

STUDIA I ROZPRAWY

Z HISTORII POLSKICH IDEI PEDAGOGICZNYCH

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CHILD AND FAMILY AS PROLETARIANS OF THE EDUCATIONAL IDEOLOGY OF BOLSHEVIK MARXISM IN THE CRITICAL REFLECTION OF POLISH HUMANISTS FROM THE PERIOD 1917–1939

S u m m a r y: The educational ideology of the Bolshevik version of Marxism had an instrumental approach to children and families. The purpose of the article is to show how the family and the child were used for the implementation of its “ideals”; how they unknowingly became its proletariat; victims of inflicted suffering, death, or limited development in areas affected by ideology (consequences of homelessness, hunger, sexual abuse). The place and the time – a hundred years ago in the Soviet Union – are important because of the respect for the victims. But for an educator, today the categories of arguments and mechanisms used by Bolshevik Marxism are important. Above all, attention is drawn to the zones of “necessary change” (religion, morality – family, child). Looking at the example of the situation of the Russian family and child, we can see how the creators of the Bolshevik “better world” project cynically made them a tool for change; we can see the reality of great manipulation. Death, suffering, biological, psychological and spiritual devastation were irrelevant to their role. This mechanism was shielded by the appearance (camouflaged lie). The ideology of Bolshevik Marxism in its references to children and families was the subject of criticism in the writings of Polish humanists from the period 1917–1939.

Key words: educational ideology, Marxism, Bolshevism, child under communism, family under communism, education under Marxism

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Introduction

The existence of educational ideologies and referring to them as theoretical approaches to pedagogical thought and educational practice makes us aware of the deep links between education and all areas of reality. On the other hand – especially when we recall totalitarian educational ideologies – participants of educational processes appear as proletarians. This is the role that was played by the pupils and educators in all the totalitarianisms of the 20th century and that proved to be instrumental. This is true of all total ideologies – both those out-of-date and those still attractive to their followers. The totality of ideology, among the many regularities that make up this fact, is also manifested in reaching out to the child and family. Subconsciously, they become its proletariat, victims in the sense of suffering, limited development (depravity) in the area most strongly affected by ideology (other disorders will be a consequence of homelessness, hunger, other consequences of sexual exploitation).

The aim of this article is to show how totalitarian ideology used family and children to implement its “ideals”. The place and time are less important here, the categories of arguments and mechanisms are much more vital, and above all the “zones of change” (religion, family and child and their rights / lack of rights, morality, the content of education). Below, looking at the example of the situation of the Russian family and child as victims of Marxist ideology in the Bolshevik style, one can see how the creators of the totalitarian version of “a new, better world” project cynically directed situations in which the child and the family became an instrument of change, its participant unaware of their role. Their suffering, their biological, psychological and spiritual destruction did not matter – the (cultural) change was important. This mechanism was covered by the rule of appearances (lies). In the educational dimension of total ideology – not only this one – it consists primarily in camouflaging a complete answer to the question “Who is man in his final vision”. These issues, in relation to the situation of children and families in Bolshevik totalitarianism, found a critical interpretation in the writings of Polish humanists from the period 1917–1939.

Bolshevism: Assumptions of Ideology and Circumstances of Its “Installation” in Russia

World War I has weakened Russia involved in it. As a result of social protests at the turn of February and March 1917, the Social Democratic Provisional Government was formed. Tsar Nikolai II abdicated and Russia became a republic. The weak government of Alexander Kerensky and chaos allowed a group of

Bolsheviks², headed by Vladimir Lenin, to return from exile (on a sealed train)³ to enact a coup on 7 November 1917 (called the October Revolution) and seize power. The new government of the Council of People's Commissioners began with a brutal, physical liquidation of opponents, executions affected masses of random people. A civil war broke out, in which the forces of the white and red army clashed. The unprecedented terror against civilians was reinforced by propaganda actions and isolation from the world. The laws and decrees promulgated by the Bolsheviks seemingly only guaranteed the working class, endowed with the role of proletariat, freedom of speech, press and assembly. In fact a new social hierarchy was created in which the privileged group was the communists, then the non-party workers and the poor. Other social groups were considered class enemies and destined for brutal re-education or extermination (clergy, landowners, aristocracy). Bloody terror and the unimaginable number of victims of the new experiment would continue to exist before the eyes of the world until Stalin's death in 1953, with the highly ambivalent behaviour of the West.

At the outset it is worth noting that the Polish criticism of Bolshevism from the interwar period⁴ is consistent with the analyses of political scientists and philosophers almost a century later. In the most general terms, the criticism of Bolshevism at the time spoke of the loss of European cultural unity – including philosophical, social and political – and a threat to the Latin civilisation. Bolshevism identified with communism was considered to be an idea that has its own history in evolution and its philosophy is Marxism. The actions of the Bolsheviks were unequivocally interpreted as an intention to create communism on a global scale⁵.

² The term “Bolshevik” has its origin in Lenin's activity: in 1903 “at the Brussels–London social democrats' convention he led to a split between the Mensheviks (Rus. ‘mense’ = less) – those who were in the minority and the Bolsheviks (Rus. ‘bolshe’ = more), those who had the majority”. Włodzimierz Lenin, *Państwo i rewolucja*, 1919, 100, cited after: Antoni Szymański, *Bolszewizm* (Poznań–Warszawa: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1920), 7.

³ Romuald Moskała, “Nasz sąsiad wschodni (Szkiec o bolszewizmie)”, part I i II, *Przegląd Powszechny* 145 (1920), 376–388; 146 (1920), 33–47.

⁴ Although criticism of Bolshevism focused on its version implemented in Russia, the global expansion of Bolshevism through the activities of the Communist International was realised. Its element was a slanderous campaign against Poland – the alleged fascist governments of the Second Republic of Poland were being spread in the form of imaginary information – and the idea of communism was being spread around the world. And so, among other things, in the USA there was the *Manifesto* of the communist party existing there; there, too, the communist revolution was postulated and the creation of the United States of Soviet America.

