

The Educational Role of the Journals of Social and Educational Associations in the Second Republic of Poland as Exemplified by “Citizen Work” of the Women’s Citizen Work Association

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The organisational press, as exemplified by “Praca Obywatelska”, published by ZPOK, served a vital role from the point of view of the reborn state, its administration, and local government, as well as the expectations of broader social circles (particularly women) and political parties; it fulfilled the awakened demand and expectations of engaged women citizens in the areas of information on the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the country, its regions, and local communities.

The press of women’s organisations defended the interests of women and facilitated the forming of their political, social, and economic beliefs. It was a tool of propaganda and political agitation in various local and central events; it popularised the ideologies and programmes of political parties and expressed the convictions of particular sections of public opinion, while bringing together clearly defined political and creative circles. This press also served to develop various social initiatives and fulfil the cultural needs of intellectuals, and it participated actively in the popularisation of interest in the country, regions, and local communities.

Key words: Women’s Citizen Work Association, journals of social and educational organisations, “Praca Obywatelska”, Second Republic of Poland (1918–1939).

The Women’s Citizen Work Association (Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet, hereinafter: ZPOK) was one of the most influential women’s organisations in the Sanation movement in interwar Poland. At the peak of its development the association had over 31 thousand members. It was established on March 25, 1928 and continued without interruption until the outbreak of World War II.

The association took a clear social and political stance. Its political agenda was expressed in the pursuit to increase the political awareness and independence of women in the spirit of the Sanation movement. The idea of “sanation” (i.e. healing) of political life was particularly important for the activists of the Association as it was related to the image of a woman that was developed at the beginning of the Second Republic of Poland – the image of an active woman, a healer of the relationships in public life, which was meant to contribute to the forming of a state founded on “a truly democratic system, calling all the citizens, equal in their rights without exceptions, to work creatively toward its good”.¹ In this address the activists of the Association saw the chance for women to achieve legitimate citizenship consisting in full participation in public life, on which they had had no influence previously.

For this reason the main aim in the work of ZPOK was to encourage women to be active and to educate them as citizens, to create a “new type of Polish woman citizen” who was aware of her rights and duties as a citizen, interested in the affairs of the state, independent, and who felt responsible for the state and participated in the work to “raise the ethical, cultural, economic, and social levels”.²

Thus the Association undertook the task of realising a new model of the education of female citizens, which was compatible with the main aims of the state. Hanna Pohoska,³ who developed the assumptions and the ideological stance of the citizen education for ZPOK, wrote that: “it is to be our ideal to create a citizen aware of their duties to the state, able to fulfil them and possessed of an inherent need to fulfil their duties”.⁴

An important element of the promoted image of a “new woman citizen” was the obligation to be politically active. This was understood as the

¹ Moraczewska, Z. (1928). Nasz program. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 1, p. 4.

² Z Kongresu Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet (1938). In *Kobiety w Pracy*, Issue 9; *Statut Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet* (1931). Warszawa.

³ Leader of ZPOK, its president throughout 1936–1938. Between 1931 and 1933 she was the chair of the Commission of Citizen Education in the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, which was responsible for the reform of the school curriculum.

⁴ Pohoska, H. (1932). Wychowanie obywatelskie. In *Almanach. Kalendarz ZPOK. Rok 1932*. Warszawa, pp. 20–22. According to Pohoska “the realm of citizen educational ought to be the family, the school, and all the organisations in the state of Poland who focus in their work on the idea of the good of society and the state”. That is why she assigned proper aims and methods of citizen education to each of the mentioned environments. The highest emphasis was placed upon the tasks and the methods of citizen education in social and political organisations.

necessity to know about the current political situation and to participate in elections. The leaders of the Association would frequently emphasise that participation in elections was one of the crucial citizen duties that women ought to fulfil.⁵ However, what was stressed first and foremost was the social activity of women in the women's citizenship model realised by the Association. One of the leaders of the Association, Leokadia Śliwińska, underlined that social work, which encouraged the members of ZPOK to be active "in the interest of the common good of the society and the state", was to constitute a vital element of the process of citizen education as a way of shaping the moral stance of the members and forming their sense of self-worth.⁶

