

The social welfare system in the period of the Polish People's Republic (1944–1989). Outline of the problem

Abstract

In Polish People's Republic (1944–1989), a number of organisational and ideological changes were made in the social welfare sector: most of the ways of organising help that were tested during the interwar period were replaced with new concepts, often with sad consequences for those in need. This article presents the changes that took place in the Polish social security sector in the decades after World War II. Subsequent attempts to reform the social welfare system have been shown with the use of archival materials, other historical sources and literature of the subject.

Keywords: social welfare, social assistance, history of social assistance, social welfare in the Polish People's Republic, history of social work

Social rescue period between 1944 and 1947

After the end of World War II, a number of Central European states fell into the zone of influence of the USSR, including Eastern Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania. Within a few years, power in these countries was taken over by communist governments, which sought to subordinate almost all areas of social life to socialist ideas.

The process of fundamental transformation of the social system begun in the initial period of the Polish People's Republic, i.e. between 1944 and 1948. The propaganda declarations made by communist authorities emphasised the need to improve the lives of citizens, especially peasants and workers¹ but also to protect the population from hun-

¹ *Manifest demokratycznych organizacji społeczno-politycznych i wojskowych w Polsce*, [Manifesto of democratic socio-political and military organisations in Poland], [in:] *Protokół Pierwszego Plenarnego Posiedzenia Krajowej Rady Narodowej*, Warsaw 31.12.1943–01.01.1944., p. 1-7; *Protokół Pierwszego Plenarnego Posiedzenia Krajowej Rady Narodowej odbytego dnia 31 grudnia 1943 r. i w nocy z dnia 31 grudnia 1943 r. na 1 stycznia 1944 r.*, [Minutes of the First Plenary Meeting of the National State Council held on

ger, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and homelessness. People emphasised the need to break with the pre-war traditions, which were built in the capitalist system, based on private ownership.

The work on the structure of the post-war social welfare system started already in July 1944 when the self-appointed Communist government called the Polish National Liberation Committee, created by Stalin, began its operation. Its structure included the Resort of Labour, Social Welfare and Health. It supervised the work of the Voivodship Social Welfare Offices located in the areas that had already been liberated from the German occupation. The legal basis governing the matters of social welfare in force at the time and throughout the entire period of the Polish People's Republic was the 1923 Act on social welfare.

On 7 December 1944, the Central Committee for Social Welfare (CKOS)² was created. It reported to the ministry and took over the supervision of social welfare institutions. The newly formed unit was meant to replace an organisation from the period of World War II, the Central Welfare Council (RGO), which had operated under conditions determined by the German occupier.

Social welfare in the initial period of the Polish People's Republic took the form of a social rescue, which was defined as an emergency aid for people who had been affected by the war. It was started after the end of the war and lasted until 1948. At the time, social welfare focused on meeting the basic needs of the population, especially in the war-affected communities³. It included, among others, providing food, health care, housing, education and workplace⁴. The scale of post-war relief was unprecedented in the history of the Polish social services and included one in four Poles, or more than six million people in total.⁵ An important element of the social welfare system of this period was the help sent from abroad in the form of food, clothing, cereal seeds for sowing, cleaning agents, toys and others. It took the form of an aid provided by governments of many countries and foreign charities. Among the dozen or so large international organisations supporting Poles in this post-war period, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) played a major role⁶.

The urgent need for qualified staff to work in social welfare institutions encouraged some charitable institutions and municipal authorities to organise off-and-on courses in

31 December 1943 and at night of 31 December 1943/1 January 1944], [in:] *Protokół Pierwszego Plenarnego Posiedzenia...*, p. 2-4 n.

² A competent minister had the right to make personnel changes at all levels.

³ WÓDZ, K., *Śłużby społeczne w Polsce. Geneza, kierunki rozwoju, metody pracy*, [Social services in Poland. Origins, directions of development and methods of work], Katowice 1982, p. 28.

⁴ *Poradnik Pracownika Socjalnego*, [Social Worker's Manual], ed. J. ROSNER, Warsaw 1973, p. 20.

⁵ CZYŻOWSKA, Z., *Świadczenia socjalne w czterdziestolecu PRL*, [Social benefits in the 40 years of the Polish People's Republic], Warsaw 1987, p. 108; KARCZEWSKI, M., *Opieka społeczna*, [Social care] [in:] *Polityka społeczna*, ed. A. RAJKIEWICZ, Warsaw 1979, p. 501.