⁵ Ignacy Czuma, “Bolszewicka dialektyka moralności”, *Prąd* 18 (1930), 294–308; Edward Kosibowicz, “Ideowe źródła współczesnego bezbożnictwa”, *Przegląd Powszechny* 215 (1937), 111–125; Józef Pastuszka, “Prądy materialistyczne w filozofii współczesnej”, *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 32 (1933), 13–38; Jan Urban, “Ideologia bolszewizmu”, *Przegląd Powszechny* 194 (1932), 129–143; Antoni Szymański, “Bolszewizm jako prąd kulturalny i cywilizacyjny”, *Prąd* 32 (1937), 207–242; Stefan Wyszynski, “Społeczeństwo i prasa a wychowanie młodzieży”, *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 32 (1933), 175–188.

Rev. Father Professor Antoni Szymański was not alone in the view that the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia consisted in the implementation of Marxist ideology to create a new communist system; that it was carried out with the participation of German plans and money and Swedish banks⁶. Most Polish critics of Bolshevism viewed the Soviet Revolution as an experiment of the Western socialists, into which the Russian people fell in a situation of weakness of their government and devastation by war. The new “liberators” managed to sacrifice this nation for the verification of the ideological vision of “happiness”⁷. Bolshevism was considered to be the incarnation of Marxism – such were the declarations of Lenin and Stalin. It was written that not only they, but also Leo Trotsky or Nikolai Bucharin, did not bring anything new to the doctrine – they only commented on Marx and justified the economic collapse of their policy in terms of its compatibility with Marxism⁸.

Critics of Bolshevism rejected the features of the culture desired by Bolsheviks. Szymański mentions many of Marx’s claims which he did not substantiate, especially in the area of materialism and programmatic atheism. He admits that one of the Bolshevik programme works published in Moscow in 1933, which Marxism-Leninism describes as “militant atheism”, is right. For Bolshevism, atheism was an expression of progress, just as the concept of “godlessness” was modern and progressive – even the periodical *The Godless* was published. Atheism was not considered an artificial creation of Marxist ideology, but a consequence of dialectical materialism; combined with the materialistic interpretation of the world, it created a new “religion”: it is said that “socialism and Bolshevism are religion. And indeed. Bolshevism has its dogmas and requires faith in them. It has its infallible masters of science and practice [...] it has their books, which are interpreted by the ruling group”⁹. Critics claimed that socialist “faith” does not have the ability to raise and ennoble people. Bolshevism – by creating a new man – made this “new” man fall low and not be reborn. It could not, because in the Marxist revolution the word hatred was the second after the word “exploitation” – Polish magazines cited examples of promoting hatred, ordering it to abolish exploitation. It was noted that the socialist religion is a religion of hatred, and

⁶ Szymański analyses the study: *German-Bolshevik Conspiracy. Documents Concerning the Relationship of the Bolsheviks with the German Supreme Command, Great Industry and Finance and Photographic Reproduction of Documents*, Warszawa 1919 (after: Szymański, *Bolszewizm*, 3).

⁷ Szymański, *Bolszewizm*, 3. In 2010, Walicki, citing the law theoretician Hans Kelsen, writes that the Lenin Treaty *State and Revolution* served “as an explanation and legitimisation of the communist experiment in Russia”. Andrzej Walicki, “Rewolucja październikowa jako projekt komunistyczny”. In: *Totalitaryzm XX wieku*, eds. Wiesław Kozub-Ciembroniewicz, Hanna Kowalska-Stus, Bogdan Szlachta, Małgorzata Kiwior-Filo (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010), 125. Nowadays, Walicki writes about such a view of the Marxist project for Russia: “we distrust people who resemble this obvious fact”. *Ibidem*, 123.

⁸ Antoni Szymański, *Zagadnienie społeczne*, 3rd edition (Lublin: TWCh, 1939), 444.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 221–223.

its symbol is an upwardly extended fist¹⁰. The idea of hate, speech and practice of hate was demonstrated. The cynicism in its application in school relations was effective not so much in the way from teacher to pupil, but in the opposite direction, through the activity of pioneer and komsomol organisations. They judge teachers by using their position to dominate their requirements. Another means of “educating” Bolshevism was a lie – it supported terror and isolation from the world (closing the borders to ordinary citizens).

An attempt to organise the scope of activities of the Bolshevik authorities aimed at changing the vision of man and his upbringing shows that the issue of religion, religious practices and their presence in the public sphere comes to the fore. It can be said the following happened:

- a) Minimising, from the beginning of the Bolshevik rule, and consequently eliminating the influence of religion on society, which functioned as a principle until the end of the Soviet Union. This was not only about the dominant Orthodoxy, which was the foundation of the Tsarate, but about every religion.
- b) In the 1920s, Kerensky’s government and initially also Lenin, taking into account the position of the Catholic Church in the international arena, announced certain freedoms for Catholics and diplomatic contacts with the Holy See. Parallel to these declarations, which were not translated into practice, a commission for the separation of the Church and the Catholic Church from the state was established in the period 1922–1928 at the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party, which in subsequent years was called the Anti-Religious Commission.
- c) The Decree on the Separation of the Church and Churches from the State issued by the Council of People’s Commissioners on 28 January 1918 apparently guaranteed freedom of religion and freedom of worship if it did not violate public order. But in addition to this, he also introduced: a ban on teaching religion in all state, municipal and private educational establishments (in schools of all types) and churches. The church was deprived of the right to own anything: land, buildings, objects of worship. The clergy were deprived of the right to take any position.
- d) Secularised education in practice was to consist in convincing pupils about the non-existence of God and mocking religious practices. Discrediting religion and the Church, it was planned, would create a new type of man, easy to be “lead” by the Bolsheviks (other-direction). The Vatican tried to use the Genoa Economic Conference (April 1922) to ease the persecution of the Church and stop the extermination of Catholics and Orthodox believers in Russia. During the discussion on the papal memorandum it

¹⁰ Ibidem, 225.

turned out that influential politicians of Western countries were not interested in the Pope's initiative¹¹.

