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**THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL
SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION IN POZNAŃ
AS A NEW FORM OF PRACTISING EMOTIONS,
BASED ON THE LOCAL POLISH PRESS AT THE TURN
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY***

Abstract

This paper discusses the inclusion of women in municipal social administration in Poznań (at that time, German Posen), the city where, since the end of the nineteenth century, they could be elected to honorary, unpaid positions previously reserved exclusively for men. This process occurred in larger municipalities within the Prussian state. It was the implementation of the ideas of liberal social reformers who believed that the female nature made women experts in caring for the poor and children. According to the reformers, the empathy and emotionality of women would help combat social pathologies originating in the family. The participation of women in social administration is therefore seen as a form of practising emotions in a rationalised public space. The article analyses the reactions of the Poznań press, representing various political persuasions, to this new sphere of women's activity from the perspective of the prevailing gender hierarchy at the time and from the point of view of the Polish-German national conflict. Methodologically, the article draws on the concepts proposed by Barbara H. Rosenwein and William Reddy.

Keywords: Poznań at the turn of the twentieth century, history of cultural gender, emotions, social policy

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INTRODUCTION: EMOTIONS AND GENDER CHARACTERISTICS

The prevailing nineteenth-century bourgeois social construct of gender division of labour was based on a clear distinction between the feminine and the masculine. This division was supposed to stem from gender characteristics, i.e., the belief in a link between biological traits and psychological and behavioural characteristics.¹ An analysis of contemporary encyclopaedias, as well as medical, pedagogical, psychological, and literary writings conducted by Karin Hausen shows that women were attributed with emotionality and a set of traits and behaviours based on affects and sentiments. They were therefore supposed to be naturally sensitive, receptive, religious, and understanding. Men, on the other hand, were rationalised by their biological conditioning and guided in their actions by reason, knowledge, and the ability to think abstractly and make judgments.² Women were thus portrayed as expressive, emotional, warm, and gentle, while men – as intelligent, competent, creative, strict, capable of calculation, and insensitive to the concerns of others. Nature was therefore supposed to determine women's emotionality and make them, *ex definitione*, incapable of making rational decisions.³ As a consequence, the public space, as a sphere of male activity, was subjected to emotional repression. The private sphere, on the other hand, became a place for practising emotions inherent in women's nature, allowing them to care for their children and family with tenderness and affection, and thus fulfil their assigned roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers. The consequence of this division was the deprivation of women's agency and autonomy in the public sphere, thereby denying them the possibility of political participation or involvement in the administrative apparatus.⁴

¹ Ute Frevert, *The Power of Emotions. A History of Germany from 1900 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2021), 94–5.

² Karin Hausen, *Porządek płci. Studia historyczne*, trans. by Justyna Górny (Warszawa, 2010), 51, 55.

³ *Ibid.*, 54–5; Susan J. Matt, 'Introduction: What Were Emotions? Definitions and Understandings, 1780–1920', in Susan J. Matt (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. In the Age of Romanticism, Revolution and Empire* (London, 2019), 12–3.

⁴ Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found* (Budapest – New York, 2011), 100–19.

The nineteenth-century perception of gender therefore shaped cultural norms of behaviour, including separate emotional regimes for women and men, understood by William M. Reddy as sets of rules about who should experience which emotions, when, and how to present and express them.⁵ This was how the emotional standards of genders, as constructed by society and its expectations, were expressed. At the end of the century, however, along with changing socio-cultural contexts, tensions began to emerge between the prevailing emotional order and new narratives about how emotions should be experienced and practised.⁶ We can observe this in the main city of the Prussian partition, i.e. Poznań (at that time German Posen), where, from the end of the nineteenth century, local authorities gradually included middle-class women⁷ in social administration, which was made up of honorary (unpaid) positions that had been defined as political and therefore only available to men.⁸ It was a step towards implementing the recommendations of German liberal social reformers, developed during a debate on addressing social issues and improving the municipal social system. The reformers believed that women, who, according to the beliefs of the time, had a special “natural” predisposition to caring for children and families, should work alongside men in care institutions, using their potential for the good of the whole community [*Gemeinwohl*], in the name of social solidarity and the healing of social relations disrupted by the effects

⁵ See William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), 129; Sofia Björk, *Gender and Emotions in Family Care. Understanding Masculinity and Gender Equality in Sweden* (Göteborg, 2017), 30–1; Katie Barclay, ‘State of the Field. The History of Emotions’, *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*, cvi, 371 (2021), 457–8.

⁶ Ute Frevert, *Writing the History of Emotions. Concepts and Practices, Economies and Politics* (London, 2024), 27.

⁷ By this term, in the case of German society, I mean women from educated [*Bildungsbürgertum*] and economically active [*Wirtschaftsbürgertum*] families, and in the case of Polish society, women from intelligentsia families, i.e., adopting Witold Molik’s definition, a group with at least secondary education and earning a living from intellectual work. Witold Molik, *Inteligencja polska w Poznańskim w XIX i początkach XX wieku* (Poznań, 2009), 15, 262–6; Wolfgang D. Engeldinger, ‘Niemiecka inteligencja w Poznaniu w latach 1871–1914’, *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, lxvi, 2 (1998), 63–76.

⁸ See Ludovica Scrapa, *Gemeinwohl und lokale Macht. Honorationen und Armenwesen in der Berliner Luisenstadt im 19. Jahrhundert* (München, 1995).

of industrialization and urbanization.⁹ In this way, they carved out a space for practising emotions within a rationalised bureaucratic system, a space where women held expert status. As proponents of a scientific approach to solving social problems, however, the reformers believed that women's emotionality could work for the common good only when it was underpinned by theoretical and practical knowledge. They were convinced that a scientific view of the origins of social issues would enable a process that could be described as the rationalisation of emotions, i.e., combining what was believed to be gender-specific empathy and a calling to provide care with qualifications that would guarantee the effectiveness of preventive and supportive measures.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these demands were met (albeit to varying degrees and in different forms) in the majority of large cities in the Hohenzollern monarchy.¹⁰ However, not everyone welcomed this step, neither women themselves nor the men who were supposed to work with them. Both sides considered it a violation of the existing gender order.¹¹ In Poznań, the situation was complicated by the city's bicultural character: at the turn of the twentieth century, it was inhabited by Poles and Germans, as well as a small percentage of culturally German Jews.¹² The Polish and German populations were similar in size. However, Poles dominated the lower classes, while Germans dominated the middle and upper strata. The two nationalities formed two culturally distinct communities living side by side.¹³ The chasm between them was widened by Berlin's Germanisation policy, which intensified after 1900.¹⁴

⁹ Marcus Gräser, *Wohlfahrtsgesellschaft und Wohlfahrtsstaat. Bürgerliche Sozialreform und Social State Building in den USA und in Deutschland 1880–1940* (Göttingen, 2009).

