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FIRST PRE-SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS IN SLOVAKIA

COUNTESS MARY TERESA BRUNSWICK
AND HER CREDIT IN ESTABLISHING
THE FIRST PRE-SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS IN SLOVAKIA

In the history of nations many important personalities participated in a great extend in the support of many social changes, reforms and laws. More rarely these were the women who contributed to progress and improvement due to several barriers and social prejudices existing in the area of education and access to the public and political life. In spite of that, it was Mary Teresa Brunswick, one of the most important personalities in Austrian-Hungarian monarchy, who significantly contributed to the establishment of day nursery organizations for children.

At the end of the 18th century, complex social and economic aspects of the coming industrial era influenced by the scientific progress and extending industrial production concluded in the change of social relations that had impact on the family life of ordinary people. Among the most significant social family changes also belonged the entering of women and children into the labor market in the swiftly developing branches of textile industry. In larger cities women had a chance to be employed predominantly in plants and manufactories as cheap labor working 12 or even more hours a day while leaving their small children at home often without any supervision. The consequence was frequent injuries and accidents caused to the children without relevant care. This hopeless situation motivated eager philanthropists,

but also pragmatically thinking owners of plants and manufactories to think about many small children who had to be taken care of when their mothers were at work. These factors lead at first to rare attempts, later to **large-scale establishment of institutions specialized in small day nurseries**. In their formation the focus was laid on **social-nanny orientation** of these institutions. From the beginnings, they were assigned for orphans, later to take care of the worker's children in large cities when their parents were at work — they saturated the health and social care of family (cf. D. Kovačikova, 2000).

It was also Austria-Hungary that had several enthusiasts and propagators of day nurseries who tried to help the children of working mothers. In Vienna it was predominantly Joseph Wertheimer and in Budin Leopold Chimani, Matej Kern and Stephan Rokos in Banska Bystrica as well as Rehlinger in Trnava. Among the most insistent propagators of the idea of the need or necessity of establishing pre-school educational institutions in the area of Slovakia belonged enlightened countess, philanthropist, Bratislava native Mary Teresa Brunswick (1775-1861) who alternatively lived in Budin and Vienna, between 1833-1841 in Bratislava too. During her stay in Bratislava, where she lived in the house on Rybné Square, she occasionally visited Dolna Krupa near Trnava where she also met Ludwig van Beethoven (Tarjanová, 1970, p. 78, Zacharová, 1999, p. 34).

M. T. Brunswick was a woman in her times exceptionally educated. She was mainly interested in the area of educational effectiveness and its influence on personality. She familiarized herself in details with the pedagogical work of Pestalozzi whose works she specially admired and with whom she corresponded. She met him in person in Yverdon in 1808 where she stayed for some weeks in his family. She also knew later pedagogical works of his followers Diesterweg and Charles John. She was knowledgeable, studied several other pedagogical systems and was educated in philosophy too: she studied the work of Kant, Fichte, Jakoby, Herder and Hegel. She personally got to know the important philanthropist Salzmann. During her many journeys she visited Russia, Switzerland, Hungary and Bohemia (stay for a longer time in Brno). *Thanks to Joseph Wertheimer from Vienna she familiarized with the translation of Wilderspin's work Infant Education or Remarks on the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor* (Mikleš, 1970, p. 14). After the detailed reading of theoretical foundations of Samuel Widerspín's pedagogical work, his opinions on helping poor children as well as the results of pedagogical work in day nurseries, she decided to act. She became an eager propagator and founder of the day nurseries and circulated

informative leaflets popularizing the day nurseries, she was founding philanthropist clubs and communities focusing on gathering finances that covered the maintenance of future day nurseries. As a countess, she was a very influential and socially respected personality. She used her influence and position for the benefit of charity and the enlightenment campaign oriented towards children at the pre-school age. In that time it was really unusual that a woman from high society paid such attention to poor children.

From the initiative of the countess the first day nursery in Budin, Hungary was established in 1828. She opened the day nursery from her own finances on June 1, 1828 in her mother's house in Mika's Street and called it the Angel's Garden. It was the first institute of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe and became a sample for establishing similar institutions in the area of Hungary and other countries of Austrian Monarchy. *In addition, she also established in that time two day nurseries in Pest and one in Budin. In all four day nurseries there were 555 children* (Tarjanova, 1970, p. 78). The founder did not content herself with local successes and turned her attention to the northern area of Hungary and its cities.