- e) As a result of successive arrests of clergy in the spring of 1923, followed by anti-religious activities during Christmas in Moscow, Petrograd, Pskov and Kazan, in December 1924 the papal representatives of the charitable mission left Moscow.
- f) In subsequent actions, the obligation to work on Sundays was implemented; the clergy were deprived of their electoral rights, the right to housing and the right to food ration cards; high taxes and rents were imposed on the clergy; at Christmas 1929, marches, demonstrations, readings degrading the faith and objects of religious worship were held; the workers were systematically forced, under the threat of losing food ration cards and housing, to sign declarations of apostasy. In 1937, there were 11 churches in the USSR where 10 priests performed pastoral duties; in 1939 – only two Catholic churches: in Leningrad (with the French Dominican Fr. M. Florent) and in Moscow (with the American assumptionist, Fr. L. Braun)¹².

Anthropological Assumptions of the Educational Ideology of Bolshevik Marxism

Bolshevism interpreted people and their nature from a materialistic and naturalistic standpoint, with a rejection of religiousness and the sphere of the spirit – they were questioned and had no *raison d'être*. It considered it only as a tool of history and creative economic factors. The Bolsheviks claimed that man by his nature is a man of revolution, of constant resisting and fighting, and that revolution itself is an organic law of the world and life. Critics of Bolshevism pointed out that these anthropological assumptions have axiological consequences – in such a revolution truth and all norms necessary for the spiritual development of man perish¹³. It was emphasised that although this assumption does not work in a positive sense, it is of practical importance because it turns individuals into passive groups.

Humanistic values are lost, man dies as an independent and self-conscious being, as a cognitive and responsible subject. This was considered an inevitable consequence of historical materialism, mainly because the only factor of development is economic relations in Bolshevism (communism), while man remains

¹¹ Ewa Kozerska, Tomasz Scheffler, "Pope Pius XI Towards Totalitarian States". In: *Totalitaryzmy XX wieku...*, 109–110.

¹² Ibidem, 112–119.

¹³ Kosibowicz, "Ideowe źródła...", 122.

nothing¹⁴. It has been noted that while Marx recognises the influence of the man and the institutions created by him on the course of history, these are secondary factors, since the assumption of complete determination (“existence determines consciousness”) is paramount.

In the writings of Polish critics of communism, there was no consensus on any element of this message. It was seen to have a captivating dimension both in its premise and its practical effects. In the field of pedagogy, such a concept of man carried with it the promotion of upbringing that eliminates the person of the pupil and any elements of individualism. With its participation Bolshevism created two extreme educational concepts: the theory of collective education and the Bolshevik school of work. In the practical brutality of their implementation they had no equal: their creators – Anton Makarenko and Paweł Błoński – must have been aware of their ruthless methods (an educational centre behind the barbed wire, etc.).

There were warnings that the message of Bolshevism comes down to the words of the protagonist of one of the theatre productions in Moscow: “A man costs little and you can’t take care of individuals [...]. People have to be counted as companies and battalions, you have to think about the masses”¹⁵. Another element of criticism were the Bolsheviks’ solutions concerning the family. The Bolshevik doctrine was against the family, each of its opinions brought the family’s superfluousness closer. The destruction of the family was found in Marx’s *Capital* (1867), where he claims the family to be an “obvious absurdity” in its Germanic-Christian formula related to the social role and upbringing of children. Szymański also found this message in Friedrich Engels’ book in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). Here he claimed that monogamy is linked to private property, which means that when the means of production are jointly owned, the family will lose its *raison d’être*, raising children will become a public matter and love will regain its freedom¹⁶.

Critics questioning such an assumption show its practical consequences: as early as November 1917 the divorce law was liberalised as much as possible and abortion on demand was introduced; provoked and critical statements of children about their tutors and parents resulted in sending them to a camp, imprisonment and loss of work. Due to millions of victims, a 7–8/9-million-strong army of *besprisonny* (homeless, unaccompanied children) was formed, which continued in this number despite a drastically high death rate. Prisons for children were

¹⁴ Szymański, “Bolszewizm jako prąd...”, 231–232.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 227.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 240–241.

a common practice and the death penalty¹⁷ was applied to 13-year-olds, and reportedly also to 10-year-olds¹⁸.

It was assessed as follows: the state takes a man completely to itself. Bolshevik (communist) theory and practice “turns citizens into slaves [...]. Citizens, all of them, are dependent on the state for their needs. The state has at its disposal agricultural goods and products, housing, paper for printing books and magazines, schools and universities, railways and means of communication¹⁹. Citizens are the mass that the State has at its disposal with all its coercive apparatus”²⁰.

Pr. Jan Urban wrote about the impoverishment of the human spirit, about the tight framework of materialistic formulas, a separate language, clotted terminology repeated always and everywhere; he wrote about the produced state of some mass suggestion of the Bolsheviks’ satisfaction with themselves. Bolshevik radio and magazines create terrible one-sidedness and poverty of thought, interest and language. “Nothing, just the production, realisation of *pyatiletka*, construction of the socialist system, Leninism, Marxism, dialectical materialism, class struggle, destruction of the bourgeoisie, extermination of deviations in their own party”²¹. In Urban’s deliberations, there appears a fact that surprises Polish commentators of Bolshevik ideology: the lack of mutual, elementary trust in their own camp²². This in turn was transferred into the educational sphere of this ideology²³.

Family in the Vision and Practices of Bolshevik Marxism

Among the texts written by teachers from the period 1918–1939, the most complete picture of the situation of the Soviet family is given by Fr. Stanisław Podoleński in his book *Rodzina w Sowietach* (1938). The programme applied to the Russian family is “an attempt to put the Marxism programme into practice. His guidelines were long ago given by Karl Marx and his supporters: Fryderyk

¹⁷ A decree of 7 April 1935 introduced the death penalty for minors from the age of 12 for anti-social crimes, which included not only murder but also theft. Stanisław Podoleński, *Rodzina w Sowietach*, Kraków: WAM – Księża Jezuita, 1938, 77.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 241–242.

