

Women in the Service of Independent Poland

Mirosław Piwowarczyk / e-mail: miroslawpiwowarczyk@gmail.com
Institute of Pedagogy, University of Wrocław, Poland

Piwowarczyk, M. (2019). Women in the service of independent Poland. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 11/1, 10–22.
<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2019-002>

The paper presents the ideological assumptions of the educational work of National Organisation of Women and Women's Citizen Work Association. What is also discussed are the aims, the forms, and the means of the educational work used by the activists-leaders of the organisations, thanks to which Polish women, aware of their rights and duties, were educated to participate in service to the state and the society.

Key words: *Second Republic of Poland; women's organisations; citizen education; civil education; Women's Citizen Work Association; National Women's Organisation*

After the restoration of Polish independence the situation of women in public life changed significantly. First of all, women were granted the right to vote. They have also been guaranteed the right to work and to associate freely, as well as to benefit from education on all of its levels. They would use these rights to various extents. This used to influence their attitudes and participation in social life, which was expressed in, among others, participation in women's associations which, in spite of their ideological differences, shared common aims. The most important of these goals included: improving women's position in the Polish society and making women more active in the realms of public, political, and social life, as well as the life of the state.¹

The new reality (with the new legal status and social change) called for the creation of a new image of woman who could be the creator of social life equally with men. As Dobrochna Kałwa points out, the discourse of the first years of the Second Republic of Poland which was conducted by women's societies was characterised by the need to present women with new challenges, to articulate their own demands towards the state, to define the change that the women's work would bring in the future in the life of the society and the state, the life which had not been available to women previously.²

¹ Łozowska-Marcinkowska K. (2010). *Sprawy niewieście. Problematyka czasopism kobiecych Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Female problems. The problems discussed in women's journals in the Second Republic of Poland], Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, p. 35.

These new needs, as well as the new life attitudes, called for the creation of a new, clearly defined model and image of the woman as an active, dedicated individual who is aware of her rights and duties.³

The years 1918–1939 were characterised by enormous changes in the area of social and political activation of women in Poland. It was for the first time that they were able to run in parliamentary elections and vote; they were also able to work in women's organisations, with great dedication.⁴ This new situation has substantially empowered women as citizens with full rights. Because of this, most women's organisations, regardless of their main profile, would attempt to shape their members as model citizens.⁵

The basic aims of the numerous women's associations and societies (except for the strictly charitable ones) included shaping citizen awareness and the awareness of the consequences of enjoying rights equal to those of men. Such aims were to be found in the programme and in the work of many organisations, among others, the Political Committee of Progressive Women (Komitet Polityczny Kobiet Postępowych), Association of Women with Higher Education (Stowarzyszenie Kobiet z Wyższym Wykształceniem), Women's Citizen Work Association (Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet), and National Organisation of Women (Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet).⁶

The programmes of many of the organisations included the same elements. The formation of pro-state and pro-citizen attitudes was emphasised, and slogans of self-help would be invoked. The women's organisations would differ in their stance on the question of the role and the place of women in Polish society. These were clearly visible ideological and political differences which were translated into the type of women who would become members and the aims defined in the programmes – in their scope, as Kamila Łozowska-Marcinkowska writes, revolutionary goals were hardly ever to be found. Women would not postulate

² Kałwa D. (2000). Model kobiety aktywnej na tle sporów światopoglądowych. Ruch feministyczny w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym [Model of the active woman and ideological dispute. Feminist movement in the interwar period]. In Żarnowska A., Szwarc A. (eds.), *Równe prawa i nierówne szanse. Kobiety w Polsce międzywojennej* [Equal rights and unequal chances. Women in interwar Poland], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, pp. 139–140.

³ Ibid., p. 141.

⁴ Skibiński P. (2018). *Polska 1918*. Warszawa: Muza. Sport i Turystyka, p. 440.

