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Nationalistic Upbringing of a Ukrainian Child Based on “Woman’s Lot” Magazine

Nacjonalistyczne wychowanie ukraińskiego dziecka na podstawie
czasopisma „Kobiocy Los”

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia najważniejsze składniki idei pedagogicznych nacjonalistycznego wychowania ukraińskich dzieci, wyznawanych przez redaktor czasopisma „Kobiocy Los” Olenę Kisilevską.

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika, rodzicielstwo, ukraińskie dziecko, wychowanie nacjonalistyczne, czasopismo „Kobiocy Los”, Olena Kisilevsky.

Abstract

This study presents the most important components of the pedagogical ideas for nationalistic upbringing of Ukrainian children held by the editor of the „Woman’s Lot” magazine O. Kisilevsky.

Keywords: pedagogy, parenting, family, Ukrainian child, nationalistic upbringing, „Woman’s Lot” Magazine, Olena Kisilevsky.

This question has not yet been a subject of a separate study in the national pedagogy. Neither has it been considered in the Polish historiography. This paper and study are based on the speech of the „Woman’s Lot” maga-

zine editor O. Kisilevsky on June 27, 1934 at the Ukrainian Women Congress in the city of Stanislav (nowadays Ivano-Frankivsk), where she delivered a report on the subject „Education of a Nation.” The complete report was published in seven issues of the magazine: No. 22–24 for the year 1934 and No. 1–4 for the year 1935¹.

Olena Kisilevsky (1869–1956) was a prominent Halychyna² public figure of the interbellum, a writer, and a Polish Seim Senator from the UNDA³ party from 1928 to 1935⁴.

In the article „Education of a Nation”, O. Kisilevsky’s main views are reduced to 17 important principles of the nationalistic education of a child in the conditions of the realities of that time. In particular, she considers the battle for the soul of the Ukrainian child to be the foremost task of the Ukrainian society in the nationalistic education. In her opinion, this is an extremely important task, because parents’ losing the battle for the child’s soul means nation’s losing one of its members, and many such losses may cause the nation to cease to exist. She states: „This indeed is a life-and-death battle, because parents’ losing the battle means their losing the soul of their own child, whereas the nation loses one of its sound members. Should there be many such losses, if this process continues over a long period of time, the nation may cease to exist. [...] When a child does not receive strong support in the upbringing, such as given by patriotic parents and the entire milieu in the child’s own home, it wavers from one side to another and may easily tumble to the very bottom of the social abyss”⁵.

The first years of life generally play a very important role in the nationalistic upbringing of a Ukrainian child as an individual. They are the foundation upon which the further destiny and life of the child are based. The school and surroundings do not have such an effect on the child in the future. Therefore, parental upbringing of the child in its very first years of life is decisive. If the parents sow corn cockle into the child’s soul, in the future they will reap not grain, but weeds. The most important role in the national-

¹ O. Kisilevsky, *Education of a Nation*, „Woman’s Lot” 1934, November 15th, pp. 8–9; December 1st, pp. 3–4; December 15th, pp. 8–9; 1935, January 1st, pp. 8–9; January 15th, pp. 4–5; February 1st, pp. 5–6; February 15th, pp. 5–6.

² Also, Galicia, a region that lies mostly in Western Ukraine and partly in Eastern Poland. Named after the medieval city of Halych.

³ Ukrainian National-Democratic Alliance.

⁴ [Kisilevsky Olena], *Encyclopedia of Ukrainian Studies*, Ukrainian Edition, Lviv 1994, vol. 3, p. 1033.

⁵ O. Kisilevsky, *Education of a Nation*, „Woman’s Lot” 1934, November 15th, p. 8.

istic upbringing of a Ukrainian child during the first years of its life belongs to its mother. O. Kisilevsky states: „It has been scientifically proven that what the child’s soul absorbs during the first years of its life is so durable that it determines the entire nature of the individual. It forms that foundation upon which the child’s destiny rests. Moreover, the latest research in the pedagogy field also indicates that what the child absorbs at home can very seldom be changed later even by the strongest efforts at school and by the surroundings in general. Because during the first years of its life the child belongs almost exclusively to its mother, her importance in the matter of existence and fate of the nation is immense. If the mother sows good and sound seeds, the harvest will also be wholesome. But by leaving the field of her own child’s soul fallow she opens it to outside influences that may even be hostile. Having sown corn cockle instead of wholesome grain she will have to reap poisonous weeds”⁶.