¹⁹ Szymański, “Bolszewizm jako prąd...”, 232–233; See also: Janina Kostkiewicz, “Krytyka warstwy wychowawczej totalitaryzmu komunistycznego lat dwudziestych i trzydziestych XX wieku w pismach Antoniego Szymańskiego”. In: *W służbie nauki, wychowania i wartości. Szkice biograficzne o lubelskim środowisku naukowym*, eds. Ryszard Skrzyniarz, Małgorzata Łobacz, B. Borowska. Lublin: Wydawnictwo “Episteme”, 2015, 439–455.

²⁰ This is a short quote from: Janina Kostkiewicz, “Polski nurt krytyki totalitaryzmów”. In: *Pedagogika. Podręcznik akademicki*, eds. Zbigniew Kwieciński, Bogusław Śliwerski (Warszawa: PWN, 2019), 167–176.

²¹ Urban, “Ideologia bolszewizmu”, 141.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ *Ibidem*, 138.

Engels, August Bebel and others”²⁴. Marx, in an attempt to destroy the existing social order, “demands” – writes Podoleński – elimination of those devices of social life that sustain him: religion and family. It is not rational but emotional: religion becomes a superstition; family and marriage are traditionally understood as a retrograde form. Free associations were proposed in their place and the children were to be placed in state care. Thus, in the first period Soviet communism declared a ruthless war on the family as remnants of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. All that contributes to and sustains the family, it was decided, would be blown up from the inside and from the outside²⁵.

The presence of the above principles on the Bolshevik banners resulted in violent propaganda against the current rules of family life and upbringing. Podoleński wrote about a three-dimensional plan to implement family breakdown through:

- 1) total disorganisation of marriage: disconnection from the religious background and almost limitless freedom to enter into and break the relationship with the removal of all traditional morals;
- 2) separation of, and to some extent hostile attitudes of children and parents towards each other, which was justified by Marxist doctrine according to which children were primarily state property;
- 3) specificity of “liberation of a woman” – it was supposed to kill her maternal instinct and thus facilitate the implementation of the above points of the programme²⁶.

The Polish texts from the interwar period refer to specific legal and administrative solutions that support the above vision of the “new family”. By decrees on marriage and family issued on 18 and 19 December 1917 the existing marriage legislation was abolished (Tsarist Russia recognised its religious nature linked to religious affiliation). It became a completely secular institution detached from any religion. The Marriage and Family Code of September 1918²⁷ lowered its status of validity even further – it was to be a minor agreement. For its conclusion, it was sufficient, without any waiting period, to report to the office and register²⁸. Eventually, even these rules were removed. “The new marriage code of 19 November 1926 abolished the obligation to register and did not impose any prescribed forms of marriage. It was stressed that marriage is a ‘private matter’ and that there can be no ‘embarrassment’”²⁹. Podoleński writes that it was emphasised that there

²⁴ Podoleński, *Rodzina...*, 4.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 10.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 12.

²⁷ Information about marriage and family decrees and codes is given as follows: *ibidem*, 15.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 14.

²⁹ Podoleński describes a case of the prosecutor’s refusal to initiate an investigation against a citizen of Samara, who had three children with his own daughter – the justification says: “so that things don’t look like sharing bourgeois superstitions”. *Ibidem*, 5–16.

was no obligation to live together, and that this was followed by work orders separating married couples. In order to expand the sphere of “freedom”, a divorce “on demand” was introduced. These divorces had already been introduced by the Bolshevik government by virtue of the “decree of 19 December 1917 [...] There is no need to sue, look for important reasons or guilt. [...] Moreover, the consent of the other party is not required. The will of one of the spouses is enough”³⁰. After breaking up one marriage, another could be concluded, the office only needed to indicate which one in turn was the relationship. These practices lasted until 1935, and then some steps were taken to return to the traditional principles of family life given the threat of the lack of biological reconstruction of the fabric of society.

Meanwhile, in order to destroy the family: a) freedom of morality and customs was spread. Podoleński quotes an excerpt from an article from *Komsomolskaya Pravda* no. 125 of 1935: “There is no love in nature. The family should be wiped out [...]. Men will live in one dormitory, women in another. They will not meet each other but for the satisfaction of their instincts, remaining otherwise completely alien to each other” – the morality of animals is higher, Podoleński wrote; b) the slogans of woman’s liberation were intensified – they proclaimed the equality of her professional rights with men (a woman in a factory, in a mine, in the army); the use of life according to preferences without religious and bourgeois superstitions was promoted; upbringing of children and housework were considered humiliating (e.g. *Pravda* of 8 March 1929); c) there was a special employment policy – people were directed to work by order to different places in the country separating married couples (in this respect Podoleński refers to three press articles: *Isvyestya* of 24 May and 21 October 1934 and *Pravda* of 25 March 1936); d) the housing policy was made remarkably anti-family: the state was the owner of houses in the cities, and in the absence of housing, only the Bolshevik elite had perfect conditions. In the 1930s, one room with access to shared rooms (laundries, dining rooms, nurseries, children’s rooms) was considered to be a type of apartment for the proletarian family – according to the 1937 standards, it provided for 5.5m² per person, without a kitchen stove.

In order to change the essence of humanity, in addition to the divorce on request, a change in the relationship between children and their parents was programmed:

- the children belong to the state;
- the parents have no power over their children.

The remaining issues and their interpretations were derived from it and from the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism. Their development in the programme of Soviet communism was that the state “should take the children away from their parents and take them completely into its educational institutions, provide them

³⁰ Ibidem, 17.

with everything there and take care of their upbringing”. Only because the economic conditions do not yet allow for this project, the parents can keep their children at home. However, this is a transitional state in which the parents act as temporary state delegates. However, the state can change this at any time and take the children away from them, if, for example, it considers that the parents are “not fulfilling their duties properly”³¹.