In the image of an active woman citizen created by ZPOK, high importance was attached to "woman's nature" and women's competences arising from their traditional social roles as mothers and wives which provided women's citizenship with a special value in the life of the nation and the state.⁷

Thus, tasks connected with educating society were among the duties of modern, active women citizens. Women citizens were to take care "that Polish society be raised to a high level, that ethics in the broadest of their understanding, unconditional integrity in public and private life, a deep sense of honour, civil courage, honesty in the selection of methods and righteousness in action be a habit of the contemporary generations and all the citizens of Poland".⁸ They were also supposed to make certain that they "bring forth the values of order, harmony, and selflessness in politics, the ability of creative effort, and a healthy social instinct".⁹

The domination of social activity in the work of the members of ZPOK was a necessity and the result of their leaders' perception of a connection between the low interest that the general population of women had in public affairs and their life situation: poverty, too many domestic and family duties, the lack of leisure time and proper education.¹⁰ That is why the care for the development of the education of women, raising their professional qualifications, combating discrimination on the labour market and the establishment of care institutions were to be an

⁵ Dufurat, J. (2013). *W służbie obozu marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego. ZPOK (1928–1939)*, Kraków–Wrocław, p. 172.

⁶ Śliwińska, L. (1933). Obowiązki członkiń ZPOK. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 24, p. 4.

⁷ Ibidem, pp. 172–173.

⁸ Moraczewska, Z. (1932). *Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*. Warszawa, p. 11.

⁹ *Odezwa*. In *Prosta Droga* 1930, Issue 36, p. 1.

¹⁰ Dufurat, J. (2013). op. cit., p. 173.

indispensable element of the process of the development of women's citizenship.¹¹

The views of the leaders were reflected in the structure as well as the programme of the Association, which combined activities for the good of the society and the state with everyday efforts to strengthen the social and economic position of women.

In practice ZPOK was a social organisation with the mission of "pulling up" typically uneducated women through encouraging them to become engaged in public affairs (mainly through social and educational work, which in practice dominated over political efforts). One of the main forms of the activity of the Association was therefore the organisation of public readings and lectures on matters of society and the state, establishing educational centres and dayrooms, as well as conducting courses¹² and publishing journals in which the model of an active woman citizen that was accepted and promoted by the Association was propagated along with the model of education necessary to achieve it.

The Association achieved its aims through eight specialised Departments/Referee Committees.¹³ The highest importance from the perspective of the aims of the Association – that is, the realisation (education towards) the new ideal (model) of a woman citizen and forming correct citizen attitudes according to the ideology of the Association – lay with the Department/Referee Committee of Citizen Education, and in the realm of propaganda and education – the Press Department/Referee Committee which, as Zofia Moraczewska wrote in 1932 – "stood out in educational and ideological work, in the spreading

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Chojnowski, A. (1996). Moralność i polityka. Kobiecte lobby w Bezpartyjnym Bloku współpracy z Rządem. In *Kobieta i świat polityki w niepodległej Polsce 1918–1939*. Ed. A. Szwarz, A. Żarnowska. Warszawa, p. 167. Specialist and legal counselling centres were established for girls and women seeking employment or with problems in private and family life. Care and help centres were set up as well.

¹³ To realise its ideas the Association was properly structured: the basic territorial and organisational unit was the urban and rural Branches which were combined into Poviaste Associations at the poviaste level. Poviaste Associations made up the Voivodeship Associations and the level of the voivodeship. These were in direct communication with the Main Board in Warsaw where the work was divided between the particular departments: Citizen Education, Women's Affairs, Care for the Mother and the Child, Economic Production, Rural Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Press, Financial. The equivalent of the Departments with the Main Board was the Referee Committees organised with the Boards of the Voivodeship Associations. According to the data of the Main Board in 1930 ZPOK had approximately 31 thousand Members in 360 Branches and in 1933 – 37,703 Members in 827 Branches.