Establishment of Banská Bystrica Day Nursery. The greatest credit of the establishment of the first day nursery in the area of Slovakia was mainly connected with the initiatives of M.T. Brunswick. Matej Kern and Štefan Rokos ranked among the first teachers of the day nursery. Matej Kern came to the day nursery as the best student of professor Wagner thanks to whose recommendation countess Brunswick accepted him. The teacher Štefan Rokos informed children about the basis of natural science – he showed them various pictures of animals, preserved models and natural products as well as different craft products. Children were instructed *how to use these products and in this way were educated in „technological entertainment”* (Mikleš, 1970, p. 15-16). As a teacher he took care of approximately 80-150 children at the pre-school age. Through his progressive pedagogical efforts he became wellknown and the newspaper Slovenskje Narodnje Novini edited by Štúr was praising him for educating people also *on Sundays in a school functioning according to the English model of „Sunday school”* (Mikleš, 1970, p. 17). Children of workers attended the day nursery free of charge. They were educated in the Slovak language. Besides the game activities, children were given even some basis of elementary education. The content of education in the day nursery in Banská Bystrica was formed by the basis of literacy, but also by the aforementioned basis of natural science, technological skills (elementary working operations). Except of theoretical

teaching, dancing was practically taught and music was practiced every day. Under good weather conditions, children were in the courtyard near the day nursery or went together with a teacher and nanny on the meadow. From the beginning the children were equipped with *alphabet tables and cubes* (Mikleš, *ibid.*). The day nursery was private. The organization, maintenance and facilities were operated by the Banska Bystrica Women Society (Mikleš, 1970, Zacharová 1999, Statute of the Banská Bystrica Women Society, 1970).

Other day nurseries were just the matter of a short time. The philanthropist Brunswick was promoting and founding day nurseries in the whole area of Hungarian Kingdom. From her and the Association for Day Nurseries initiative, the first Bratislava day nursery was also established in 1830. Since Bratislava had suitable conditions, other day nurseries started appearing in a short time – on the Promenade (present Hviezdoslav Square), on the Kožia Square, etc. With the support of the countess Brunswick, Anton Rehlingen, her personal secretary, a noble man of Czech origin, founded the day nursery in Trnava where he became a teacher. Rehlingen adopted Wilderspin's model, the work schedule and even the names of subjects. Later together with M. T. Brunswick he produced the revision of the Wilderspin's methodology (probably under the influence of Pestalozzi and Diesterweg documents).

Brunswick developed and revised also the Wilderspin's principles, content and methods of pre-school education for the conditions of Austria-Hungary. She even overcame Wilderspin through requesting more playing in day nurseries for children than learning. In this way she went through the intellectualization and drill of untimely learning in case of small children in Wilderspin's day nurseries. Her idealism and philanthropy are capable of being *identified predominantly with non-revolutionary philanthropy of Pestalozzi* (Mikleš, 1970, p. 72). Altogether, the countess Brunswick personally participated in founding *11 day nurseries* in Austria-Hungary (Zacharová, 1999, s. 34) and she wrote several works on their missions, tasks and overall orientation. Day nurseries grew in number and also fulfilled educational goals; they started to saturate not just the social and health functions in family education, but later didactic-formative function of family education too. In 1848, there were already 77 day nurseries in total in Austria-Hungary.

In the area of Slovakia pedagogical views and efforts of the countess Brunswick had their supporters and admirers in a wide spectrum of Slovak intelligence, pedagogically oriented frontiers as Samuel Tešedik (1742-1820), Daniel Lehotsky (1759-1840).

The establishment of day nurseries had a positive response in a group of Slovak intelligence represented by writers. There are well-known articles of Jondš Zdborsky which were published in the *Slovak News* in 1851 and 1852. Even well-known Štúr's *Slovenskje národňje novini* from 1846 pointed to the progressive character of establishing day nurseries, they presented information and detailed news about new established day nurseries.

Bohemia. In 1830 the Czech count Chotek recommended the establishment of day nurseries for small children. After this impulse, three Prague day nurseries and one in Pilsen were established. The first and at the same time biggest day nursery (attended by 300 children) was a "model formation day nursery" for poor children in Prague on Hrádek. It was opened on September 1, 1832. This institution had to be an example for the other day nurseries in Bohemia. According to the model teacher J. V Svoboda, "the purpose of this institute is to protect the poor pre-school children at the age of 2-5, whose parents are employed quite distantly, in a way to support their growth of love towards the good" (Uhlířová, 2003, p. 6).