⁵ Sierakowska K. (2009). Samoorganizowanie się kobiet w II Rzeczypospolitej: dążenia, szanse, realizacje [Self-organisation of women in the Second Republic of Poland: aims, chances, realisations]. In Janiak-Jasińska A., Sierakowska K., Szwarc A. (eds.), *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki... Samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich po 1918 roku (na tle porównawczym)*. Tom II [Social activists, feminists, citizens... Self-organisation of women in Polish lands after 1918 (against a comparative background) Vol II], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, p. 47.

⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

breaking up ties with the family or to take up the roles and the positions of men. The women's movement in Polish lands had to take into consideration the generally prevalent attitudes, which is why there was no radical feminism in Poland.⁷ That is why, the non-feminist women's organisations, which emphasised national, religious, social, and vocational aims, would attach great importance to working for the benefit of women through care, help, social activation, professional, cultural, and health education, and participation in the fight against legal discrimination.⁸

The most popular forms of women's work included all types of social and educational work, which allowed women to make use of their individual tastes, skills, and competences. Work as part of associations and organisation provided women with the opportunity to create the cultural character of local communities, development of their communities, and at the same time did not collide with their family duties. "Mission" – and such perception of women's activity was, according to D. Kałwa, the keyword for the protagonists of making women citizens – ought to be realised in all the forms of undertaken efforts. Therefore, what stood before women who would undertake any kind of work, was the necessity to answer the question about their potential input into the broadly understood public and social good.⁹

Most of women's organisations worked in accordance with the traditional division of gender roles, seeing in the women who take active part in public and civil life first and foremost the propagators of moral and ethical values. The ideas formulated in this way would attract numbers of women to the organisations which, using equal rights, saw their calling in fulfilling the roles of mothers and wives.¹⁰

Joanna Dufurat maintains that the organised women's movement characterised by a great diversity of aims and political associations would largely, in its public work, to the areas which had traditionally been reserved for women; the realms of care and education, in the broad understanding of the term.¹¹

Women's organisations and associations, although numerous and diverse as to their political stance and subjects of their work, in spite of the favourable interwar legal conditions and the attempts made, never became mass organisations.

⁷ Łozowska-Marcinkowska K. (2010). *Sprawy niewieście...*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁸ Kałwa D. (2000). *Model kobiety aktywnej...*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹¹ Dufurat J. (2009). Jak włączyć kobiety w świat działań publicznych? Problemy organizacyjne Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet (1928–1939) [How to involve women in the world of public work? Organisational problems of Women's Citizen Work Association]. In Janiak-Jasińska A., Sierakowska K., Szwarz A. (eds.), *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki... Samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich po 1918 roku (na tle porównawczym)*. Tom II, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, p. 295.

Organised women's movement remained an area of the work of narrow social circles; it remained an elitist movement, founded in the communities of landowners, intellectuals, and civil servants. However, this movement would greatly contribute to the broadening of the circle of active and reactive women, not only in the realm of politics, but also in other traditional and new areas of public life: education, culture, economy, and cooperatives.¹²

On the basis of the available sources and data it is difficult to precisely define the number of women engaged in the life of associations between the years 1918 and 1939. It is estimated that about 3% of women were active, from among the 11 million women over 15 years of age in 1930, which produces the number of about 330,000 women active in organisations.¹³ On the national level, the participation of women in political life was insignificant. For example, the number of female members of parliament and senate in the years 1919–1939 never exceeded 2% of the MPS and 4% of the senators. Therefore, they were not numerous, taking into account that throughout these years there over 2,000 persons sitting in both the chambers.¹⁴

In the interwar period the women's activity was evidently led by educated persons from the circles of landowners, intellectuals, civil servants, and even aristocrats.¹⁵ To an insignificant extent the role of the leaders of the women's movement was assumed by representatives of other social groups – workers, servants, or farmers. The female members of parliament, as Monika Piotrowska-Marchewa points out – elected between the years 1919–1938 came from the stratum of intelligentsia, with women of landowner and rural origins constituting exceptions.¹⁶

The engagement of women in the work of the organisations, even if we assume that the real group of women would only constitute a few percent of the general female population, was the proof that women in various social circles felt an increasing need to be active in public and civil life, and to work for the benefit of their local communities.¹⁷

¹² Chojnowski A. (2000). Aktywność kobiet w życiu politycznym [Women's activity in political life]. In Janiak-Jasińska A., Sierakowska K., Szwarc A. (eds.), *Równe prawa i nierówne szanse. Kobiety w Polsce międzywojennej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, p. 48; Also: Żarnowska A. (2000). Obywatelki II Rzeczypospolitej [Female citizens of the Second Republic of Poland]. In Żarnowska A., Szwarc A. (eds.), *Równe prawa i nierówne szanse. Kobiety w Polsce międzywojennej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, p. 291.