of our ideas". Hanna Żóttowska, in turn, in 1936 wrote: "the Press Referee Committees ought to develop the propaganda of our journals, to have the ambition that all the members in their reach do read them, and to understand that the regular reading of our journals forms the members in a proper way", she claimed that the press has an enormous educational influence.¹⁴

In 1932 Press Referee Committees functioned in 150 Branches in the whole of Poland, and in 1938 there were 251 of them. In the Referee Committees the work was organised and led by press clerks who, as part of their job, apart from preparing and publishing press materials were to:

- develop and form aware and intelligent readers through reading the association journals on every occasion and conducting discussions about the articles;
- be excellent organisers of the distribution of "Praca Obywatelska" (Citizen Work) and "Prosta Droga" (A Straight Path) and the publications of the Association;
- be passionate in acquiring new subscribers;
- send the subscription fees to the Main Board in Warsaw regularly and meticulously;
- write reports on the work and independent articles to both the Association journals;
- publish articles on the work of the Association in the local press;
- send the press clerks on conferences and press staff training courses organised by the Association.¹⁵

The basic task of a Press Department/Referee Committee was publishing, through which the basic aims of the Association were realised, according to par. 4 point e of the statute of ZPOK in which it was written that the aims set by the organisation were all to be met by the publication of journals.

The Press Department published two journals: "Praca Obywatelska" (which was the main organ of the Association) and "Prosta Droga" (a weekly popular with the general population of women – "for a less developed reader" – in which articles were published on politics and social affairs, education, culture, ethics, history, literature, problems of women and households, as well as novels in parts)¹⁶ as well as the

¹⁴ Żóttowska, H. (1936). Wychowanie obywatelskie a prasa ZPOK. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 8, pp. 9–10.

¹⁵ Ceysingerówna, H. (1936). Problem prasy w ZPOK. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 8, pp. 8–9.

¹⁶ The weekly had two supplements: *Życie wsi*, and *Nasza świetlica*.

Instructor's Library of the Association, as part of which until 1938 eighteen volumes/titles were printed. The subject matter of the titles published as part of the Library was diverse and encompassed problems of social, cultural, and educational work¹⁷. Brochures were printed as well as detailed instructions on various forms of work (e.g. "Instructions on establishing kindergartens", "Instructions on establishing day nurseries", "Postcard with the logo of the Association").

The work in the Press Departments/Referee Committees consisted in writing articles to the local press, distributing journals and other publications of the Association, writing reports and correspondence between the Branches of the Association and with organisations and institutions that the Association cooperated with (apart from publishing two journals of their own the activists of the Association would also publish their own articles on the work of the Branches which provided the opportunity to have a broader impact, not only on the members of the Association or readers sympathising with it, but also on local communities).¹⁸

To increase the quality of the journalist staff in the Department/Referee Committees the Main Board of ZPOK organised specialist courses and training meetings "that were to theoretically and practically train these young writing forces for the benefit of the Association".¹⁹

¹⁷ As part of the Instructor's Library of ZPOK the following works were published: (1) Hanna Pohoska *Wychowanie państwowo-obywatelskie*; (2) Zofia Moraczewska *Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*; (3) *Almanach spraw kobiecych* edited by Hermina Naglerowa, Helena Ceysingerówna, Maria Rychterówna, Maria Kuźmińska; (4) Helena Witkiewicz Mokrzycka *Dziecka a służba społeczna*; (5) *Praca świetlicowa* by multiple authors; (6) Anna Szelągowska *Międzynarodowe organizacje kobiece*; (7) Maria Jaworska *Kultura życia zbiorowego*; (8) Helena Kraheńska *Praca młodocianych a opieka społeczna*; (9) Maria Dąbrowska *Codzienna praca*; (10) Nela Samotyhowa *Potrzeba kultury i piękna w dzisiejszym życiu Polski*; (11) Janina Strzelecka *Cele i zadania wychowawcze teatru dla dzieci i młodzieży*; (12) Marian Gromski *Stacja Opieki nad matką i dzieckiem*; (13) Helena Ceysingerówna *Jak Monika hodowała jedwabniki*; (14) Michalina Mościcka by multiple authors; (15) Zofia Ostromecka *Rozmowy Jagny z Marysieńką*; (16) Sabina Marcinkowska *Książka pracy świetlicy*; (17) Janina Miedzińska *Przymusowy rok bezczynności młodzieży*; (18) Teodora Męczkowska *Z dziejów szkolnictwa żeńskiego w Warszawie*.