⁶ See BRENK, M., "Działania z zakresu ratownictwa społecznego w Polsce w latach 1944-1948", ["Social rescue activities in Poland from 1944 to 1948"], *Biuletyn Historii Wychowania* 2014 (32), p. 145-160.

this area⁷. In time, training centres were established – on 1 June 1945, the first permanent institution was created in the form of the Training Centre for Social Welfare Workers in Łódź, where lecturers were social work practitioners and academic workers from the pre-war period, such as Helena Radlińska⁸.

The pre-war tradition in the area of the development of the research related to social welfare was continued. At the University of Łódź, which had been established in May 1945, Helena Radlińska organised the first Department of Social Pedagogy in the post-war Poland, where the circle of social educationalist and social politicians was created, among others, by people related in the past with the Free Polish University. The personal relationship with the tradition of the Second Republic of Poland makes it possible to call it a continuation of the pre-war school of social pedagogy. Research subjects were continued and the continuity of the studies that had begun before the war in the College of Social and Educational Work was maintained on the courses conducted by the Department of Social Pedagogy. The consolidation of the social pedagogical environment was also positively influenced by the first congress of auditors of the College of Social and Educational Work of the Free Polish University and the Department of Social Pedagogy, which took place in 1947⁹. In addition to Helena Radlińska, people who would later become her successors (as a head), Aleksander Kamiński and Irena Lepalczyk, worked there. In 1947, Ryszard Wroczyński joined the department to receive a doctoral habilitation in the field of social pedagogy three years later, thus becoming the second independent researcher of this discipline (apart from H. Radlińska)¹⁰. The prominent scientists who conducted classes but did not belong to the department included: Sergiusz Hessen, Maria Librachowa, Bogdan Suchodolski, Józef Chałasiński, Wiktor Wąsik, Stefan Baley, Maria and Stanisław Osowsky¹¹.

⁷ Opieka Społeczna 1944-1947, [Social welfare 1944-1947], Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Pracy i Opieki Społecznej, [1948], Archiwum Akt Nowych, zespół Ministerstwa Pracy i Opieki Społecznej w Warszawie, zespół nr 402/0, nr ref. 263. [Publishing House of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, [1948], Archives of Modern Records, team of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Warsaw, team no. 402/0, ref. no. 263], p. 34.

⁸ Sprawozdanie z działalności Centrum Szkolenia Pracowników Opieki Społecznej w Łodzi za okres od dnia 15 maja 1945 r. do dnia 1 grudnia 1947 r.), [Report on the activity of the Training Centre for Social Workers in Łódź from 15 May 1945 to 1 December 1947], Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archives of Modern Records, the team of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Warsaw, ref. 134], p. 34.

⁹ CICHOSZ, M., *Pedagogika społeczna w Polsce w latach 1945-2005. Rozwój - obszary refleksji i badań – koncepcje*, [Social pedagogy in Poland from 1945 to 2005. Development – areas for reflection and research – concepts], Toruń 2006, p. 30.

¹⁰ SMOLIŃSKA-THEISS, B., *Pytania o pedagogikę społeczną w PRL*, [Questions about social pedagogy in Polish People's Republic], [in:] *Pedagogika społeczna. Tradycja – teraźniejszość – nowe wyzwania*, eds. E. TREMPAŁA, M. CICHOSZ, Olecko 2001, p. 26.

¹¹ LEPALCZYKI., *Helena Radlińska. Życie i twórczość*, [Helena Radlińska. Life and Creativity], Toruń 2001, p. 137.

An attempt to liquidate social welfare (1948–1956)

The strengthening of the communist power in Poland to the extent that enabled them to control the social and political life took place in the period between 1947–1948. During this period, the direct influence of opposition politicians on the national politics in Poland was eliminated by the communist authorities. In December 1948, the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) was founded, which ruled Poland in authoritarian manner until 1989.

The Communists introduced the so-called “people’s democracy” in Poland. Its main assumptions were based on extending the state monopoly to all possible areas of social life mainly through the elimination of the private sector, liquidation of non-governmental social organisations and weakening of the role of the Catholic Church. New organisations, which were completely subordinated to the communist authorities, were created in their place.