¹⁰ See Jenny Apolant, *Stellung und Mitarbeit der Frau in der Gemeinde* (Leipzig–Berlin, 1910), 41–77.

¹¹ Andrea Bergler, *Vom Armenpflegern und Fürsorgeschwestern. Kommunale Wohlfahrtspflege und Geschlechterpolitik in Berlin und Charlottenburg 1890 bis 1914* (Stuttgart, 2011), 166–9.

¹² See William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews. The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East 1772–1914* (Chicago, 1980).

¹³ Konstanty Kościński, 'Poznań w ubiegłym półwieku', in *Książka Jubileuszowa Dziennika Poznańskiego 1859–1909* (Poznań, 1909), 195.

¹⁴ See Lech Trzeciakowski, *Walka o polskość miast poznańskiego na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Poznań, 1964).

One of its effects was the German character of the city's bureaucracy and the small participation of Poles in the Poznań Magistrate.¹⁵

RESEARCH QUERIES

The print media allows us to study social moods and prevailing social patterns, as well as the process of creating new practices.¹⁶ Assuming, therefore, that the cultural environment shapes our perception of the world,¹⁷ and that nationality, combined with socialization in different circumstances, is a category that influences the way we experience emotions and shapes national "emotional styles",¹⁸ this article aims to analyse the content of leading Polish periodicals published in Poznań at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in search of answers to the question of how individual press publications reacted to the inclusion of women in municipal social administration, given that until then these tasks, as a form of participation in local government, had been reserved for men. Were there impartial news reports, or were there concerns about the violation of the gender order? Or, on the contrary, arguments justifying the need to correct emotional regimes and supplement the catalogue of forms of practising femininity in public space with participation in official, and therefore "masculine", administrative structures? In this context, I am particularly interested in three issues. Did the position of the Polish press change over time, i.e. between the mid-1880s and the outbreak of the First World War, when women were gradually included in the Poznań social administration? Individual press outlets had different ideological leanings or were mouthpieces for political groups consolidating in the Poznań region at the beginning of the twentieth century. Were their reactions therefore varied, or did they take a uniform stance on the issue? Finally, what role did the Polish-German national conflict play

¹⁵ Lech Trzeciakowski, 'Polacy i Niemcy w samorządzie miejskim w Wielkim Księstwie Poznańskim', *Kronika Wielkopolski*, lvi, 3 (1991), 30–41; Lech Trzeciakowski, 'Polacy i Niemcy w życiu codziennym w Poznaniu w XIX wieku', *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, lx, 1/2 (1992), 7–18.

¹⁶ Jerzy Myśliński, 'Uwagi o prasie polskiej przełomu XIX i XX w. jako źródło historycznym', *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, xiv, 1 (1974), 5–26.

¹⁷ Katie Barclay, 'State of the Field', 462–3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 463, 464–5.

in the assessment of women's presence in the social administration? Was the German-dominated bureaucracy in Poznań eager to entrust positions to Polish women, and if so, did the press encourage Polish women of the intelligentsia to do so, presenting them with a new form of emotional practice as a national duty towards Poles from the lowest social strata? Or did it interpret cooperation with German men and women in administrative structures as a violation of national dignity? This issue is part of a broader discussion on the conditions that led to the revision of the gender order prevailing in a given historical reality and the accompanying emotional regimes assigned to women and men as cultural constructs.

The analysis was based on articles and press releases published in the local Poznań printed media, i.e., the main tool in the social communication system. This type of source enabled us to examine the debate that shaped attitudes and public opinion on issues important for everyday life, specifically a new form of female activity in public space, which expanded the canon of activities considered appropriate for middle-class women at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁹ In the Poznań context, the debate on this topic intersected with the national discourse, which, from the early twentieth century, had increasingly polarised Polish society, particularly in relation to German culture and Polish-German relations.²⁰

The compiled body of sources, i.e., a collection of articles and press notes on women's participation in municipal social administration (a question of issue salience), was analysed to identify content related to women's emotionality (a question of content presence). This content was then examined and grouped together as arguments in the debate (i.e., the question of evaluation). The next step was to analyse the whole message by looking for words that reveal the author's emotional

¹⁹ Jerzy Myśliński, 'Uwagi o prasie polskiej', *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, xiv, 1 (1974), 10–1.

²⁰ See Tomasz Sikorski, Adam Wątor, *Liga Narodowa w zaborze pruskim i jej działacze* (Warszawa, 2021); Jerzy Marczewski, *Narodowa Demokracja w Poznańskim 1900–1914* (Warszawa, 1967); Rafał Łysoń, „*Wiecznie proszący, nigdy nie wysłuchani*”. *Polskie ugrupowania ugodowe w Wielkim Księstwie Poznańskim w latach 1894–1918* (Poznań, 2013); Lech Trzeciakowski, 'Polskie ugrupowania polityczne zaboru pruskiego wobec Niemiec 1871–1918', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, iv, 1 (1972), 25–47; Marek Chamot, *Polska myśl chrześcijańsko-społeczna w zaborze pruskim w latach 1890–1918* (Toruń, 1991); Stanisław Kubiak, *Ruch socjalistyczny w Poznańskim 1872–1890* (Poznań, 1961).

temperature and/or words meant to make the reader feel a certain way (question of the text's function),²¹ and then to interpret them in context. I consider the emotionality of the text to be an important component of the persuasiveness of press narratives, influencing readers' attitudes toward the presence of women in municipal social administration and, consequently, weakening or strengthening their interest in this type of activity from a nationally oriented perspective. Press texts should therefore be considered an important source for research that adopts emotionality as an interpretative framework.