¹⁸ Siemieńska, H. (1938). *Wydział Spraw Kobiecych*. In *Praca Obywatelska*, nr 5–6, p. 35. Articles were published in the journals of other organisations such as – Soldier's Family and the Association of Women Government Administration Employees and in specialist journals in Warsaw, such as: *Opieka Społeczna*, *Warszawskie Czasopismo Lekarskie*, *Zdrowie*, *Przegląd Policyjny*.

¹⁹ Moraczewska, Z. (1933). *Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*, Ed. II, Warszawa, p. 64.

The necessity of their own press organ, a tool/means which could be used to carry out their aims and tasks, seemed obvious to the leaders of the association. Hermina Naglerowa justified the need to publish the organisation's own journal as follows: "The Organisational press is indispensable. It explains the aim and the necessity of organisational tasks, summarises the results of the current work, explains events that take place in the country and abroad, defends women's rights and fights for the realisation of those rights, provides supplementary materials in citizen and political education, and makes one acquainted with the problems of writing and artistic culture. And furthermore, it attempts to (...) not only be a reflection of the life of the organisation, but to anticipate and initiate the future tasks".²⁰

The role that the organisational press played in the dissemination of ideas, and its popularity among women, came as a great surprise even to the leaders of the Association. In 1933 Moraczewska wrote: "a great role in the life of our Association, a role that we had not in any way anticipated, is that of our press. She who wants to know about the Association, its lively present, aims and ways, struggles and difficulties, reaches first for both the journals: "Praca Obywatelska" and "Prosta Droga", and when she finds what she was looking for... she joins the Association!".²¹

The publishing of their own journal soon appeared to be a necessity for the developing young organisation. "Praca Obywatelska" was to be, on the one hand, "a faithful reflection of all that is happening within the Association, and on the other, cement holding together all the parts of the organisation in a single entity",²² a type of a printed newsletter. And that was the form which the journal assumed in the first period of publication. However, with time the programme and propaganda articles came to the foreground; these paved the way for the Association in its political and social work, and the frames of a simple newsletter became too small, and the original form of the monthly became inappropriate due to the "impatient life pulsing within the Association".²³

The necessity to propagate and popularise the ideas of the Association among the general population of women resulted in the

²⁰ Naglerowa, H. (1938). Dziesięć lat prasy ZPOK. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 5–6, pp. 64–65.

²¹ Moraczewska, Z. (1933). *Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*, Ed. II, Warszawa, pp. 62–63.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 63.

²³ *Ibidem*.

establishment of "Prosta Droga" which "easily made its way to the minds of even very little intellectual and ideal preparation, giving great service to the Association"²⁴. The articles published in this journal were frequently read in even the remotest villages and towns, in so-called "work circles" and they constituted a subject for discussion in the meetings in numerous branches.

The popularity that the organisational press enjoyed among female readers in the initial stages of their publication emboldened the leaders of the Association to undertake efforts to initiate and publish their own journal. The Head of the Press Department and simultaneously the chief editor of the journal "Prosta Droga" Helena Ceysingerówna wrote: "having developed female pens on one side, and aware and willing readers on the other – we are going to consider publishing a journal that could fulfil our dearest common wishes. We want to create an everyday women's press which:

- is independent, unrestrained, self-sufficient, expressing the convictions, desires, and aims of a thinking modern woman;
- reflects all the directions of the work of the contemporary woman citizen;
- defines new worlds of thought and action;
- paves the way for a brave, independent, creative initiative in all areas;
- shapes the new type of a woman reborn;
- shapes the general population of female readers and writers".²⁵

Unfortunately this brave plan/idea was never realised. The enthusiasm of the leaders of the Association as to the increase of the number of their readers was too high. The sales figures and the number of subscriptions fell substantially in the times of the economic crisis; in the second half of the 1930s the Association was unable to raise the print run.