As to the second point, family law said that children were not required to obey their parents. In practice this meant that they could not take their children away from school or from a political or sports organisation without their consent. Children, however, not only can, but even should oppose their parents when the interests of the state or the communist party’s programme, in the child’s view, so require. Therefore, the upbringing at school and the children’s organisation took place in the communist spirit, preparing the child for its propaganda in the families. In schools and communist organisations it was recommended that children should denounce their parents and relatives if they said anything negative about the Bolshevik party³². This recommendation frightened Fr. Podoleński, because the quintessence of evil here was to tell children that such denunciation was a moral act. The system of penalties and rewards served this purpose – children were rewarded in public for their denunciations, they were praised in front of the whole school, their “glorious act” was described in the newspapers. It was assumed that children should participate in political life and party work from an early age. Writing this, Podoleński referred to articles from Soviet newspapers: “Do not keep children away from politics – said *Czerwona Młodzież* of 3 April 1919 – on the contrary; one should bring them up in the spirit of the proletarian revolution and arouse in them a fondness for war! We must pour revolutionary blood into their veins!”³³.

Polish critics of Bolshevik-Marxist ideology saw it as moral nihilism. The awareness of the great danger of the Bolshevik experiment was present among them. A layer of apparent actions was seen to enable man to perceive this new vision of the world positively and to justify the brutality of the communists. Polish critics wrote that we are dealing here with a morality for which there are no standards (morality without ethics). The sources of these solutions were found in the writings and accounts of the global Marxist movement. What did they think of the cost of creating a “new man”? Well, they wrote: “the tragedies of the heart and

³¹ Ibidem, 19. They write credibly about the school issue: Sergiusz Hessen, Mikołaj Hans, *Pedagogika i szkolnictwo w Rosji sowieckiej. Rozwój szkolnictwa sowieckiego i zmiany komunistycznej polityki oświatowej od rewolucji październikowej do końca planu pięcioletniego (1917–1932)*, transl. dr Adam Zieleńczyk (Lwów–Warszawa: Książnica – Atlas, 1938).

³² Podoleński, *Rodzina...*, 20–21. People who were denounced by a child were subject to heavy prison, gulag or even death penalties.

³³ Ibidem, 22.

of a broken life, cannot be quantified at all and presented in all their horror”³⁴. It was common knowledge that the destruction of man to destroy the old Christian order is enormous. The shocking accounts of Poles “miraculously” returning from the “Bolshevik Paradise” clashed with the narrative of Western Marxism sympathisers, who remained outside the reality of its implementation³⁵.

A Child’s Place on the Way to a “New, Wonderful World”

The child’s misery began in the families. Shocking reports from the Soviet newspapers said that about 40% of women from working families were abandoned by their husbands and took care of their children on their own. Food ration coupons that were not always based on goods, lack of fuel, increasing prices, fear of being accused of disloyalty to the authorities – these were constant contexts of life. It happened in the atmosphere of the state’s proclaimed responsibility for children.

Although the Bolshevik authorities were thinking about implementing this point of the Marx programme and right at the beginning of their rule they started to create state educational institutions [...]. In 1922 there were reportedly 6,063 such establishments with 540,000 children. But it soon became clear that further implementation of this plan could not be done for financial reasons. There was a shortage of clothes, food, fuel. Diseases, misery, dirt were shining in these little establishments. In order to save the case, in 1923/24, the state shifted the burden of maintaining these plants onto municipalities, which were unable to cope with the task even more so. The number of establishments started to decrease; by 1927 there were only about 2,000 out of 220,000 children. The others were let free³⁶.

Not only this move – the main one was the loss of parents as a result of the terror – gave rise to a large-scale problem of unprotected children, i.e. children deprived of care, home – vagrants (the so-called *bezprizorni*). The phenomenon was not known on such a large scale in other parts of the world.

Other sources of the misery of the Soviet child were in the free moral behaviour of adults: the freedom of divorce, the spread of views about the “backwardness” of marriage and family, the collapse of the traditional model of culture caused numerous abortions. In the writings of Polish critics this phenomenon was called the “epidemic of infanticide” – the number of miscarriages exceeded the number of births. In the clinics of the “Public Health Commissariat” they recorded:

³⁴ Ibidem, 34.

³⁵ Ibidem, 36.

³⁶ Ibidem, 53–54.

	Births	Miscarriages
Leningrad in 1929	39,058	53,512
Moscow in 1934	57,100	154,584
// in 1935	70,000	155,000

“[...] these figures do not include private miscarriages. *Pravda* of 11 August 1935 gives an example. In May of the same year 150 female workers of one big factory in Moscow (Dedowski) went to the hospital; 30 of them agreed to become mothers, 120 demanded that their pregnancy be terminated”³⁷. The pressure was coming from companies that were firing pregnant women and depriving them of their livelihood³⁸.

Another reason for the homelessness of children was their abandonment and escapes from home.

Pravda of 10 May 1935 said that 80–90 children under the age of three, left by their mothers in offices, railway stations, police, on the stairs of houses, etc., gathered every month on the streets of Moscow. *Isvyestya* of 26 August 1935 stressed the fact that the number of abandoned children was constantly increasing. [...]. Other children are escaping from home by themselves. They do so sometimes out of a desire for freedom, or because of conflicts with their parents, which are based on the principles implanted by Bolshevik tutors. But they also do it out of misery, because they don't have anything to eat and they think they can get something on the street easier. They were escaping both during the terrible famine that haunted Soviet Russia in 1921, when corpses lay on the streets leading to the cities, as they were escaping in the following years and are fleeing today³⁹.

The above situation is confirmed by Alina Borkowska⁴⁰ using an extensive report of Count W.N. Kokovtsoff published in *Revue des deux Mondes* of 15 December 1928 (pp. 824–846). This is confirmed by the memories of André Gide's trip to the USSR in 1936, who did not expect to see the world's most unhappy creatures, the *bezprizorni*. But he saw for himself that there are plenty of them, that they are running away from their families “because they think that nowhere will they have to suffer such misery and hunger as at home”⁴¹.