The query covered seven major Poznań periodicals of various ideological persuasions, which commented on the participation of women in municipal care for the poor and orphans throughout the entire period under study, i.e. from the first half of the 1880s (the time the reform of the social system, eventually carried out in Poznań in 1884 and 1885, was being discussed) until the outbreak of First World War. However, the collected body of sources has some gaps due to the condition of individual publications. Despite its incompleteness, it provides insight into the positions of leading Poznań daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers, primarily the daily *Dziennik Poznański*, which has been published since 1859. During the period in question, it was conservatively oriented, representing the landed gentry and circles closely associated with the Catholic Church. The search also covered: *Orędownik*, published since 1871, established as a title promoting organic work and aimed at the petty bourgeoisie, as well as the anti-Semitic and anti-landowner *Postęp*, founded in 1890, and *Głos Wielkopolek*, a weekly addressed to female members of the intelligentsia and the landed gentry, published since 1908. *Orędownik*, *Postęp*, and *Głos Wielkopolek*, as well as *Kurier Poznański*, fell under the influence of National Democracy (*Narodowa Demokracja*, *Endecja*) in the early twentieth century. Our analysis also covered items from titles outside the press network created by the *Endecja*. *Wielkopolek*, founded in 1883, aimed at the lower social classes and was edited in an aristocratic spirit. *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, published between 1902 and 1910, drew on Catholic social teaching. The latter represented publications founded by Catholic clergy, a sector of the market that emerged in the late 1890s. The periodicals covered by the study thus fall into three main categories that dominated the Poznań press

²¹ Walery Pisarek, *Analiza zawartości prasy* (Kraków, 1983), 50–8.

in the period preceding the First World War: the National Democracy movement, the Christian social movement, and the much weaker conservative movement.²² At the same time, a functioning German press market existed in Poznań.²³ An important context in which the Poznań press should be considered is the Prussian Press Law of 1874, which was in force during the period under study and introduced repressive censorship. However, as Witold Molik notes, court proceedings and confiscations of press issues in response to criticism of the monarch or the actions of the German local administration did not deter journalists from speaking out against Germanization policies and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, from promoting national isolation under the *swój do swego* (loosely translated as “buy Polish”) program. It can therefore be assumed that fears of possible repressions did not influence the evaluation of social administration reforms in Poznań and the presence of Polish women in its structures.²⁴

From a theoretical perspective, this study fits into studies on cultural gender and draws on the principles of the emotional turn as a historical research perspective that focuses on emotions understood as changing ways of experiencing and expressing feelings, that develop in a specific social situation, and to related concepts that allow certain behaviours

²² See Wojciech Spaleniak, ‘Prasa polska w Poznaniu w okresie zaborów (główne kierunki rozwoju)’, in Marceli Kosman (ed.), *Z dziejów prasy wielkopolskiej XIX–XX wieku*, i (Poznań, 1994), 20–34; Sikorski and Wątor, *Liga Narodowa w zaborze pruskim*, 77–95; Czesław Strzeszewski and Marian Banaszczyk, ‘Chrześcijańska myśl i działalność społeczna w okresie międzypowstaniowym 1832–1864’, in Czesław Strzeszewski, Ryszard Bedner, and Konstanty Turkowski (eds), *Historia katolicyzmu społecznego w Polsce 1832–1939* (Warszawa, 1981), 77–80; see also Feliks Fikus, ‘Z dziejów “Orędownika” (21 marca 1871 – 3 września 1939)’, *Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej*, xix, 3 (1980), 105–18; Henryk Szareyko, ‘Dwutygodnik “Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny” (Poznań 1902–1910)’, i, *Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny WSP w Krakowie*, 194, *Prace Bibliotekoznawcze*, ix (1998), 127–42.

²³ Matthias Barełkowski, ‘Niemiecki gazety i czasopisma w krajoznazie prasowym Poznania i Wielkopolski przed rokiem 1918. Przyczynek do zbadania ciekawej grupy źródeł’, *Biblioteka*, xxxiv, 25 (2021), 151–69.

²⁴ Witold Molik, *Dziennikarze Polscy pod panowaniem pruskim 1890–1914 (próba charakterystyki)*, in *Inteligencja polska w XIX i XX w. Studia*, iii (Warszawa, 1983), 117–8; Grzegorz Kucharczyk, *Cenzura pruska w Wielkopolsce w czasach zaborów 1815–1914* (Poznań, 2001), 245–8; Marek Rajch, *Cenzura pruska w Wielkopolsce w latach 1848–1918* (Poznań, 2004), 36–7, 104–9.

to be interpreted as forms of practicing emotions. These include William Reddy's theory of emotional regimes, understood as binding and accepted forms of expressing and practising emotions, and Barbara H. Rosenwein's theory of emotional communities, i.e., social groups that share the same norms that influence the valuation and expression of emotions.²⁵ The gender studies perspective was also used, which allowed us to examine the conditions (emotive factors, according to Reddy) that influence changes in the forms of emotional expression attributed to women.

The subject mentioned above has not been studied before. Neither Polish nor foreign historiography has acknowledged the presence of Polish women in local social administration in Poznań.²⁶ However, this form of activity of German women in other cities of the Second Reich has already been studied, mainly in German-language literature.²⁷ To some extent, the issue under analysis is addressed in publications on various forms of assistance and care for the poor and children in Poznań.²⁸

²⁵ Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review*, cvii, 3 (2002), 821–45.

²⁶ See Agnieszka Baszko, 'Organizowanie się kobiet polskich w Poznańskim na przełomie XIX i XX wieku', in Agnieszka Janiak-Jasińska, Katarzyna Sierakowska, and Andrzej Szwarz (eds), *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki. Samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich do 1918 roku (na tle porównawczym)*, (Warszawa, 2008), 287–305; Witold Molik, 'Udział kobiet w polskim ruchu narodowym w Poznańskim na przełomie XIX i XX wieku (lata 1894–1914)', in Helena Karczyńska (ed.), *Udział kobiet w polskim ruchu narodowym na Górnym Śląsku i Śląsku Cieszyńskim w XIX i XX wieku* (Opole, 1996), 44–59; Rudolf Jaworski, 'Polish Women and the Nationality Conflict in the Province of Posen at the Turn of the Century', in Rudolf Jaworski, and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (eds), *Women in Polish Society* (New York, 1992), 56–8; Natali Stegmann, '„Je mehr Bildung, desto polnischer“. Die Nationalisierung polnischer Frauen in der Provinz Posen (1870–1914)', in Ute Grau (ed.), *Frauen und Nation* (Tübingen, 1996), 165–77; Rudolf Jaworski, 'Kilka refleksji nad dziejami Wielkopolanek w XIX i na początku XX wieku', in Anna Żarnowska and Andrzej Szwarz (eds), *Kobieta i społeczeństwo na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 1995), 21–8.

²⁷ See Bergler, *Vom Armenpflegern*.

²⁸ See Teresa Ziółkowska, 'Opieka wychowawczo-zdrowotna nad dziećmi specjalnej troski w Poznaniu do 1918 r.', *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, lvi, 2 (1990), 105–15; Waldemar Karolczak, 'Z dziejów Kolonii Wakacyjnych im. Franciszka Dobrowolskiego i Stacji Sanitarnej Towarzystwa „Stella” w Kobylnicy do 1939 roku', *Kronika Wielkopolski*, lxxii, 3 (1997), 69–89.