She then goes on to emphasize: „Until now our mothers have not been properly appreciating this first period of the human life and have been sending their children into the world unprepared like soldiers without weapons into combat. All the people will feel the terrible outcome of ignoring this family factor in the patriotic upbringing of the child”⁷.

The native language is the most important factor in and the means of the nationalistic upbringing, it is its foundation. Underestimating the importance of the Ukrainian language in the nationalistic upbringing is a fatal error of parents who when meeting acquaintances of another nationality immediately switch to the language of the invader, thereby holding in contempt the rights of the native language and their own human dignity. This is a sin against one’s own self-respect and against the welfare of the nation. O. Kisilevsky states: „[...] not only do adults speak the language of the most despised oppressing enemy among themselves, but they also use it with their small children, which is simply a crime against the people. Is there any other nation that has fallen so low, that has no sense whatsoever of national dignity and responsibility before the future generations? For a child being brought up in this way by the parents, by its own mother, must in the future either splinter off its own people or realize the sin its parents committed against their own

⁶ O. Kisilevsky, *Education of a Nation*, „Woman’s Lot” 1934, December 15th, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

dignity and against the welfare of the nation, and he or she will feel pity for and even superiority over them, instead of love and respect”⁸.

O. Kisilevsky believed that the most important feature in the upbringing of the Ukrainian child must be the milieu of its parents, especially its mother, and not street mates and peers of other nationalities. In this respect she points out: „[...] this is absolutely required of them by the Fatherland. Namely, to make it their duty to bring up the child using good, pure, unspoiled native language during all the time the child is in their care. The surroundings of a small child must first of all be its own mother and relatives, and not the street and peers of other nationalities. When mothers work outside the home, they must try to arrange care for the child by members of their own nation in whatever form”⁹.

In her opinion, the child should start learning non-native language only after the native language has deeply rooted in its soul, that is, when it is nationalistically aware and no outside influences can affect it. She writes: „Let the child attend school for two and even three years instead of one until it learns a non-native language. But it should start learning this language when the native language has put such deep roots in its soul, that it won't be uprooted by the strongest outside influences”¹⁰.

O. Kisilevsky maintains that besides the living word the child must also have books and newspapers in the native language. Even when the child cannot read yet, the mother should first give it books with pictures, but they must be in the native language, because a book in another language will plant in its young soul an alien seed of assimilating influence. She stresses: „Perhaps other books are better or less expensive, but remember that such an alien seed will plant its demoralizing root in the young soul”¹¹.

In the nationalistic upbringing of the Ukrainian child, O. Kisilevsky assigns a special place to a home library of national literature. She emphasizes the need of subscribing national periodical literature for children and pupils and giving them an opportunity to build their own library of Ukrainian literature, even if it is a small one. In this respect O. Kisilevsky says: „Children and school age youth should be given their own newspapers and books, let them collect a small library of their own... But here example must also be set by the environment of the child's own home and by its mother. When the

⁸ Ibidem, p. 9.

⁹ O. Kisilevsky, *Education of a Nation*, „Woman's Lot” 1935, January 1st, p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 8.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 9.

mother does not read anything herself, or if she reads gutter press and brings home all kinds of trashy literature of another national culture, and does not buy or read books of her own national culture, by this she will instill the same attitude in her child and befoul its soul”¹².

O. Kisilevsky further states that children and parents reading together national children literature plays an important role in the nationalistic upbringing of the child. Moreover, parents must take interest in what their children read and discuss with them, what the children read by themselves and, should it be necessary, explain to them the meaning of the materials they read¹³.