"Praca Obywatelska" was first published in 1928. The first issue is dated November 10, 1928, the second – December 28, 1928. The journal was not published regularly, first as a monthly (until December 1929), and from 1930 as a biweekly. The final issue was published on August 15, 1939. Altogether 239 issues were printed. The first editor-in-chief was Maria Rychterówna and from the issue 5/1935 the periodical was edited by Dr. Hermina Naglerowa. Two years later (from the issue 4/1939) Zofia Popławska was made the editor-in-chief, and from the issue 4/1939 it was Maria Matuszewska.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Moraczewska, Z. (1933). *Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*, Ed. II, Warszawa, pp. 64–65.

“Praca Obywatelska”, just like many other organisational journals, was to serve, according to the programme, “the role of disseminating opinions and information, allowing everyone to clearly understand all the affairs” (...), it was to “spread the ideology of the organisation, attracting followers”;²⁶ it was to be an expression of the ideology of the organisation, a connection and an informer.²⁷ That is how it fulfilled an educational role. “The educational aim would lie in the development in the broad masses of women of moral and intellectual values, while at the same time forming a conscious and active citizen stance. Among the moral values it was mainly about awakening altruism, selflessness, a sense of honour and dignity in team work”;²⁸ the intention was also to teach women to persevere in their work towards the chosen goals.

Through its journal the Association intended to realise “political and citizen education, that is, to deepen and broaden the knowledge of citizens, to shape civil and social attitudes, to lead activities in the realm of the legal and moral duties of the citizen”.²⁹

Unlike “Prosta Droga” the journal did not immediately become popular among the ZPOK members. Throughout the first years of its publication the importance of the organisational press of this kind for initiating, cementing, and leading the activities of the Association was not noticed. Particularly in the times of the economic crisis, when the Association would mostly focus on charity in their work, when emphasis was placed on providing direct help, the importance of the organisational press in the shaping of attitudes compatible with the ideology expressed and propagated by the Association went unnoticed – “charity work would completely dominate over ideological, economic, educational, and cultural efforts”.³⁰ The sales dropped noticeably. This led to enormous financial difficulties for the editorial board. The members of ZPOK cancelled their subscriptions (the sales of the journal prevalently relied on member subscriptions). The Branches’ payments were overdue. Debt grew. In an attempt to offset the situation it was made obligatory for Branches to subscribe to at least 2 copies of “Praca Obywatelska” and 3 copies of “Prosta Droga”.³¹ The situation was turned round after 1936. The sales increased and all the debts were paid.

²⁶ Naglerowa, H. (1938). Dziesięć lat prasy ZPOK. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 5–6, pp. 61–65.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Jaroszewiczowa, H. (1938). 1928–1938 r. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 5–6, p. 6.

²⁹ Wolska, L. (1938). ZPOK jako organizacja polityczna. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 5–6, p. 8.

³⁰ Ceysingerówna, H. (1936). Problem prasy w ZPOK. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 8, p. 8.

³¹ Ibidem.

The journal was established and run in the Press Department of the Main Board of ZPOK; its initiators as well as the first members of the Department were: Helena Ceysingerówna (head of the Department, sole editor of "Prosta Droga"), Maria Rychterówna (deputy to head of Department, the first editor of "Praca Obywatelska"), Maria d'Andree (secretary), Natalia Greniewska (treasurer), and members of the Department: Sylwina Bogucka, Łucja Kipowa, Jadwiga Krawczyńska, Anna Minkowska, Hermina Naglerowa, and Janina Strzelecka. The journal was addressed to those members of the organisation of higher intellectual development and political and citizen awareness ("Prosta Droga" – first as a monthly, then as a weekly – was addressed to "the broadest masses of women – the villages, the towns, the cities – to popularise the ideology of ZPOK").³² The Department developed guidelines for the journals – they aimed to: (1) be concerned with all the branches of the work of the organisation, (2) publish articles presenting the times of the national struggle for independence with the particular issues dedicated to the corresponding anniversaries and national holidays, (3) foster close relations with the field.³³ "Praca Obywatelska" was to "serve as a connection between women, keeping up their spirits, educating and informing, and inspiring the broad masses of women to unite".³⁴