FEMALE EMOTIONALITY AS A SOURCE OF WOMEN'S SPECIAL
QUALIFICATIONS FOR CAREGIVING: THE PERSPECTIVE
OF GERMAN LIBERAL SOCIAL REFORMERS

At the turn of the twentieth century, care for the destitute provided by municipal authorities in Prussia was supplemented by new preventive programs, and this care gradually transformed into local social policy. This process also occurred in Poznań. The authorities of individual centres implemented the recommendations and guidelines issued to local governments by the supervising state administration, local councils, as well as associations involved in developing programs aimed at combating social pathologies and addressing social issues, improving the health and hygiene of the lowest social strata. This set of issues, discussed in the context of the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation, was the subject of intense public debate in Germany, involving scientists, social activists, and representatives of the bureaucracy dealing with social issues. One of its threads was the inclusion of women in the reformed municipal social administration. This topic was primarily discussed by liberal social reformers in the German Association for Poor Relief and Charity [*Deutscher Verein für Armenpflege und Wohltätigkeit*], an organisation founded in 1880 that developed and recommended programs to municipal authorities to address growing social tensions.²⁹ Finally, in 1896, the organisation advocated for women to be given positions in the social administration with equal responsibilities and rights as men, as well as for cooperation with women's associations that would carry out social tasks assigned by the deputies for women and children from the lowest social classes.³⁰ In 1901, this was also supported by the Third Local Government Council of Prussian Cities in Berlin, and later by councils meeting in individual provinces, including the Province of Posen [*Provinz Posen*].³¹

²⁹ Since 1896, all cities in Germany with more than 20,000 inhabitants have been members of the Association. F.W.R. Zimmermann, 'Der Deutsche Verein für Armenpflege und Wohltätigkeit in den ersten 25 Jahren seines Bestehens 1880–1905', *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, lxii, 4 (1906), 739–40; Marcus Gräser, *Wohlfahrtsgesellschaft und Wohlfahrtsstaat*, 250–1.

³⁰ *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen der sechzehnten Jahresversammlung des deutschen Vereins für Armenpflege und Wohlthätigkeit* (Leipzig, 1896), 149–50.

³¹ Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu [State Archive in Poznań], Records of the City of Kórnik, ref. no. 73: *Verhandlungen des vierten Städtetages der Provinz Posen aus 4. und 5. Oktober 1901 zu Bromberg*, Posen 1901, 17–8.

However, reformers stressed the need for special training for women in social work. Representatives of the middle class were therefore to receive further training in social and social legislation, national economics, hygiene, basic nursing, and the latest pedagogical and educational concepts to work for the good of the entire community [*Gemeinwohl*] in the spirit of social solidarity. They particularly recommended social courses for women involved in charitable associations, which were launched in Berlin in 1893 and transformed by Alice Salomon into the Social School for Women in 1908.³²

At the end of the nineteenth century, the most controversial issue was the appointment of middle-class women to the position of poverty counsellor [*Armenrät*], which was considered a political office. Social reformers supported this solution based on the conclusions of statistical analyses and reports on municipal assistance to the needy. It turned out that the largest group of beneficiaries of the municipal social system were women, children, and mothers with children, including those born out of wedlock, and in many cases, the source of the social crisis of families was to be found in the improper organisation of family and household life or the absence of adequate childcare. They therefore emphasised the need to provide special care for working-class families, which were also the focus of reformist social movements, churches, and the state for other reasons. Based on their projects, which were grounded in a paradigm of prevention and a scientific approach to solving social problems, they recognised that the key to combating poverty was to correctly diagnose its causes and then implement measures that would lead to their elimination. From this perspective, women, in the reformers' view, were "naturally" more competent than men to assess the situation in a working-class family, and the empathy inherent in their vocation as mothers was supposed to enable them to gain a deeper insight into the situation of those seeking help. The reformers considered them to be the "natural" caregivers of the poor.³³

³² Christoph Sachße, *Mütterlichkeit als Beruf. Sozialarbeit, Sozialreform und Frauenbewegung 1871–1929* (Wiesbaden, 1994), 128–34; Christoph Sachße, 'Social Mothers. The Bourgeois Women's Movement and German Social-State Formation, 1890–1929', in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World. Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Social States* (New York, 1993), 145–48.

³³ Rudolf Osius-Cassel, 'Die Heranziehung von Frauen zur öffentliche Armenpflege', *Schriften des deutschen Vereins für Armenpflege und Wohlthätigkeit*, 25 (1896), 7–8;

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OF GENDER ORDER

However, these arguments did not convince everyone. The most spectacular protest by poverty counsellors against working with women took place in Berlin in the late nineteenth century. They threatened that as soon as these positions were handed over to women, they would all resign from their offices. They believed that this step was a violation of their male prerogatives. Concerns were raised not only about women's lack of preparation for administrative functions, but above all about the nature of their gender, which was thought to prevent them from making rational decisions. There was a fear that the emotionality and caring nature inherent in women would lead to an increase in spending from the poor relief fund. Women would not be able to verify applications for assistance properly, and it would end up in the hands of a demoralised and work-shy pauper class that would take advantage of female gullibility and empathy. Contact with this often pathological environment was also considered inappropriate for them for moral reasons. There was a perceived disconnect between the fragile nature of women and the brutal world of poverty. Men protested against sitting on the committees with them, arguing that their presence would force them to behave formally and affect their vocabulary, which had to be straightforward and blunt when discussing certain cases.³⁴ The presence of women in local government institutions was also seen as a sign of emancipation. For this reason, some middle-class women were cautious about this new form of activity opening up to them. They saw official assistance to the poor as a "masculine" endeavour. Instead, women viewed themselves as activists in private charitable associations. The moderate German bourgeois women's movement, from which some middle-class women distanced themselves, made the professionalisation of social work one of its main goals. It promoted care-related professions as "feminine" and sought to place women in honorary, unpaid positions in municipal social administration. These demands were linked to the concept of spiritual motherhood [*geistige Mütterlichkeit*] taken from the German educator

Emil Münsterberg, *Die Armenpflege. Einführung in die praktische Pflgeethätigkeit* (Berlin, 1897), 180.

³⁴ Bergler, *Vom Armenpflegern*, 180–5.