The reaction of the first Czech day nursery in Slovakia. The first and at the same time biggest "model formation day nursery" formed in Prague on Hrddek was an example for the other day nurseries in Bohemia, but it also became a source of inspirations of the following work for Slovak teachers in day nurseries who were in fact enthusiasts of pre-school institutions in Slovakia. For instance Jozef Miloslav Hurban published a book *Cesta Slovák k bratrům slawenským na Moravě a v Čechách* (Pešť, 1841) where he depicted to Slovak teachers the pioneer and innovative work of Ján Svoboda in the first day nursery on Hrádek in Prague. Hurban described every day work in the day nursery, predominantly the innovative, didactic procedures of J. Svoboda. In details he described how he teaches children to read in a joyful way with the help of small tables and how he teaches them to count with the help of marbles. It is clear that similarly as in case of Retlinger in Trnava day nursery even Jan Svoboda came out from the work schedule of Wilderspin *Lessons on the transposition frame*.

The first state pre-school institutions – the day nursery was established only in 1876. Of course, after Wilderspin, Pestalozzi the teachers of day nurseries used predominantly the unbeaten pedagogical work of Jan Amos Komenský penetrated with a deep understanding of a child and child's world. The ideas of pre-school education present in the work of Jan Amos Komenský were really fruit-bringing. The work *Informatorium školy mateřské*

was published for the first time by the printing-works in Ružomberok in 1892, at the occasion of the 300 anniversary of J.A. Komneský's birth thanks to the efforts of Karol Salva (1849-1913), the teacher, organizer of pedagogical movement in Slovakia, letterpress printer and devoted enlightenment activist. Thanks to him, pedagogical magazines and several significant pedagogical works were published in Slovakia until 1909.

Magyarization of pre-school institutions. On the basis of the Law Article XV from April 28, 1891 published under the title *Law on child care*, the day nurseries were renamed to „ovoda” This law became the first legislative regulation concerning Kindergartens in Hungarian Kingdom. According to this regulation the state had a duty to establish day nurseries predominantly as a means of Magyarization. Children of other origin than Magyar, had to learn the state language in these institutions and that is why teachers had to know the Magyar language (Pšenák, 2002, p. 113). The law required a thorough realization, i.e. the „ovoda” had to be established in all the areas where parents were not capable of proving their care of children at home and then were obliged to send their children to these „ovodas” If not, they were sanctioned by a fine of 10-15 kreuzers for the purpose of the „ovoda” At the beginning of the 20th century, the magyarization efforts reached their climax in the educational politics. In 1907, the Apponyi school reforms were issued. These reforms definitely removed the Slovak language as a school language from all the types of schools. In the school year 1913/14, there were 416 day nurseries in the area of Slovakia, but none of them was Slovak.

Pre-school institutions in the period of the first Czechoslovak republic. After the birth of the first Czechoslovak republic, there were formation institutions for children still without compulsory learning, i.e. day nurseries (Law XV *On the child care* from 1891 was still in effect). However, conditions respecting the rights of the Slovak nation and minorities in the area of Slovakia were created. That is why, the harborages and day nurseries ceased to function as places of denationalization. The only cardinal organization regulation through which the day nurseries went across was the fact that according to the Small School Law from 1922 they were transmitted into the educational system of the first Czechoslovak republic. The interwar period was characteristic for the efforts connected with the development of education in the Slovak area due to keeping significantly behind the Czech area.

Kindergartens. The old day nurseries were in our conditions later transformed into kindergartens which fulfilled besides the educational functions even the political functions.

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PIERWSZE INSTYTUCJE PRZEDSZKOLNE NA SŁOWACJI
HRABINA MARIA TERESA BRUNSWICK I JEJ UDZIAŁ
W ZAKŁADANIU PIERWSZYCH INSTYTUCJI PRZEDSZKOLNYCH
NA SŁOWACJI

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł na tle przemian kulturowych w Europie XIX w., których jedną z cech była moda na przedsięwzięcia filantropijne bogatych mieszkańców Anglii, Francji, czy Włoch, opisuje proces zakładania i rozwoju pierwszych na terenie dzisiejszej Słowacji, choć wówczas w Monarchii Austro-Węgierskiej instytucji przedszkolnych. W tym kontekście osobą zasługującą na szczególną uwagę jest hrabina Maria Teresa Brunswick. Brała ona udział w zakładaniu pierwszych przedszkoli w wielu słowackich miejscowościach, a w szczególności w Banská Bystrica, Trnawie i Bratysławie. Autor podkreśla konsekwencje zakładania zakładów dziennej opieki dziecięcej wśród słowackiej inteligencji.

Tłum. Ks. Włodzimierz Wieczorek

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