There is no right word that can describe the fate of the *bezprizorni*. Podoleński writes that in 1925 Nadieżda Krupska (Lenin's widow) reported that there were

³⁷ Ibidem, 57–58.

³⁸ *Pravda*, 30 May 1935, *Isvyestya*, 8 August 1935, cited after: Podoleński, *Rodzina...*, 60–61.

³⁹ Ibidem, 65–66.

⁴⁰ Alina Borkowska, “Nędza i ucisk dzieci pod rządem bolszewickim”, *Prąd* 17 (1929), 245–253.

⁴¹ André Gide, *Retour de l' U.R.S.S.*, 123; cited after: Podoleński, *Rodzina...*, 67. See also: Adam Niemancewicz, *Bolszewizm a wychowanie* (Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff, 1929). The opposite perspective to Bolshevik, see: Janina Kostkiewicz, “Potencjalność podmiotu wychowania w ujęciu antropologii katolickiej”, *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Pedagogika* 393 (2009), 11–27.

two million *bezprizorni* children. Among the abandoned and fugitives there are natural orphans after the victims of the Revolution, and new ones are constantly arriving, because the perfect “freedom” of the proletariat is still being fought for. In December 1926, a census was carried out in the Soviets, on the basis of which it was not possible to determine the number of the *bezprizorni* because, according to *Pravda* of 17 December 1926, on the day of the census, children were fleeing places of refuge. There were also situations when children fought battles with census officials, welcoming them with a hail of stones and winning⁴². The number of these children – both in the opinion of Borkowska and Podoleński – is impossible to estimate.

Initially, the Soviets published the number of the *bezprizorni* known to them, but later, because of the outrage of the world, this number was reduced. The few foreign guests, most often supporters of Marxism and communism, described it as a huge and terrifying phenomenon of cruelty. In *Pravda* (1923, No. 51) it was written that “of the 7 million abandoned children recorded, only 800,000 were placed in children’s homes; at the end of this year, 8 million were reported”⁴³. The quoted source states that the figure of 8 million was to remain until 1926. Lunatsarski – the People’s Commissioner of Public Enlightenment reported 9 million abandoned children in 1922⁴⁴.

The Soviet authorities applied strange measures to the *bezprizorni*, such as conducting a detailed survey. This fact seems absurd in relation to small, homeless children – its results were considered unreliable by the Bolsheviks themselves. One of the Soviet newspapers wrote: “there are 15 out of every 100 from three to seven and 57 out of every 100 from eight to thirteen among the abandoned children. [...] 67 out of 100 are father and mother orphans”⁴⁵. The number of the *bezprizorni* did not decrease despite the enormous mortality. “They’re hungry, so they look everywhere for something to eat and beg. Neglected in the most horrible way, dirty, in rags, barefoot, sometimes half-naked, they live in the most primitive conditions [...]. They die of hunger, cold, disease, accidents”⁴⁶. They are affected by immorality: prostitution, sexual exploitation, premature sex life; even among several-year-old children there is crime, alcoholism, drug addiction. Their begging is intrusive, with the threat of being bitten or injured. Their crime most often concerns robbery – they form whole gangs with their intelligence and

⁴² *Pravda*, 17 December 1926, cited after: Borkowska, “Nędza...”, 245.

⁴³ This is reported by Prof. P. Posnischev “Abandoned Children and Measures to Combat the Phenomenon”, Moscow 1926, 10, cited after: Borkowska, “Nędza...”, 247.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 246.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 246–247.

⁴⁶ Podoleński, *Rodzina...*, 68.

organisation, they can sow fear. Soviet newspapers in the late 1930s wrote about an army of juvenile offenders in Moscow⁴⁷.

The Bolshevik authorities dealt with the *bezprizorni* mainly because of the assault on the property of the “red aristocracy”. Podoleński wrote: “these poor people have been hunted down like wild animals [...]. Both in the capital city and in Leningrad special armed troops were created and with their help night manhunts began on a large scale. *Pravda* of 25 March 1926 describes the course of such a penal expedition in Moscow. ‘Around 1,500 people – she wrote – took part in a raid on abandoned children, between them militiamen and G.P.U. agents’⁴⁸. After this manhunt, 500 younger people aged 6–12 years were placed in the “Work Life” Department, 23 km away from Moscow. After 18 months and three different directors being appointed, the plant was closed down and the most difficult pupils were locked in prison. When the news of the closure of the house reached the children who were staying there, they threw themselves wildly on the house, knocked out nearly 600 windows, destroyed the library, the physics office, furniture – the militia had to be called in immediately. The message was published by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on 22 January 1928, accurately predicting that the same fate would befall more educational institutions.

Why was the facility destroyed, if, after all, it was a place of refuge for children, a rescue? The answer is complex, from the texts analysed it appears that these reasons were to be found in the demoralised staff of these houses, also in the moral state of the children. Perhaps it was a revenge of prematurely adolescent children who realised that their parents’ love, safety and all the joy of life were taken away from them. A specific explanation is given below:

The living conditions of abandoned children are depressing, both those who live in shelters and those who live on the streets. The loss of parents, idleness and great poverty, sometimes even a desire to learn, together with an unspecified hope of being admitted to school, all this drives children from their home villages to the cities, especially the capital. Having arrived in Moscow, the child wanders around, begs or steals, trying to find a shelter from the cold and the maltreatment. Houses in ruins, stations and empty carriages, and finally even asphalt boilers or large trash boxes serve as shelter. [...] Here is a description of the interior of a huge asphalt boiler, given by Kalinina, the wife of the president of the Central Executive Committee. “When I came closer so that I could distinguish objects, I saw in front of my eyes one of those black boilers where asphalt melts. I wouldn’t have noticed it maybe if it wasn’t for the fire shining inside, making it look even more mysterious and sinister. The inhabitants of the boiler were almost glued to its edges, like starlings [...]. The boiler had 38 inhabitants, 8 of these children still had parents [...]”⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ *Vechernyaya Moskva*, 30 Nov 1936; *Pravda*, 24 Oct 1936, 2 Nov 1936, 11 Dec 1936; cited after: Podoleński, *Rodzina...*, 71.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 73–74.