Friedrich Fröbel and developed primarily by the well-known activists Henriette Goldschmidt and Helene Lange. At its core was the belief that women were destined for motherhood, which was to be realised both in the domestic sphere and in the public sphere. This concept assigned women the role of mothers of local communities, cooperating with men in fulfilling various social tasks. This work was recognised as a social and national service, as well as a civic duty of women, comparable to military service for men. As a consequence, maternal ethics were to be given greater value, enabling them to influence the public sphere and male-dominated politics. The moderate German bourgeois women's movement saw these practices as a cultural mission for women, but also as a path to emancipation. However, the activists did not question the existing gender order; instead, they fought for its correction. In this context, "spiritual motherhood" was crucial for the development of the concept of women's citizenship in the German nation-state. It was also the basis for some German activists' demand for women's suffrage.³⁵

INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION IN POZNAŃ

In Poznań, the involvement of women in social administration was a gradual process, which influenced the chronology and intensity of press discussions on the subject. Initially, these were auxiliary positions in municipal care for orphans and neglected children. This changed with the introduction of a new system of assistance for the poor, known as the Elberfeld system, on 1 April 1885. This system was adopted in several places at the time, but in different forms depending on local conditions. It was based on the work of poverty counsellors [*Armenrat*, also known as guardians or supervisors of the poor, *Armenpfleger*, *Armenvorsteher*], who provided care and supervision for several people/families receiving support in individual parts of the

³⁵ Iris Schröder, 'Wohlfahrt, Frauenfrage und Geschlechterpolitik. Konzeption der Frauenbewegung zur kommunalen Sozialpolitik im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871–1914', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, xxi (1995), 368–90; Christoph Sachße, *Social Mothers*, 141–3; Christoph Sachße, *Mütterlichkeit als Beruf*, 98–107; Dietlinde Peters, *Mütterlichkeit im Kaiserreich. Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung und der soziale Beruf der Frau* (Bielefeld, 1984), 187–94.

city (districts). Direct contact with the poor and regular visits to their homes were intended to facilitate the proper diagnosis of the causes of social crisis and the implementation of effective prevention and assistance programs. The position of poor law advisor belonged to the category of honorary (unpaid) municipal offices. Only men, members of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, could become guardians. It was considered a form of participation in municipal government and a first step towards public activity.³⁶ The provision stipulating that only a few poor people could be under the care of a single *Armenrat* meant that in municipalities where the Elberfeld system was in force, not dozens but hundreds of counsellors were needed. In Poznań, where one representative of the district poor commission could deal with a maximum of ten cases in 1885 (the number was lower in later years), there were 250 such positions to be filled.³⁷ With the city's spatial development, there were already over 400 of them in 1914.³⁸ By comparison, in Berlin in 1912, there were 5,494 positions to be filled.³⁹

The rules of the system developed in Elberfeld in the early 1850s did not provide for the participation of women in the works of poverty commissions. However, over time, individual cities established cooperation with women's associations or included representatives of the middle class in committees dealing with poverty relief. In Poznań, counsellors for the poor and orphans were initially assisted by members of two women's associations. Growing pressure for women to be professionally trained for social work, including recommendations from the German Association for the Care of the Poor and Charitable Causes,⁴⁰ prompted the City Council, at the request of the Poznań Magistrate, to decide to create the position of community care worker

³⁶ Taking up this position was voluntary, but those who shirked these duties had to face losing their voting rights or an increase in taxes. Adelheid von Saldern, *The Challenge of Modernity. German Social and Cultural Studies, 1890–1960* (Ann Arbor, 2001), 169–70; Schröder, *Arbeiten für eine bessere Welt*, 120–2; Emil Münsterberg, *Das Elberfelder System* (Leipzig, 1903), 25; Sachße, *Mütterlichkeit als Beruf*, 37–9.

³⁷ *Adreßbuch der städtischen Armen-Verwaltung von Posen 1885* (Posen, 1885).

³⁸ *Adreßbuch der städtischen Armen-Verwaltung von Posen 1914* (Posen, 1914); Hildegard Radomski, *Die Frau in der öffentlichen Armenfürsorge* (Berlin, 1917), 44.

³⁹ Bergler, *Vom Armenpflegern*, 168.

⁴⁰ Rudolf Osius-Cassel, 'Die Heranziehung von Frauen zur öffentlichen Armenpflege', *Schriften des deutschen Vereins für Armenpflege und Wohlthätigkeit*, 25 (1896), 9–11.

[*Gemeindepflegerin*] on 1 April 1897.⁴¹ In 1912, reports mention 23 women working in this capacity.⁴² Unlike the position of a poverty counsellor, a community care worker had to have certified qualifications to care for the sick. This function was therefore professional in nature and was a paid job. It involved working with poor people's committees and doctors to care for convalescents, as well as nursing the less seriously ill poor in their homes. The community caregiver was to be supported by caregivers for the poor [*Armenpflegerinnen*] trained in the municipal hospital and assigned to individual commissions. This was a new position intended exclusively for women. The caregivers had the status of a member of the poverty commission and an advisory voice during its deliberations.⁴³ The first of them took up their duties on 1 June 1897. The caregivers for the poor, usually two, were to work in all district commissions in Poznań, taking over from the counsellors' cases which, in the opinion of the commission, required a "female touch", i.e., those related to the care of families with small children, single mothers, and single women. The auxiliary nature of the tasks performed and the scope of duties were in line with the prevailing gender order and the practices of femininity. This was not the case with the position of poverty counsellor, who, in addition to dealing directly with those entrusted to his care, also paid out benefits and was responsible for the situation in his assigned district, i.e., the section of the area covered by the commission. The Poznań Magistrate decided to allow women to hold this position not so much out of support for the concept of gender equality in social administration, but out of necessity. After several suburbs were incorporated into the city, the number of poverty counsellors increased, making it increasingly difficult to fill these positions. The City Council, therefore, passed a resolution to increase the tax rate for anyone who refused to accept an honorary office without a serious reason.⁴⁴ However, the solution to this problem was to allow women to become poverty counsellors,

⁴¹ 'Gemeindepflegerin in Posen', *Soziale Praxis. Centralblatt für Sozialpolitik*, vol. 6, 15 (7 Jan. 1897), 368.

⁴² *Adreßbuch der städtischen Armen-Verwaltung von Posen 1912* (Posen, 1912), 3.

⁴³ *Auszug aus dem Bericht über die Verwaltung und den Stand der Gemeinde-Angelegenheiten in der Stadt Posen für das Verwaltungsjahr vom 1. April 1897 bis Ende März 1898 betreffend die Armen- und Waisenverwaltung* (Posen, 1898), 9–10.