¹³ Sierakowska K. (2009). Samoorganizowanie się kobiet w II Rzeczypospolitej..., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁴ Piotrowska-Marchewa M. (2016). Nauczycielki polskich szkół powszechnych i średnich w życiu politycznym II Rzeczypospolitej [Female teachers in Polish public and secondary schools in political life of the Second Republic of Poland]. In Kulak T., Dajnowicz M. (eds.), *Drogi kobiet do polityki (na przestrzeni XVIII–XXI wieku)* [Women's roads to the politics], Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Chronicon, p. 333.

¹⁵ Sierakowska K. (2009). Samoorganizowanie się kobiet w II Rzeczypospolitej..., *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Piotrowska-Marchewa M. (2016). Nauczycielki polskich szkół powszechnych..., *op. cit.*, p. 333.

¹⁷ Sierakowska K. (2009). Samoorganizowanie się kobiet w II Rzeczypospolitej..., *op. cit.*, p. 35.

According to J. Dufurat, in the Second Republic of Poland there existed 60 to 80 female associations, diverse as to their aims, programmes, methods of work, and social background. The avantgarde of the women's movement were the organisations of political character.¹⁸ However, only two from among them: National Organisation of Women (NOK) and Women's Citizen Work Association (ZPOK) had political activity as part of their statutes.¹⁹ Both were among the largest women's groups of the interwar period.²⁰

NOK was undoubtedly the largest social and political organisation in the interwar period. According to its declarations the organisation had about 78,000 members in 1931, while ZPOK had from 31,000 in 1930 to about 50,000 in 1934.²¹

Both the organisations were established in a similar way, that is, they were created out of electoral committees in parliamentary elections: NOK in 1919 and ZPOK in 1928. They were linked with opposing political camps: the national and the Sanation ones, and so their members were perceived as rivals by the observers of political life in contemporary Poland.²² Both – according to the political orientation assumed and expressed in their work – would promote to the end of the interwar period models of women's pro-civil and pro-citizen attitudes and stances.²³ NOK would cooperate with political parties from the national camp,

¹⁸ Dufurat J. (2011). Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet – podobieństwa i różnice. Kilka uwag o funkcjonowaniu społeczno-politycznych organizacji kobiecych w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej [National Organisation of Women and Women's Citizen Work Association – similarities and differences. A few notes on the social and political functioning of women's organisations in the Second Republic of Poland]. In Wrzesiński W., Masnyk M., Kawalec K. (eds.), *Polska leży na Zachodzie. Studia z dziejów Polski i Europy dedykowane Pani Profesor Teresie Kulak* [Poland lies in the West. Studies in the history of Poland and Europe dedicated to professor Teresa Kulak], Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, p. 574; Also: Łozowska-Marcinkowska K. (2010). *Sprawy niewieście...*, *op. cit.*, p. 35; Also: Sierakowska K. (2009). *Samoorganizowanie się kobiet w II Rzeczypospolitej...*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁹ Dufurat J. (2011). *Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet...*, *op. cit.*, p. 574.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 575.

²¹ Skibiński P. (2018). *Polska 1918...*, *op. cit.*, p. 444; Also: Piwowarczyk M. (2016). *Kobiety aktywne – działalność społeczno-oświatowa liderki Wileńskiego Zrzeszenia Wojewódzkiego Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet (1929–1939)* [Active women – social and educational work of leaders of wileńskie voivodship circle of ZPOK]. In Dawid A., Lusek J. (eds.), *Kobiety na Kresach na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* [Women in the Eastern Borderlands of Poland], Opole: Wydawnictwo DIG, p. 43.