The home settings play quite an important role in the nationalistic upbringing of the child and, therefore, it must have exclusively Ukrainian nature: needlework, carpets, toys, plates and dishes, painted eggs, hand towels, icons, portraits. All furniture must have Ukrainian appearance. It is this type of cozy home surroundings in the national style that the child will remember during all its life. She states: „Ukrainian home setting must have the Ukrainian character. This can be achieved at little cost. All of your furniture must have native appearance. Clever arrangement of needlework, carpets, some decorative wooden works, toys, a plate, a painted egg, an icon and a landscape on the wall, portraits of great people decorated in the folk style by embroidered towels, all of this by itself can give the dwelling its own special Ukrainian feel, which an individual will retain in memory during all of his or her life”¹⁴.

In the nationalistic upbringing of the younger Ukrainian generation, O. Kisilevsky reserves an important role to observing by adults religious rites, customs, traditions and celebrating major religious holidays. The parents should use the beauty of the folk rites, customs, and traditions to encourage their children to celebrate religious holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc. She writes: „No other people have such beautiful religious holidays as our holidays of consecrating Easter cakes, blessing of fruits of the earth on Savior feast days, or Baptism of the Lord. Unique to our people are also spring blessing of fields and excursions during the Pentecost holiday”¹⁵.

For the younger generation of Ukrainians traditional and national holidays and jubilee celebrations are of great educative importance.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ A mostly Western Ukrainian tradition of attending and honoring graves of fallen fighters for the Ukrainian independence, Ibidem, p. 9.

Anniversary commemorations of Markian Shashkevich, Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, Natali Kobrynska, Lesia Ukrainka, Anna Pavlic, the November Revolution¹⁶, the Mother's Day, and the like must be held in families with children's participation.

In these days, parents should tell their children about works of great national writers and about events in our fight for independence. This helps parents in upbringing their children in the nationalistic spirit.

O. Kisilevsky states: „[...] Let's recall the solemn commemoration of Markian Shashkevych anniversary on the Pidlyska mountain near the city of Zolochiv in Halychyna, public worship at the Cossacks graves, and other similar events. The solemnity of such gatherings, the numbers of participants, the beauty of our rite, the fairytale colors of our folk costumes, songs and all other aspects majestically touch the child's soul. So it should be understood that if a child sees all this, it will never forget it. These images will leave a bright inerascable impression in the child's memory for the rest of its life. But it's necessary that our community not take this matter lightly and take part in such events with the due respect... Poets' anniversaries should be celebrated in families with all members present by reading their works aloud. On the First of November Day, which is dedicated to commemorating our independence fight and remembrance of those who gave their lives for it, we should tell our children some facts from the history of our independence fight. Then we will be true educators of our children and builders of our nation”¹⁷.

Our people should foster the memories of the old times on the family level. The child must know and understand the national history. This will help us extirpate the servility and faintheartedness, these shameful stains of our enslaved nation. The renown Italian pedagogue A. Compte wrote: „From the moment that we learn that we have common ancestors, when we know about those who are dead and about these who are guiding us now, from that moment we have a Fatherland”¹⁸. Peoples who have states receive solid knowledge of the history of their Fatherland at the national school. Enslaved people must make up for this huge deficiency in the nationalistic upbringing of their children themselves.

¹⁶ An uprising by Ukrainian national elements in the Kingdom of Halychyna and Volyn, the crown land of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, directed at installing the authority of the Ukrainian State on the territory to which it laid claims.

¹⁷ O. Kisilevsky, *Education of a Nation*, „Woman's Lot” 1935, January 1st, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, January 15th, p. 4.

O. Kisilevsky stresses: „They must devote their greatest attention to this area. This is necessary, on the one hand, in order to teach the child to love its ancestors, to be proud of them, as if give it new parents, and on the other hand, in order to allow the child to oppose historical falsehoods by which the occupying nation usually muddles up minds of the youth of the occupied nation.

The own home must not only foster memories of old days, but also allow to take by handfuls from the pool of our most recent positive memories. Let the youth grow in their souls awe of the heroes' deeds and longing and desire to follow in their footsteps. By this we will extirpate the servility and faint-heartedness, these shameful stains of our enslaved nation”¹⁹.