⁴⁴ 'Z rady miejskiej', *Postępy*, xvii, 107 (11 May 1906).

on condition that only those who had previously proven themselves as caregivers for the poor, and thus possessed the appropriate qualifications, could be appointed. They could also resign from office without giving a reason. When this solution took effect in 1905, 11 women were elected from among 46 counsellors. This was a small group compared to the 336 men holding this position. In the following years, the number increased, but by 1914, it had not exceeded 60 women.⁴⁵ Poznań was thus one of about 70 municipalities across the German Empire that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, allowed women from the middle class to participate in local social administration. Some of these urban centres also included women in the composition of the Deputy Magistrates or the Poor Relief Board [*Armen Direktion*]. In Prussia, Charlottenburg was the first town to do so. In 1904, three women were admitted to the Poor Relief Board, which, as Andrea Bergler emphasises, was considered a political sensation.⁴⁶ Ultimately, by the outbreak of First World War, women in Poznań's social administration held honorary positions as poverty counsellors, guardians of the poor and orphans, and paid positions as community nurses, as well as paid positions requiring certified qualifications in new social administration departments established in the early twentieth century, i.e. care for alcoholics, tuberculosis patients, and care for women in childbirth and infants.⁴⁷

THE POLISH PRESS IN RESPONSE TO A NEW FORM OF PRACTICING FEMALE 'NATURE'

The Polish press in Poznań, regardless of its ideological affiliations, reported on all changes in the organisation of the social system throughout the entire period under study. It also reported on the inclusion of women in social administration structures, although separate notes or articles on this subject appeared rarely. This was, therefore, not a topic that particularly preoccupied the Polish press.

⁴⁵ Radomski, *Die Frau in der öffentlichen Armenfürsorge*, 44.

⁴⁶ Dorothea Hirschfeld, *Die Frauen in der Armen- und Wohlfahrtspflege Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1909), 10–1, 19; Hildegard Radomski, *Die Frau in der öffentlichen Armenfürsorge*, 45; Jenny Apolant, *Stellung und Mitarbeit der Frau in der Gemeinde* (Leipzig–Berlin, 1910), 45, 48; Bergler, *Vom Armenpflegern*, 178–9.

⁴⁷ Apolant, *Stellung und Mitarbeit*, 67.

Głos Wielkopolek, the leading magazine for women in the Poznań region, which had been published since 1908 and was affiliated with the National Democracy circles, also showed no interest in this form of activity. On the other hand, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, a magazine inspired by social Catholicism and published by the clergy since 1901, devoted relatively much space to women's work in municipal social administration.

According to press reports, the administrative structures of the municipal social system were multinational in character. Honorary offices in commissions for the poor and orphans were therefore a space for cooperation between Germans and Poles. However, Germans dominated in terms of numbers, while also holding municipal offices dealing with the poor and presiding over the city as subsequent lord mayors and mayors. There were also a few Poles in the City Council, which voted on changes to the social system. Despite Berlin's anti-Polish policy, which was also implemented by the local authorities in Poznań, there are no reports in the press of any national discrimination against Poles in bodies dealing with the poor and orphans. Moreover, published reports from City Council meetings indicate that throughout the entire period in question, Poles were encouraged to take up positions on committees; this was also influenced, at least to some extent, by the difficulty in recruiting the required number of counsellors and guardians for the poor. As early as 1884, shortly after the decision to introduce the Elberfeld system in Poznań with effect from 1 January 1885, *Kurier Poznański* reported that one of the German deputies of Jewish origin asked the Poles present in the room "to use their influence to encourage Polish citizens to take up honorary positions in the care of the poor".⁴⁸ In 1906, shortly after women were allowed to take up positions as poverty councillors, *Postęp* wrote about a City Council meeting during which German deputies criticised Poles for not applying for honorary positions on poverty committees. The same applied to Polish women.⁴⁹ The following year, *Kurier Poznański* noted with regret in a report from the March City Council meeting that no Poles had responded to the Magistrate's call to take up the position

⁴⁸ 'Wczorajsze posiedzenie reprezentacji miejskiej', *Kurier Poznański*, xiii, 240 (17 Oct. 1884).

⁴⁹ 'Do obywateli i obywaterek miasta Poznania', *Postęp*, xvii, 12 (17 Jan. 1906); 'Do obywateli i obywaterek miasta Poznania', *Wielkopolek*, xxiv, 11 (16 Jan. 1906).

of poverty councillor.⁵⁰ In 1910, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny* cited a lecture given by a priest during a meeting of the St Vincent de Paul Conference, in which the speaker appealed to his audience to take up municipal social work, defining it as a duty.⁵¹ Two years later, *Dziennik Poznański* complained about the indifference of Polish men and women to appeals for work in municipal committees for the poor.⁵² The press narrative clearly presented municipal assistance to the poorest residents as a cause uniting Poles and Germans, residents of Poznań, in the name of the common good. However, throughout the entire period in question, it was noted with sadness that there was little interest in this form of activity among Polish society. When arguing for the necessity of undertaking this task, periodicals referred to both social and national solidarity. Publicists repeatedly emphasised that the beneficiaries of the municipal social system were primarily the Polish poor.⁵³ *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, in an article on the relationship between official and private aid to the poor, argued that “we must admit with regret that the majority of those in need are our own poor, and therefore they have a right to be cared for by their own people, lest it be thought that where there is work and sacrifice to be done, only strangers are to be found”.⁵⁴ In addition, Poles seeking support often did not know German and were not always able to communicate effectively with the poverty counsellor.⁵⁵

Over time, however, municipal care for the poor began to resemble a field of national struggle more and more. The presence of Poles in committees for the poor and orphans was intended to counter the Germanization efforts of social institutions. Publicists were particularly

⁵⁰ ‘Z posiedzenia rady miejskiej’, *Kurier Poznański*, ii, 62 (15 March 1907).

⁵¹ ‘Stosunki prawne opieki nad ubogimi do prywatnych stowarzyszeń dobroczynnych w Poznaniu’, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, viii, 9 (8 June 1910), 498.

⁵² ‘Dobroczynność publiczna w Poznaniu’, *Dziennik Poznański*, liv, 24 (31 Jan. 1912).

⁵³ ‘Wczorajsze posiedzenie reprezentacji miejskiej’, *Kurier Poznański*, xiii, 240 (17 Oct. 1884); ‘Opieka nad ubogimi w Poznaniu’, *Wielkopolanin*, iii, 219 (26 Sept. 1885); ‘Do obywateli i obywaterek miasta Poznania’, *Postęp*, xvii, 12 (17 Jan. 1906); ‘Z posiedzenia rady miejskiej’, *Postęp*, xvi, 103 (5 May 1905); ‘Zakłady miejskie Poznania dla wspomagania biednych’, *Dziennik Poznański*, liii (130) (9 June 1911); ‘Dobroczynność publiczna w Poznaniu’, *Dziennik Poznański*, liv, 24 (31 Jan. 1912).

⁵⁴ ‘Stosunek prawnej opieki nad ubogimi do prywatnych stowarzyszeń dobroczynnych w Poznaniu’, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, viii, 9 (June 1910), 498.