²² Dufurat J. (2011). *Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet...*, *op. cit.*, p. 575.

²³ Maj E. (2016). *Wzorce aktywności kobiet w Narodowej Demokracji (1893–1939)* [Models of women's activity in National Democracy]. In Kulak T., Dajnowicz M. (eds.), *Drogi kobiet do polityki (na przestrzeni XVIII–XXI wieku)*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Chronicon, p. 153.

first with the National People's Association (Związek Narodowo-Ludowy), and from 1928 with the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe), however, not all the members of NOK were directly connected with the politics of the largest Polish right-wing party.²⁴ ZPOK cooperated with the Sanation camp, first and foremost with the Non-Party Bloc of Cooperation with the Government (Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem).

The rules of the work of NOK were unambiguously defined. The organisation aimed to call "all the women of Poland to consciously participate in political life on the grounds of Christian, national, and democratic principles."²⁵ The programme would strongly emphasise the traditional role of women as wives, mothers, and the caretakers of future generations, with a mission to defend the family community, the faith, and the "national spirit." According to the formulated slogans the activists of NOK were to, in accordance with the slogan "God and Motherland", be the guardians of faith and morality in public life while at the same time, as J. Dufurat writes, enrich it with the elements of "social solidarity, purity of ideas, and selfless sacrifice." Women ought also to purify the country and the society from the "influences and impacts of a culture alien to our spirit."²⁶ The NOK activists, who would actively participate in the legislative work of the Polish parliament for the sake of the protection of women's rights, declared that they would take action to protect the interests of women in the realm of civil, property, professional, and political rights.²⁷ In the context of organisation there was the issue of the activation of Polish women in accordance with the slogan that a woman engaged in national work protected Polish interests and a passive woman gave way to the enemies of Poland, was unaware of her duty to Poland, and was not able to combine her personal interests and those of the society.²⁸

With the help of rallies, courses, lectures, and discussions the organisation would carry out its citizen work ("citizen-awareness-raising"), and educational ("educational-and-upbringing"), whose aims were to form an aware Catholic citizen "who is in every respect legally equal and equal to men."²⁹ As part of these forms of work what was represented and popularised were contents pertaining to hygiene and health, history of Poland, religion, or current politics. The activists of the organisation would combat illiteracy among women by organising reading and writing courses for the poor. For the sake of the promotion of the ideas and slogans

²⁴ Skibiński P. (2018). *Polska 1918...*, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

²⁵ Dufurat J. (2011). *Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet...*, *op. cit.*, p. 576.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 576; Also: Kałwa D. (2000). *Model kobiety aktywnej...*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²⁷ Dufurat J. (2011). *Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet i Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet...*, *op. cit.*, p. 576.

²⁸ Maj E. (2016). *Wzorce aktywności kobiet w Narodowej Demokracji...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–156.

²⁹ Łozowska-Marcinkowska K. (2010). *Sprawy niewieście...*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

their own press, for example the weekly “*Hasło Polki*” (“The Slogan of the Polish Woman”).³⁰

In the opinion of the leaders of NOK (among others: Zofia Kirkor-Kiedroniowa, Irena Puzynianka, Józefa Szebeko, Maria Holder-Eggerowa) benefitting from equal rights in the sphere of women’s social and civil life was strictly connected with the maintenance of the theretofore role of women defined by tradition, teachings of the Catholic Church, and other social norms. In the new conditions of the independent state the function of the caretaker and homemaker were to not only be fulfilled in private life, but also in the public one.³¹ Zofia Kirkor-Kiedroniowa³² in October 1918 defined the public duties of Polish women as follows: “Undoubtedly in the near future providing women with political rights places on them the duty to not only be the of the ideas of men, to work out the ideas of their own and to bring into the political life the spirit which creates family bonds, the spirit of kindness and solidarity. A particular care of women ought to be social care, and the care of over the mother and child.”³³