⁴⁹ *Krasnaya Gazeta*, 17 June 1926; cited after: Borkowska, “Nędza...”, 248.

In the centre of Moscow proper [...], in a huge rubbish box closed with a heavy iron cover, ten children were found [...]. As spring approaches, abandoned children abandon cities, heading for the mountains, to the sea, to warmer surroundings, where they can sleep in the open air and eat stolen vegetables and fruit. [...] thousands of them travel under the wagons, risking falling under the wheels at any time; each time the train stops, they surround the passengers like a flock of hungry wolves. That's how they travel two and three thousand kilometres, to the Caucasus, Crimea, to the mid-day sun. The children of the abandoned can be counted in hundreds of thousands. They live in organized groups, having their own leader and their own morality [...]. The environment and hunger lead the child to a crime. The child starts by stealing bread, then money, and by the way, they are ready to commit a crime. [...] Between 118 murderers, 20 were between 10 and 11 years old, 22 were less than ten years old [...]. "Statistics – writes 'The Evening Red Newspaper' in the 9 July 1928 issue, shows that crime is multiplying systematically among children. [...] Out of 2,445 children who were put before the juvenile committee in Moscow alone in 1925, 400 were ill; 114 were drug users, 16 had syphilis, 55 were mentally ill, and so on. [...]. The abandoned children were brought to the attention of the Soviet government by a private initiative, but jealous of its successes, it ordered their dissolution. That's what happened to the League of Child Rescue... It has been resolved by the intervention of Kamenev"⁵⁰.

In the case of the *bezprizorni*, Podoleński adopts a peculiar way of narration – he does not judge, he gives whole sets of randomly selected facts, and their image is terrifying. The above account – after getting to grips with the reader's fear – leads to a surprising reflection: children and youth turned out to be an active group of opponents of the reality created by communism... Was it the righteousness of youth that encouraged the rebellion and the search for methods of survival adequate to those used by the initiators of the socialist revolution – an experiment brought to the Russians in a "sealed train"⁵¹.

In many texts from the period 1918–1939, Polish critics of the ideology of Bolshevik Marxism reveal the cynicism of its promoters. It manifests itself in actions that openly worsen the situation of children and families – only the spirit of the revolution is important. The infallibility of the principles of the Marxist revolution is proclaimed, even when they experience their bankruptcy and so "Lilina, Zinowiew's wife, writes in her book entitled *Soviet Upbringing and Education through Work*: 'We have to keep the children away [...] from the family's destructive influence, we have to nationalise them, so to speak. Parents' love is particularly harmful to children; the family is individual and selfish, so the child brought up by it becomes anti-social'⁵². Is it madness or calculating and cynicism resulting from the worship of evil? Alina Borkowska wrote that the *bezprizorni* as children seemed to be useful material for communist pedagogy. It was put out

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 247–251.

⁵¹ Moskała, "Nasz sąsiad wschodni...".

⁵² Borkowska, "Nędza..."; 252.

openly by “Maria Levitina, proving that abandoned children are fertile ground for making communists”⁵³.

In the actual reality of implementing the Bolshevik-Marxist educational ideology there appeared a child (millions of children) escaping the new order: homeless, struggling for survival – finally depraved and criminal. The child proletarian became an object of Soviet law, which followed his tragedy. A decree of the Bolshevik government of 14 January 1918 placed the matters of minors under the competence of committees, which were not to punish, but to decide on their assignment to an educational institution or their return to parents. Initially, offences of young people under 17 years of age were not subject to criminal law. But already “a few years later, the communist ‘national upbringing’ led the young people to such a decision that in 1922 it was decided that juvenile delinquency would be handed over to the ‘revolutionary tribunals’”⁵⁴. Thousands of children went to prison with sentences ranging from 3 to 8 years and even more, instead of to educational institutions. “By virtue of the decree of 7 April 1935 the death sentence was extended to minors from the age of 12. [...] ‘Juvenile people, from the age of 12 – who were proven to have stolen, raped, mutilated, murdered or have attempted murder – are to be brought before a criminal court and tried [...]’ until the death penalty is given for all antisocial crimes, which include not only murder but also theft”⁵⁵. Podoleński claims that this law was applied frequently, and in practice it was applied to gangs even before the Decree of April 1935 was issued. In the far north, concentration camps were set up for minors, from where children usually did not return.

The Marxist-Lenin ideology of education after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 created a yet another group of children and young people subordinate to the new power – the pioneers and Komsomol members. It had the status of a “positive” product of Marxist education. It was a “product” of controversial quality: shallow – devoid of spiritual values, wanting to live a better life and working for it; deeply demoralised, but pursuing the aims of the party – that is why it deserved to live. The ideology of the Soviet experiment assumed that “children should not be kept away from politics”, wrote *Czerwona Młodzież* of 3 April 1919. “[...] Yes, on the contrary; one should bring them up in the spirit of the proletarian revolution and arouse in them a fondness for war! We must pour revolutionary blood into their veins!”⁵⁶ – they wrote. The communist organisations of pioneers and Komsomol members served this purpose.

Pioneers (members of the All-Union Pioneer Organisation named after W.I. Lenin) – were the first degree of upbringing in the organisation involving

⁵³ Borkowska’s text is a review of the December 1928 “Revue des deux Mondes” (Borkowska, “Nędza...”, 253).

⁵⁴ Source: “Sow. Just.” 12 (1922) (after: Podoleński, *Rodzina...*, 76).