In the journal the problems of the state were addressed, and current social, political, economic, and cultural affairs were discussed "factually and meticulously". Articles on political and social subjects, announcements, and all the instructions pertaining to the functioning of the Association were printed. The aim and the necessity of organisational tasks were explained, the results of completed work were presented, and the events taking place in Poland and abroad were interpreted. The organisational press defended women's rights and fought for the upholding of those rights, provided supplementary material for political and civil education, presented the problems of readership and artistic culture, and initiated organisational activity. Throughout the time of the functioning of the journal efforts were made to stick to the ideological line, regardless of the circumstances. A modern graphic layout was designed, and the published materials were illustrated with graphics, photographs, and drawings. The texts were written in clear, simple language.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Naglerowa, H. (1938). Dziesięć lat prasy ZPOK. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 5–6, p. 64.

³⁴ Matuszewska, M. (1938). Dzisiaj i jutro naszej organizacji. In *Praca Obywatelska*, Issue 5–6, pp. 11–12.

The journal was divided into different columns and specialist sections in which the proper subject matter was discussed. The biggest section was the one pertaining to ideology, politics, history and memories, and the columns discussing the affairs of the Association. In these columns articles were published explaining, broadening, and inspiring reflection on ideological subjects; the internal affairs of the country were discussed, the difficulties that the state had to face; comments were printed on the most important moments of the life of the state and the society; journalists presented reports on the work of the Branches and the centres of the Association; and internal problems of the organisation were discussed. The section of women's affairs was of equal importance from the point of view of the journal. What was discussed there were all the problems pertaining to the lives of women, in particular issues connected with the employment of women, their wages, reductions, emancipation, their role in social and economic life, and in the family. Biographies of outstanding female activists were also published.

An important and greatly developed section was that of education and readership, where problems pertaining to the life of schools, their aims and tasks, the educational work of the organisation and upbringing in the family were discussed; the problem of readership was also tackled – advice was provided on what to read, and lists of valuable books were provided. The cultural section was of crucial educational importance. Polish culture and art were promoted in it, with particular emphasis placed on the works and the achievements of women; the readers were introduced to the world of music, poetry, visual arts, which was to elevate them.

In the economic section, in turn, economic achievements of the country were presented and a rational model of economic activity in Polish society and families was promoted. A series of articles was published in the journal discussing the current international political, economic, and social situation (with a focus placed on the problems of women in these areas).³⁵ What was printed were also (starting in 1936) the selected thoughts, quotes, discussions, and guidelines of a political and educational character made by Marshal Józef Piłsudski;³⁶ novels of instructive value were printed in parts.

The organisational press, as exemplified by “Praca Obywatelska” published by ZPOK served a vital role from the point of view of the reborn

³⁵ E.g. Emilia Brunerowa (1935). *Sprawa kobieca we Francji* (Issue 15, pp. 11–13).

³⁶ E.g. Zofia Poptawska (1936). *Wychowawca młodzieży. O wpływie Marszałka* (Issue 9, pp. 8–9); *Marszałek Piłsudski o wychowaniu fizycznym* (1935). (Issue 10, pp. 4–6).

state, its administration, and local government, as well as the expectations of broad social circles (particularly women) and political parties; it fulfilled the awakened demand and expectations of engaged women citizens in the areas of information on the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the country, its regions, and local communities.

The press of women's organisations defended the interests of women, and facilitated the forming of their political, social, and economic beliefs; it was a tool of propaganda and political agitation in different local and central activities; it popularised the ideologies and programmes of political parties and expressed the convictions of particular sections of public opinion, while bringing together clearly defined political and creative circles. It also served to develop various social initiatives and fulfil the cultural needs of the intellectuals, and it participated actively in the popularisation of interest in the country, regions, and local communities.

In "Praca Obywatelska" a number of political, social, economic, and cultural events were initiated; people were called to participate in activities and events. The journal was educational, formed state and national identity, and influenced the attitudes and activity of women in interwar Poland.