That is why the models of the activity of women were connected with the function of the member of a traditional family. What was formed and promoted was the image of a family-oriented woman, responsible for order at home in its moral and organisational aspects. According to Ewa Maj the personal model was the homemaker/housewife who has mastered the logistics of housework, took care of the “woman’s household”, could manage servants effectively, maintained order at home, took care of the internal organisation of the household. She was to serve the role of the daughter, sister, wife, mother, caregiver. Within the scope of her function there was motherhood, raising children, educating the young people in the immediate environment (younger siblings and cousins). She would also accept the duty to pass down national heritage and the models of patriotism to the younger generations as well as transmitting the culture of the family between the subsequent generations. What is more, she would serve the role of the “priestess of the hearth and home”; she would influence men, motivate them, tame their habits, and encourage to behave well.³⁴

In the political realm the members of NOK conducted intensive civic and citizen propaganda, they would become engaged in electoral work all over the country, travelling with lectures, organising rallies and electoral meetings. Their dedication was politically profiled and supplemented with social work. The ideas

³⁰ Skibiński P. (2018). *Polska 1918...*, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

³¹ Kałwa D. (2000). *Model kobiety aktywnej...*, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

³² She was the sister of two national democratic activists: Władysław and Stanisław Grabski, and an outstanding national activist and member of the National Party.

³³ Kirkor-Kiedroniowa Z. (1988). *Wspomnienia, Cz.2, Ziemia mego męża* [Memories pt. 2, The land of my husband], Kraków, p. 271.

³⁴ Maj E. (2016). *Wzorce aktywności kobiet w Narodowej Demokracji...*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

of national solidarity were realised by integrating various social classes, collecting human resources to work for charity (landowners, wealthier townsmen), for education (intelligentsia), for farmers.³⁵ A significant part of the activity of NOK was charity work: supporting repatriates from the east, feeding and materially supporting poor mothers and children, supporting cultural initiatives for the sake of Polish immigrants. The members of the organisation would also take care of shelters for the homeless, single mothers, help women preparing for work, run soup kitchens, organise field trips for girls,³⁶ field trips for children of farmers, prepared the action "A drop of milk", took care to help youth with difficult backgrounds. As part of NOK, as E. Maj maintains, women worked while focusing on national interests organised according to the order: home, motherland, religion.³⁷

The activists themselves, as Andrzej Chojnowski emphasises, in their social and political work noticed many advantages and successes. First and foremost, they would value the effectiveness of their agitational efforts in parliamentary elections, as well as elections to city councils. They would emphasise their role in the preparation of the plebiscite in Warmia, Mazury, and Silesia. Great importance was attached to the collection of funds (gold and silver) organised by NOK to help the national treasury, which was aimed to support the carrying out of the currency reform in the years 1923–1924. In cooperation with other women's organisations the association was engaged in combating human trafficking, that is, the trafficking of Polish women to brothels in, among others, South America.³⁸ The leaders of NOK (including the MPs Gabriela Balicka and Zofia Sokolnicka) would stand in defence of women, in the parliament as well as in front of the general public, which they would always do in the spirit of the defined values: the unbreakable marital bonds, protection of the family, and Polish national upbringing in the religious spirit. In their work they used to undertake a number of problems and social tasks. The most important of them were: social support, in its broad understanding, care for the mother and the child, care for the physical and moral health of the young generation, combating alcoholism, combating pornography and human trafficking, supporting the national economy, the work of women and youth, and help, education, and religious guidance for the expatriates.³⁹

This understanding of the broad and diverse work of NOK was treated by its members as civil and citizen work for the independent Poland.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 167.

³⁶ Skibiński P. (2018). *Polska 1918...*, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

³⁷ Maj E. (2016). *Wzorce aktywności kobiet w Narodowej Demokracji...*, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

³⁸ Chojnowski A. (2000). *Aktywność kobiet w życiu politycznym...*, *op. cit.*, p. 43; Also: Skibiński P. (2018). *Polska 1918...*, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

³⁹ Chojnowski A. (2000). *Aktywność kobiet w życiu politycznym...*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

