/social workers of 1920's and 1930's, could work freely and openly, without the pathos, without the image of a missionary. The so, apparently, modern concept of empowerment and inclusiveness was not alien to Radlinska. Almost eighty years ago she wrote the following:

Bringing energy out of individuals and of human groups – this is the key of the social work of our times. It tries to transform communal life and thereby the life of individuals through effort and creativity, through the powers of everyone. It discovers, awakens and organizes latent powers, and shows methods of action (Radlinska 1928a:5).

Aleksandra Majewska, a student of the College, and later

Radlinska's collaborator, carried out research to find an answer to „Who and why undertook social studies?”. The author has shown that the largest group was that of teachers (applicants to the College had to have a proof of social practice experience). The other candidates were mostly trade unions officers, youth and cooperative activists, even junior researchers. The most frequent motives for studying was the willingness to broaden their education in the area of social sciences (Majewska 1981).

The College of Social and Educational Work, like the whole Free Polish University, was serving a broad spectrum of the young adults and youth, who could not afford University education. It is clearly stated in a letter of the WWP Senate to the Minister of Religious Creed and Public Enlightenment of February 7, 1938:

Due to relatively low fees (from 160 to 320 zł) and classes... run in the afternoon, the participants of the Free Polish University, include a considerable percentage of the youth with peasant (small farmers – 20 per cent) and workers (14 per cent) background, as well as a rather substantial percentage of people already gainfully employed... (List Senatu Akademickiego... WWP 1938).

The College was not the only institution for the training of social workers and adult educators at that time in Poland. There were also two other schools: the Catholic Social School in Poznan as well as the College of Social Work in Lwow. Research on a wide range of social, cultural, health and economic questions was carried out in two other places: the Institute of Social Economy, (founded in 1921 by Krzywicki) and the Institute of Social Affairs (headed by Kazimierz Kornilowicz since 1931).

Three above described types of adult educators/social workers: *freedom fighter – instructor – professional*, laid foundations for further development of the professionalism after WWII. Radlinska continued the education of professionals in the field of social work and cultural work. This was the aim of the Chair of Social Pedagogy at the Lodz University, which she founded in 1945 as well as of the Polish Institute of Social Services (1946). In 1949, after the communist take-over in Poland, these two institutions were closed down. Only after 1957 (the so-called thaw period) Radlinska's former students re-activated the work of institutions for the training of specialists in the field of social work. In 1957 a Chair of Social Pedagogy was set up at the Warsaw University (soon after a Chair of Pedagogy of Adults was opened there, too) and in 1961 re-established at the University of Lodz.

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