The Ukrainian child must know not only the national history, but the national literature and arts as well. We have a rich treasury of these, but are ignorant of the beauty and greatness of our achievements. The youth mentor states: „Quality writing, poetry, and art are of a great importance. What the mother or the father cannot say will be said for them by a writer or a poet in the best way. The unsaid by the parents will be visually conveyed by an artist's image, a handiwork of a folk genius, national literature. We have a rich treasury of art, literature, and poetry, which may be larger than that of other peoples whose art and literature we like only because we do not see the beauty and greatness of our own”²⁰.

In addition to the history worship, the Ukrainian family must maintain respect for the contemporary times, hold in esteem today's culture figures and their political elite. O. Kisilevsky writes: „Besides the worship of the past, the people must respect their present-day authorities, there must be discipline and deference to the leadership. Talking disparagingly about all and sundry by family members at home or allowing visitors to do it, taking lightly the undermining of all values by a certain part of our press, which for the sake of demagoguery, partisanship, or simply in pursuit of sensation does not hesitate to throw mud at everything and everyone and to undermine the respect to even the most meritorious entities or parties of the nation, all of this does not at all implant respect to its own nation in the child's soul.” She then cites the words of the Polish pedagogue Balicki about the importance of moral authorities for a society delivered at the pedagogical congress in the city of Poznań in 1919: „Youth that do not know how to bow in deference to age, adults in deference to honesty and intelligence, citizens in deference to

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 5.

²⁰ Ibidem.

merits will never create a respected nation, because they themselves do not know how and they tear to pieces the mantle of the national majesty.” She further stresses: „A generation brought up in a negative atmosphere ceases to be capable of creative work and lives only by negatives. From the negative, the road leads to indifference and then to the most despicable thing in the world – treason”²¹.

Religious upbringing, that is, instilling respect to one’s rite, one’s church, plays an important role in the nationalistic upbringing of the child. Religious faith is the factor making a nation monolithic. When a person maintains the faith of his or her parents, it will remain that foundation upon which people’s self-awareness can be sustained and which cannot be destroyed by the enemy. O. Kisilevsky points out: „Our faith has been and continues to be a strong factor that has always been knitting the nation together and protecting it from denationalization in the most difficult times. As long as a person maintains our own faith, he or she will retain the foundation upon which national self-awareness can still be restored”²².

Cultivating readiness for self-sacrifice for national causes is an important factor in the nationalistic upbringing of the child. Parents need to teach the child by their own example. Talking about the love for the native land, for the Fatherland is nothing but empty words if the parents do not substantiate it to their children by their own example. In this respect O. Kisilevsky gives an example of what she considers a model of patriotism presented by a Ukrainian family from Bessarabia²³ that she had witnessed: instead of using saved up money to buy cattle for their children, parents donated this money in support of the local national reading room. She notices, that without donations for national causes even a usual building cannot be built, let alone a whole nation²⁴. She further states: „Appeals for the need to love and respect the Fatherland will not produce any results, if at every step we take we ourselves do not prove that we hold in our souls the love and readiness for self-sacrifice for the good of the Fatherland that we demand from our children. A child does not examine our behavior analytically, but instinctively feels what is lofty and worthy and what is base and vile. Even though the child will not tell you this and may not realize this itself, it will probably have

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Basically, nowadays Moldova.

²⁴ O. Kisilevsky, *Education of a Nation*, „Woman’s Lot” 1935, January 15th, p. 5.

more respect and trust for parents of its friends who are not hypocritical, than for its own parents, who have not given it a worthy example”²⁵.

The need for everyday awareness of the significance of one’s work for the good of the Ukrainian people occupies an important place in the nationalistic upbringing. O. Kisilevsky states: „Let the child know beforehand that only on its national field, only among its own people, only in the everyday hard labor will he or she earn its bread and will not become a parasite... Useful everyday work of whose significance one is aware performed in all areas that are awaiting our hands is no less important and honorable than the most heroic exploits on the battlefield”²⁶.