The Women's Citizen Work Association (Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet, hereinafter: ZPOK) was one of the most influential women's organisations of the Sanation movement in Poland during the interwar period. It was established on March 25, 1928 and it was constantly active until the outbreak of World War II.⁴⁰ It had a clear ideological and political character (in the spirit of the Sanation political movement), which defined its aims and goals. What occupied the first position among the aims of the Association was the problem of the activation of women and their citizen, civil upbringing, the creation of a "new type of Polish female citizen", aware of her citizen rights and duties, interested in the problems of the state, independent, outstanding in her sense of responsibility for the state and participant in the work "to increase the moral, cultural, economic, and social level."⁴¹ That is how ZPOK accepted a clearly defined, educational role. In reality it was implemented by numbers of women activists, among whom the members of the intelligentsia would be prevalent – the wives of top civil servants, teachers, doctors, lawyers – activists, social activists, connected with the Sanation camp,⁴² whose main goal was to provide political, citizen, social, economic, and cultural education to the broad masses of women.

The most crucial educational aim undertaken by the members of the Association was the realisation of a new model of citizen and civil upbringing of women, a model compatible with the main goals of the state and of the Sanation camp. Assumptions and ideological bases were developed. The author of the programme, Hanna Pohoska, stated that: "our ideal is to be the creation of a citizen

⁴⁰ For more on ZPOK see: Piwowarczyk M. (2012). *Selected forms of social and educational activities of the Union of civil activities of women (ZPOK)*. In Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal. Volume 4, nr. 2, pp. 13–28; Piwowarczyk M. (2013). *Działania Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet na rzecz pomocy rodzinie* [Work of ZPOK to help the family]. In *Wychowanie w rodzinie. Od starożytnej myśli filozoficznej do współczesnych rozwiązań legislacyjnych*. T. VII (1/2013), Wrocław-Jelenia Góra: ESUS Agencja Reklamowo-wydawnicza, p. 259–291; Piwowarczyk M. (2014). *Działalność Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet na rzecz aktywizacji społeczno-politycznej i gospodarczej polskich społeczności lokalnych na Wileńszczyźnie w latach 1929–1939*. In Śleszyński W., Włodarczyk A. (eds.), *Obszary zgody czy konfliktu? Kresy Północno-Wschodnie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Białystok-Kraków: Wydawnictwo AVALON, pp. 51–71; Piwowarczyk M. (2014). *Civil education in the theory and practice of Women's Civil Work Association in the Second Polish Republic*. In Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal. Volume 6/1, pp. 30–39; Piwowarczyk M. (2014). *Działalność organizacji kobiecych na rzecz rozwoju opieki nad dziećmi i młodzieżą w województwie lwowskim w II Rzeczypospolitej*. In Herciuk D., Myshchysyn I. (eds.), *Rozwój ukraińskiej i polskiej oświaty i myśli pedagogicznej (XIX–XXI w.)*. T. 4, *Teoria i praktyka pedagogiki opiekuńczej w Ukrainie i Polsce (XIX–XXI w.)*, Lwów, pp. 127–142.

⁴¹ *Z Kongresu Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet* [From the Congress of Women's Citizen Work], (1938). In „Kobiety w Pracy”, Issue 9; *Statut Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*, (1931), Warszawa.

aware of her duties to the state, able to fulfil them and equipped with an internal need to carry out the duties.⁴³ Ludwika Wolska, in turn, wrote that the aim of the organisation was to “turn poor, unaware, unorganised individuals in an active, aware, organised force bringing values into the life of the state.”⁴⁴ The idea was to “provide the members with political and citizen education, that is, to deepen and develop their citizen knowledge, shape their citizen stance, and lead their actions in the realms of the legal and moral duties of the citizen.”⁴⁵