⁵⁵ ‘Opieka nad ubogimi w Poznaniu’, *Wielkopolanin*, iii, 219 (26 Sept. 1885); ‘Z posiedzenia rady miejskiej’, *Postęp*, xvi, 103 (5 May 1905).

concerned about the plight of Polish orphans and children who had been neglected in their upbringing. Under the system in force, they were either placed in care institutions or foster families, where they were raised in the Protestant faith and the German national spirit.⁵⁶ Poles in honorary positions were therefore expected to provide a national and Catholic education to the Polish poor, especially children.⁵⁷ This message was primarily conveyed through articles published in *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, which explicitly recommended that members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul take on positions in municipal care for the poor, orphans, and neglected children.⁵⁸ A similar position can also be found in *Postęp* from 1906 and *Orędownik* from 1910.⁵⁹

The solidaristic and national aspect of involvement in municipal social administration played a key role in shaping the press coverage of the inclusion of Polish women in its structures. Therefore, there were no comments in the Polish press questioning the presence of women in committees or suggesting that this violated the gender order. However, in 1910, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny* noted that this was a form of participation in local government, as it involved co-decision-making on the spending of funds from the poor relief fund, which was financed from municipal taxes.⁶⁰ The collected sources also do not mention any opinions suggesting that direct contact with the poor, sometimes demoralised or wayward, as part of the duties of a guardian or advisor to the poor, is inappropriate for women. In *Kurier Poznański's* report on the City Council meeting held in October 1884, it was noted that this was the reason Mayor Jarosław Herse

⁵⁶ 'Sieroty', *Kurier Poznański*, xii, 232 (12 Oct. 1883); 'Sprawozdanie z administracji miasta Poznania za r. 1894/95', *Kurier Poznański*, xxiv, 235 (12 Oct. 1895); X. St.A., 'Opieka nad dziećmi najwięcej zagrożonymi', *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, iv, 12 (15 March 1906) 275–7; 'X. pralat dr. Jażdżewski', *Wielkopoleńskie*, xxvi, 38 (15 Feb. 1908); 'Nowy sposób germanizowania polskich dzieci', *Dziennik Poznański*, I, 119 (23 May 1908).

⁵⁷ 'W myśl § 59', *Kurier Poznański*, xiii, 83 (9 Apr. 1884).

⁵⁸ 'Z ruchu kobiecego', *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, iii, 283 (15 March 1905), 283; Szczęśny Dettloff, 'Rzut oka na podstawy i sposoby komunalnej opieki nad ubogimi', *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, viii, 11 (Aug. 1910), 615.

⁵⁹ 'Do obywateli i obywaterek miasta Poznania', *Postęp*, xvii, 12 (17 Jan. 1906); 'Stosunek prywatnej opieki nad ubogimi do opieki miejskiej', *Orędownik*, xl, 69 (25 March 1910).

⁶⁰ 'Stosunek prawnej opieki nad ubogimi do prywatnych stowarzyszeń dobroczynnych w Poznaniu', *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, viii, 9 (June 1910), 498.

decided not to include women in the work of the poverty commission with the introduction of the Elberfeld system in Poznań.⁶¹ According to press reports, concerns about entrusting women with tasks in social administration did arise, but on the German side. *Kurier Poznański*, discussing the “general meeting of public social authorities” held at the end of 1899, quoted, among others, a German woman, Mrs. Landsberg, who “complained that men view women’s involvement in public affairs with suspicion, and that women themselves are not interested in public affairs, and that they are not capable of performing such tasks”. Later, she remarked that it was only a matter of utilising the potential inherent in women. *Kurier Poznański*, which after 1906, as the mouthpiece of the National Democracy, commented less and less frequently on municipal care for the poor and orphans, published information about the deliberations of a congress of German women’s organizations, noting that German women were demanding “the appointment of women to participate in public care for the poor and orphans”. However, the newspaper justified this demand by stating that it stemmed from the belief that “women are particularly suited to soothing the tears of suffering humanity”.⁶² The inclusion of women in the social administration was therefore intended to create a space for them to practice feelings that are consistent with their nature and serve both society and the nation. The Polish press invokes these arguments because they fit into the prevailing gender order, according to which women were “naturally” better suited to working among the poor.⁶³ Social work of a patriotic nature was, in fact, presented as one of the main tasks of Polish women under Prussian rule. For the good of society and the Polish nation, they cannot waste their potential. After 1906, however, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny* began to argue that social work based solely on heartfelt impulses was insufficient. Women should prepare themselves adequately and acquire additional knowledge through social courses.⁶⁴ “A Polish woman under Prussian rule must

⁶¹ ‘Wczorajsze posiedzenie reprezentacji miejskiej’, *Kurier Poznański*, xiii, 240 (17 Oct. 1884).

⁶² ‘Feministki niemieckie’, *Kurier Poznański*, xxiv, 240 (18 Oct. 1895).

⁶³ Szczesny Dettloff, ‘Rzut oka na podstawy i sposoby komunalnej opieki nad ubogimi’, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, viii, 11 (Aug. 1910), 615.

⁶⁴ A. Ziemiński, ‘O konieczności pracy społecznej kobiet warstw inteligentnych i środkach nabycia potrzebnej wiedzy’, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, viii, 5 (Feb. 1910), 247–59.

be a modern woman” and participate in the progress of civilisation, emphasised Aleksandra Słonimska, a teacher, activist, and writer who also published under the pseudonym Constantia, in 1907.⁶⁵ Her writings indicate that she was a supporter of using German achievements in the theory and practice of social work, which, as she emphasised, should be used “to save our national existence, which is threatened at every turn”, both in charitable activities and in providing official assistance to the poor.⁶⁶ Helena Rzepecka, one of the most influential Polish social activists in Poznań, who had been affiliated with the anti-German National Democracy movement since the early twentieth century, had a different attitude towards drawing inspiration from German models of women’s social work and cooperation with German women.⁶⁷ Commenting in April 1908 in *Głos Wielkopolek* on a women’s convention in the Kingdom of Poland, she noted that joining forces with German women would be a violation of national interests.⁶⁸ After 1906, *Kurier Poznański*, the organ of the National Democracy, which opposed any Polish-German cooperation, refrained from commenting on the functioning of the municipal social administration in the years leading up to the First World War and became increasingly silent on the issue of women’s activity in public life.⁶⁹

A different position was expressed by *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, a publication issued by the clergy and drawing on social Catholicism. As I mentioned above, it encouraged Polish women, especially members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, to engage in social education and official assistance to the poor and orphans, even though it was a space for Polish-German cooperation. The tensions arising from this situation were addressed in 1910 by Father Szczesny Dettloff, the

⁶⁵ Constantia, ‘Kilka uwag o potrzebie wyższego wykształcenia dla naszych kobiet sfer inteligentnych’, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, vi, 3 (1 Nov. 1907), 57–64.

⁶⁶ Constantia, ‘Kilka uwag o potrzebie wyższego wykształcenia dla naszych kobiet sfer inteligentnych. Dokończenie’, *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, vi, 5 (1 Dec. 1907), 134.