Forming the child’s character on the basis of a personal example of the of the life of the parents who should be their offsprings’ friends and advisors is an important factor in the nationalistic upbringing of the Ukrainian child. O. Kisilevsky stresses: „[...] not only words and moral sciences are used in a child’s upbringing, but also one’s living example. To be able to influence a child, we must be able not to fall down in its eyes from the pedestal on which it had emplaced us when we just taught it to play with its first toy, when every word of ours was for the child an enlightenment and a gospel. We must start this work in upbringing from the cradle..., without such solid foundations further erecting of the main building will be difficult”²⁷. The educator further notices that disrespect to one’s parents is followed by disrespect to one’s people.

Meeting with prominent cultural and state figures plays an important role in the nationalistic upbringing, in particular in instilling the patriotic spirit. Youth must know the nation’s prominent public figures in person. They will remember such meetings during all their lives. In O. Kisilevsky’s words: „[...] youth should know the nation’s leading citizens in person, should hear interesting stories from them, perhaps even events from their everyday life. They will not forget these stories as easily as those told them by their own teachers, even though they may be about the same things”²⁸.

She devotes especial attention to the upbringing of girls, insisting that without educated women development and solidification of the Ukrainian nation is impossible. The best work in the upbringing of the Ukrainian female youth can do a woman-teacher, just like a woman-mother²⁹.

²⁵ Ibidem, February 1st, p. 5.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 6.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 5.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 6.

²⁹ Ibidem.

Ukrainian womenfolk must endeavor to achieve an opportunity for their children to learn national language and literature in Polish state schools. School libraries have to stock important works of Ukrainian literature, which have been gradually thrown out of them by the Polish censorship en masse lately³⁰.

Finally, setting a personal example not only by a separate woman, but by the womenfolk as a whole plays a great role in the nationalistic upbringing. O. Kisilevsky emphasizes: „I would like to point out the great responsibility that falls upon us women for the destiny of our youth and of our nation. Our motto must be: Ukrainian woman, be vigilant! Go to the endangered positions and defend them like a soldier defends the flag entrusted him. And like a soldier you are going into the battle for the soul of you own child under the slogan ‘I must win, because this is demanded by my conscience, my honor, the good of my Fatherland, and the good of Ukraine’”³¹.

Summarizing the above stated, the following can be ascertained: pedagogical ideas of the „Woman’s Lot” magazine editor about the nationalistic upbringing of Ukrainians still remain relevant nowadays. They are an important factor and a guidepost in the state forming process in the modern Ukraine. Ukrainians must not only know them, but also use them every day, put them into practice, because education of a nation is not something of secondary importance, but it is the important and hard everyday work of every Ukrainian.

At the same time this is also a task for the rulers of the Ukrainian state, but today’s leaders of the Ukrainian people are more concerned about lining their pockets than about educating the nation in the Ukrainian spirit. Actually, this is the reason why the current ruling Ukrainian elite commands no respect of its people and does not serve it as an example. It is sad and painful and, therefore, it must be said that they do not set an example of serving the Ukrainian people and, all the more, cannot be a model for the growing up generation.

Evaluating the historical importance of the pedagogical ideas about nationalistic upbringing of O. Kisilevsky, it should be said that they are a significant achievement not only of the Ukrainian pedagogical thought, but also of the European one. The reason for this is that these ideas will be subscribed

³⁰ O. Kisilevsky, *Education of a Nation*, „Woman’s Lot” 1935, February 15th, p. 5.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

to by any civilized European nation, because they continue to be relevant and not of a marginal importance today.

At the same time, it must be pointed out that unjustly forgotten standing of O. Kisilevsky as a pedagogue with interesting views on the nationalistic upbringing of Ukrainian children and the nation in general must be restored not only in the pedagogical society of Ukraine, but also in that of Poland, because of the interbellum history shared by Western Ukrainians with Polish people. All the more because her pedagogical ideas extend beyond the national borders and are totally relevant and acceptable for the Polish pedagogical society as well.

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