In the propagated image of the “new female citizen” what was emphasised the most was the importance of the social activity of women in the realised model of female citizenship. It was stressed that social work would awake the activity and the initiative of the members of ZPOK “in the interest of the common good of the society and the state”, it was to constitute an important element in the process of citizen and civil education as a way of forming the moral stance of the members and developing their sense of self-worth.⁴⁶ In the *Ideological declaration* of ZPOK it was assumed that the fundamental condition of a proper education of citizens was their value, which is why the leaders of the organisation were given the aim of instilling in the members “unconditional fairness, civil courage, a sense of individual and group responsibility, respect for the value of the human life, and deep faith in the spiritual values of men.”⁴⁷ In 1938 Hanna Jaroszewiczowa, vice-president of the Board of ZPOK and a senator wrote in the press organ of ZPOK, “Praca Obywatelska”, that in the educational work with the members “the educational aim was to be realised in the development of broad masses of women while at the same time developing an aware and active citizen and civil stance. Among the moral values the aim was to, first and foremost, awaken the sense of altruism, selflessness, honour, and the value of group work; the aim was to build perseverance in achieving the assumed goals and personal discipline, based in recognition of the rules governing the organisation and respect for the authorities of the organisation. Citizen awareness founded in knowledge of the most important problems of the life of the state was to be the basis of political thinking. Citizen education based on the understanding of the unbreakable bond between the individual and the group, the nation and the state, was to be the fundament of political and social work.”⁴⁸

⁴² See Piowowarczyk M. (2016). *Kobiety aktywne...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–60.

⁴³ Pohoska H. (1932). *Wychowanie obywatelskie [Citizen education]*. In *Almanach. Kalendarz Związku Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet. Rok 1932*, Warszawa, pp. 20–22.

⁴⁴ Wolska L. (1938). *ZPOK jako organizacja polityczna [ZPOK as a political organisation]*. In „Praca Obywatelska”, Issue 5–6, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Śliwińska L. (1933). *Obowiązki członkiń ZPOK [Duties of the members of ZPOK]*. In „Praca Obywatelska”, Issue 24, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Deklaracja ideowa (1938)*. In „Praca Obywatelska”, Issue 5–6, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Jaroszewiczowa H. (1938). 1928–1938 r. In „Praca Obywatelska”, nr 5–6, p. 6.

From the assumed ideological goals and aims resulted the educational goals and aims, accepted by the members of ZPOK – they were defined clearly in the *Ideological declaration*: “There where there is poverty – we come with help. There were there is ignorance – with education.”⁴⁹

According to the activists, to the duties of modern, active female citizens belonged the aims connected with educating the society. Female citizens were to take care “that the Polish society be raised to a high level, that ethics in their broad understanding, unconditional fairness in public and private life, a deep sense of honour, righteousness in the selection of methods, and nobility in action were in the blood of the contemporary generation and were accepted by all the members of the Polish society.”⁵⁰ According to Hanna Hubicka, women ought to “serve (...) obligatory social duty, or civil duty. They cannot (...) not serve any duties. Is it bringing up children, managing the household, working in a workshop, office, or school, or a social organisation, everywhere, women ought to fulfil their civil duties, but carrying out these activities will only be perceived as efforts for the sake of the common good when they will be conducted with complete dedication, and not the other way around: let it be that first the good comes to me and my close ones!”⁵¹

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 that provided women’s citizenship with a special value in the life of the nation and the state.⁵² In this context the activists of the organisation attached great importance to the educational role of the Homemakers, treating, at the same time, the work women carried out at home as their profession.⁵³ That is why women were expected to not only master the role of the Homemaker, in their numerous duties and works, but also to educate the home, the family, and its members in proper, rational functioning. Women’s education in proper management of the household was perceived as “teaching mothers to feed their children rationally, to teach them the rules of hygiene, to awaken their needs to use the time of prosperity to make even the smallest savings, in building a cottage, furnishing an apartment, and, first and foremost, to understand the importance of production, exchange of goods, and consumption.”⁵⁴ That is how ZPOK took care of the specialist education of women, which was also

⁴⁹ Matuszewska M. M. (1937). Celem naszym praca dla dobra państwa i społeczeństwa (I punkt Deklaracji Ideowej) [Our aim is the work for the good of the state and the society]. In „Praca Obywatelska”, Issue 3, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Moraczewska Z. (1932). *Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*. Warszawa, p. 11.

⁵¹ Hubicka H. (1928). Prawa i obowiązki kobiet. In „Praca Obywatelska”, Issue 2, p. 4.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 172–173.