⁶⁷ Grażyna Wyder, ‘Wielkopolskie działaczki w ruchu narodowo-demokratycznym na terenie Poznańskiego na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Szkic do działalności politycznej kobiet’, *Czasopismo Naukowe Instytutu Studiów Kobiety*, i, 2 (2017), 48–72.

⁶⁸ H.R., ‘Ruch kobiety’, *Głos Wielkopolek*, i, 3 (19 April 1908).

⁶⁹ Barbara Okoniewska, ‘O przywództwo polityczne w polskim ruchu narodowym dzielnicy pruskiej w latach 1900–1919’, in Antoni Czubiński, Piotr Okulewicz, and Tomasz Schramm (eds), *Problemy narodowościowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX wieku* (Poznań, 2022), 163–7.

advisor to the poor. Seeking the reasons for the low interest of Polish women and men in taking up honorary positions in the social administration, he noted that “that there are areas in which, with our national dignity intact, we are allowed, and even required, to work together with members of other nationalities and religions – the principle of real communal social policy, which necessarily calls us to cooperate with citizens of other religions and nationalities, has not yet become second nature to us”.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

Before the First World War, the local government system in the Prussian monarchy identified an area in which emotionality, considered to be inherent in female nature, was recognised as a source of women’s special competences. Social administration, i.e., said area, along with reforms of the system of care for the poor and orphans, became part of local social policy. The policy, with its goal of preventing social pathologies, including poverty and related moral threats, increasingly interfered with the family life of the working class. The emotionality of women, stemming from their gender and thus their biological role as mothers, had been practiced in the private sphere; but in the period in question, it gained recognition within a rationalized bureaucratic system. This recognition stemmed from the politicization of the family, which at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became the focus of attention not only of social reformers but also of the ruling elites of the Wilhelmine Empire. In that perspective, the future of the German nation and the realization of the Empire’s imperial ambitions depended on the health, morals, and ideological attitude of the next generation. Women, who, according to the existing gender order, had a “natural” predisposition to care for and educate the next generation, were assigned duties towards the state and society alongside their family responsibilities. The practicing of emotions was to be carried out using tools proven effective by science. The positive evaluation of women’s “heartfelt” work in both the private and public spheres was thus made dependent on professional training.

⁷⁰ Szczesny Dettloff, ‘Rzut oka na podstawy i sposoby komunalnej opieki nad ubogimi’, *Ruch Chrześcijański-Społeczny*, viii, 11 (Aug. 1910), 610.

The main factor that influenced the acceptance of women's new field of activity in Germany was the authority of the bureaucracy and the state behind it, which imbued statements on the subject with an emotional tone. This favored the internalization of women's presence in the social administration, despite the fact that the moderate German bourgeois women's movement also called for it, linking participation in local government with the demand for women's suffrage. However, references to women's nature and their duty to the monarchy had a stabilizing effect. We can therefore assume that before 1914, the catalog of socially approved practices of femininity was gradually expanded, and within the national (German) emotional community, women's participation in the state administration concerned with family, orphans, and children gained normative status and was thus incorporated into the emotional regime.

Throughout most of the period covered by this study, the Polish press in Poznań presented a uniform stance on the inclusion of women in local government social administration, even when it concerned the position of poverty counselor, which gave female members of the intelligentsia the same rights and obligations as their male counterparts. Journalists considered work among the poor, orphans, and children from the lowest social strata to be an expression of social solidarity. They recommended that Polish women participate in official assistance to the needy, interpreting it as another field for practising their "natural" femininity and associated emotionality. Making this work a national duty, and thus a patriotic mission for women, not only in the family but also in administrative structures, played a special role in mobilising them to engage in this form of activity. The eradication of the Polish language from schools meant that Polish women were expected to provide a national and Catholic education for the next generation. This program was implemented by "Warta", the most prominent women's association in Poznań.⁷¹ Despite the ban imposed by the authorities, its members taught the native language to children from the lowest social classes. The press, therefore, focused

⁷¹ Grażyna Wyder, 'Działalność edukacyjna kobiet – Polek w Wielkim Księstwie Poznańskim w drugiej połowie XIX wieku jako czynnik kształtowania świadomości narodowej', *Rocznik Lubuski*, xxxv, 1 (2009), 85–100; Czesław Skopowski, 'Towarzystwo „Warta” w Poznaniu w latach 1894–1939', *Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Wielkopolski i Pomorza*, vi, 2 (1960), 173–207.

on including social work in the list of national and patriotic duties of Polish women.

However, periodicals published in Poznań ceased to be unanimous on this issue after 1906, when, on the one hand, more and more titles influenced by National Democracy began to appear on the press market, and on the other, the *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny* periodical joined the discussion on women holding honorary offices.

Kurier Poznański and several other publications taken over by the National Democracy, which was gaining growing support in the Poznań region, increasingly pursued a nationalist agenda that excluded any form of cooperation with Germany. In addition, Roman Dmowski, the main ideologist of National Democracy, was also opposed to women's social involvement, which he believed distracted them from their most important work: caring for their homes and families.⁷² It can therefore be assumed that ideological considerations led previous supporters of women's work in social administration to change their stance, especially since it was both a non-family sphere in which women could express their femininity and a space for interaction with German women. In this light, it is understandable why both *Kurier Poznański* and other ideologically aligned publications refrained from commenting on women's participation in social administration in the years leading up to the First World War.

A different position was expressed by *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny*, which drew on the German Christian social model and promoted a Catholic program for women's emancipation, represented in the Kingdom of Poland by the United Landowners' Circle (*Zjednoczone Koło Ziemianek*).⁷³ The narrative of *Ruch* was emotional and encouraged women to educate themselves for social work so that, alongside men, they could effectively act to lift the lowest strata of Polish society out of poverty and provide them with a Catholic-national education, as well as counteract the spread of socialism among the working class. *Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny* was thus a proponent of women's

⁷² Magdalena Gawin, *Spór o równouprawnienie kobiet (1864–1919)* (Warszawa, 2015), 224–5.

⁷³ Strzeszewski, Banaszczyk, *Chrześcijańska myśl*, pp. 72–7; Anna Barańska, 'Nowoczesny naród, nowoczesna religijność – przypadek Polski', in Jan Pomorski and Mariusz Mazur (eds), *Wielka zmiana. Historia wobec wyzwań...*, ii: *Od starożytności po wiek XIX* (Warszawa–Lublin, 2021), 410.

involvement in the social administration, recommending it mainly to the members of the charitable Society of St Vincent de Paul. This development had a destabilising effect on the range of emotional practices accepted in Polish society.

Translated by Krzysztof Heymer

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