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 76–77.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 22.

children aged between 7 and 12–14 years. Here they received initial instruction on correct thinking, politics and social issues. Their task was to actively influence the older generation in the communist spirit, to detect the “counter-revolutionary spirit” and to report the “guilty” of wrong thinking and acting: parents, teachers, other relatives and friends. In the Bolshevik school, these children criticised their teachers, school programmes and methods⁵⁷.

Komsomol members were a youth organisation belonging to the Komsomol (All-Union Lenin Youth Union), operating at the second stage of education leading towards a new communist morality⁵⁸. It was intended for young people up to 20–25 years old and prepared them for joining the party. These young people received theoretical training in the organisation, took an active part in the then current political events, joined in the implementation of the five-year plans, and became a subsidiarity to the Red Army. Joining the Komsomol was preceded by a solemn pledge to combat religion and other bourgeois superstitions by all means. The new communist morality was based on propaganda slogans: “liberation from superstition”, “liberation of a woman” from the ties of marriage, from the hardships of motherhood. Freedom of conscience was understood as the rejection of old principles and all moral aspects of sexual life resulting in sexual promiscuity which was not questioned. The disappearance of moral principles among the Komsomol members resulted in sexual abuse reported by *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* on 17 August 1937: “not even several-year-old girls are safe. This explains why in some areas parents hide their daughters from them and don't even let them go to school”⁵⁹. The new communist morality was described by its Polish critics as a moral nihilism that contradicted not only Christian but also human ethics⁶⁰.

Conclusion

In their assessment of the situation of the child and the family affected by the educational ideology of Bolshevik Marxism, Polish critics maintained that communism, by creating a new vision of man and family, “depraved the soul of society and the soul of a child by taking away from them everything that could spiritually lift them up, ennoble them, give them a sense of life – it took away their God, told them that they had no soul, broke up their marriage and family, rebelled against their father and mother. And it did it deliberately and intentionally”⁶¹.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 24.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 70.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 26–27.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 81.

The abnormality of the Bolshevik experiment on man and family met not only with negation and criticism, but also with numerous attempts of the world trying to get used to, and to “turn a blind eye” to this barbarism in order to “warm up” political relations⁶².

The analysed phenomena were described clearly, usually without cruel details. In these interpretations Bolshevik communism is total and the man has no chance to say no to it – if they want to live, which was not a guarantee of life anyway. Criticism of this ideology shows its effects: the emptiness and tragedy of a man deprived of tradition and religion; the collapse of morality as a result of questioning the old and founding a new one; society, economy and education in disintegration; new ethics and aesthetics result in the decline of culture.

It was stressed that a comprehensive critique of Bolshevism (communism) cannot be closed, as it lacks a final vision of culture. Even if dialectical materialism were to be taken as a “mechanism of history” and an indication of cultural change, it lacks a vision of desired culture (or it is infantile) – there is no description of paradise to be achieved. The West, meanwhile, practiced Marxism... theoretically, and practiced it in the East. Polish humanists of the interwar period considered the good knowledge of Bolshevism a point of honour and an expression of their identity. Thus, all sources have been explored – from the texts of Marx, Engels, Lenin, through philosophical-political analyses of other theoreticians and practitioners⁶³, to the personal experiences of eyewitnesses. In Poland, the most comprehensive approaches to the apocalyptic phenomenon of Bolshevism have been created and a new discipline of research – Sovietology – has been initiated. The knowledge of Bolshevism was brought to perfection and considered to be the best in the world⁶⁴.

Dziecko i rodzina jako proletariusze ideologii edukacyjnej bolszewickiego marksizmu w krytycznej refleksji polskich humanistów lat 1917–1939

Streszczenie: Ideologia edukacyjna, jaką była bolszewicka wersja marksizmu, miała w swych działaniach instrumentalne sięganie po dziecko i rodzinę. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, w jaki sposób rodzina i dziecko zostały użyte do wdrażania jej „ideałów”; jak nieświadomie stały się jej proletariatem, ofiarami w sensie zadanego im cierpienia, śmierci czy ograniczonego rozwoju w sferach najmocniej dotkniętych przez ideologię (konsekwencje

⁶² Stefan Wyszyński, pr., “Kultura bolszewizmu a inteligencja polska”, *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 33 (1934), part I and II, 34–48; 139–157. See also: Feliks Koneczny, “Rozmnożenie bolszewizmu”, *Mysł Narodowa* 32 (1930), 496–498.

⁶³ In the interwar period, more than 50 magazines published in Soviet Russia had the right to distribute in Poland, including: *Isvestya*, *Pravda*, *Vechernyaya Moskva*, *Kino-Gazeta*, *Literaturnaya-Gazeta*, *Sovetskoye Iskusstvo* and *Istoriik-Marxist*.

⁶⁴ Kostkiewicz, “Polski nurt...”, 175.

bezdolności, głodu, nadużyć seksualnych). Miejsce i czas – sto lat temu w Związku Radzieckim – są istotne ze względu na szacunek do niewinnych ofiar. Lecz dla pedagoga istotniejsze są dziś kategorie argumentów i mechanizmy, którymi posługiwał się wówczas bolszewicki marksizm. Nade wszystko uwagę zwracają strefy „koniecznej zmiany” (religia, moralność – rodzina, dziecko). Na przykładzie sytuacji rodziny i dziecka rosyjskiego widzimy, jak twórcy bolszewickiego projektu „lepszego świata” cynicznie uczynili je narzędziem zmiany; można zobaczyć realność wielkiej manipulacji. Śmierć, cierpienie, wyniszczenie biologiczne, psychiczne, duchowe nie miały znaczenia wobec przypisanej im roli. Mechanizm ten osłaniał pozór (zakamuflowane kłamstwo). Ideologia bolszewickiego marksizmu w swych odniesieniach do dziecka i rodziny była przedmiotem krytyki w pismach polskich humanistów lat 1917–1939.

Słowa kluczowe: ideologia edukacyjna, marksizm, bolszewizm, dziecko w komunizmie, rodzina w komunizmie, wychowanie w marksizmie

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