⁵³ Siemińska H. (1936). Czy praca Pani Domu może być zawodem? [Can working at home be a profession?] In „Praca Obywatelska”, Issue 4, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Matuszewska M. M. (1938). Dzisiaj i jutro naszej organizacji [Today and tomorrow of our organisation]. In „Praca Obywatelska”, Issue 5–6, p. 10.

aimed to increase the economic and social status of women and their families. That is why a network of private, organisational, female, vocational schools was established and developed. Through the maintenance of their own schools the Association realised not only its own social, economic, and educational aims, but also the ideological and political goals: "Through educational in vocational schools we make citizens out of these enormous masses who have heretofore stood outside the state, we lead them to the life of the community and to work, to social and civil community."⁵⁵

In its work ZPOK used numerous forms of citizen and civil education of women. These mainly included lectures on social and civil subjects, establishing educational institutions, day rooms,⁵⁶ organising courses,⁵⁷ and publishing periodicals,⁵⁸ in which the model of the active female citizen and the proper manner of her education were propagated.

The aims which were to be realised in the everyday work the specialised Departments of ZPOK (especially the Citizen Education Department)⁵⁹ were to be of "educational nature exclusively."⁶⁰ Ultimately the goal was "political awareness, raising the ideological and civil level"⁶¹ of Polish women and their local communities.

⁵⁵ Dziewulska J. (1938). Cele i zadania Szkolnictwa Zawodowego a ideologia Z.P.O.K. [The aims and the goals of vocational schooling of ZPOK], In „Praca Obywatelska“, Issue 5–6, p. 28.

⁵⁶ In the educational work the "most educational centres" were used first and foremost which included: Youth Clubs, dayrooms for youth and day rooms for the members of the Association. The work in the day rooms was deemed to be "the best and the fullest form of the cooperation of the members, facilitating their education", Jędrzejewiczowa M. (1938). Wytyczne referatów wychowania polityczno-obywatelskiego [Guidelines for the lectures in political and citizen education]. In „Praca Obywatelska“, Issue 24, p. 7–8.

⁵⁷ Chojnowski A. (1996). Moralność i polityka. Kobiecte lobby w Bezpartyjnym Bloku współpracy z Rządem. In Szwarc A., Żarnowska A. (eds.), *Kobieta i świat polityki w niepodległej Polsce 1918–1939*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, p. 167.

⁵⁸ ZPOK published two journals: "Praca Obywatelska" (which was the main press organ of ZPOK) and "Prosta Droga" (a popular women's weekly), which were to help the organisation realise "political and citizen education, that is, deepen and develop citizen knowledge, shape citizen and social stances, lead the conduct in legal and moral duties." More information on the subject of the periodicals of ZPOK, see: Piwowarczyk M. (2017). 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. In *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*. Volume 9, nr 1, pp. 7–18.

⁵⁹ In the ZPOK structure there were 8 Departments: Citizen Education, Women's Affairs, Care for the Mother and the Child, Economic Production, Rural Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Press, Financial. The Departments had their equivalents with the Board of ZPOK and the voivodship and poviaste level boards.

⁶⁰ Jędrzejewiczowa M. (1938). Wytyczne referatów wychowania polityczno-obywatelskiego..., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

NOK and ZPOK and their numerous women activists played – according to the assumed ideological, political, and social aims – a major role in creating a new type of female citizen – a woman of independent Poland; an active woman, interested in the issues of the state and the society.

The leaders of both the organisations served an educational role for thousands of Polish women, presenting them through, among others, direct work as well as publications the models and the forms of political and citizen work, as well as social, economic, cultural efforts, along with family and moral life. At the same time they would activate broad masses of women to work for the good of the state, the society, and their families, turning them into dedicated female citizens serving the state and the society, aware of their rights and duties. They awakened and inspired women to develop cultural life, strengthen the habits of everyday active participation in the shaping of their local communities. The activists of NOK and ZPOK as part of their work would shape citizen, political, and civil awareness of Polish women in the interwar period, influence their attitudes and dedicated efforts in numerous aspects and realms of contemporary life.