The traditions of Polish social welfare from the pre-war period were lost. The organisations which had been active in the interwar period were criticised for their activity based on mercy, sentiment and pity¹². As a consequence, almost all the entities that provide aid to people in need were liquidated or nationalised. For example, CKOS was closed down, the church-based Caritas was nationalised and the Polish Red Cross was deprived of its medical facilities.

The goals of social welfare underwent major transformation compared to the interwar period. The area of direct focus ceased to include the poor and the marginalised: beggars, vagabonds and prostitutes. The existence of these beneficiaries of social welfare was thoroughly marginalised, and if they were talked about, they were considered a remnant of the capitalist system. Socialism, which eliminated the sources of social misery, i.e. crisis and unemployment, according to its promoters, would guarantee the right to work for all citizens. For this reason, in accordance with this principle, benefits to those who were able to pursue a profession were consistently denied. Social welfare realised in accordance with these principles dealt primarily with directing the unemployed to work, the “productivisation” of people with disabilities (including disabled war veterans and the blind) and people from the social margins by forcibly directing them to work. The traditional social welfare tasks, such as disaster relief and assistance to people totally incapable of work, became a matter of lesser importance. Aid was gradually limited to completely exceptional cases¹³. The most optimistic voices of communist propaganda spoke of the ultimate liquidation of social welfare institutions due to the small number of people in need of support¹⁴.

The social support for state employees was strengthened parallel to the weakening of traditional forms of social welfare. In 1948, the Social Action Fund was set up and social

¹² Cf. GRIFFITHS, G.E. “The problem of rehabilitation”, *Praca i Opieka Społeczna* 1948/2, p. 86.

¹³ Cf. RUSINEK, K., “Zagadnienia pracy i opieki społecznej w działalności Rad Narodowych”, [“Issues of work and social welfare in the activities of the National Councils”], *Praca i Opieka Społeczna* 1950/1-2, p. 14-17.

¹⁴ SENDLEROWA, I., “Historia rozwoju nowoczesnej pomocy społecznej”, [“History of the development of modern social welfare”], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1947/2, p. 61-65.

departments in workplaces dealt with the provision of social benefits to employees and their families, such as running nurseries, kindergartens, day-care centres, holiday organisation and garden allotments¹⁵.

Discouragement of social welfare in the spirit of socialism in 1956

At the end of 1956, there was a political shift in Poland, called the Polish October. One of its results was the weakening of the repressions of the people critical of the authorities. This manifested itself by the release of prisoners and internees, including the primate of Poland Stefan Wyszyński. The country's economic policy was also re-examined. The collectivisation of agriculture was discontinued, limited development of private craft, trade and catering was allowed and steps were taken to better supply the market with products and improve living conditions of workers.

Despite optimistic predictions about the disappearance of social problems, people in need continued to exist in the society and the numbers of elderly and disabled people among those in need rose¹⁶. Therefore, the liberalisation of the existing policy of the state in the area of limiting and reducing the role of social welfare took place in 1956. However, non-governmental and religious organisations were consistently prohibited in this area.

An important step in the regeneration of social welfare was the restoration of the institution of a social worker. In 1959¹⁷, social workers were appointed at the lower levels of self-governments to organise and coordinate social welfare activities in cooperation with state authorities and administration, courts, public prosecutors, labour offices, schools, educational institutions and social organisations engaged in care-providing activities¹⁸. *The scope of their work included the improvement of material, social and educational conditions, assistance for children and young people without proper care, helping families who are deprived of income due to death or illness of the sole breadwinner, fighting against alcoholism and prostitution and care for the elderly*¹⁹.

After the Polish October of 1956, the Polish authorities started to popularise social organisations subordinated to the state, including those organisations that had the provision of aid to people in need and broadly understood social activity written in their statutes.

¹⁵ MATRAŚ, M., "O zadaniach referatów socjalnych w roku 1952", ["About the tasks of social departments in 1952"], *Przegląd Zagadnień Socjalnych*, 1952/4, p. 39-42.

¹⁶ OLESZCZYŃSKA, A., "Pomoc społeczna w roku jubileuszu", ["Social welfare in the jubilee year"], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1979/2, p. 56.

¹⁷ *Regulation no. 92 of the Council of Ministers of 5 March 1959 on the appointment of social workers*, M. P. 1959, no. 32 item 145.

¹⁸ See ZIELIŃSKI, F., *Organizacja sieci terenowych Opiekunów Społecznych*, ["Organisation of the network of social workers"], *Biuletyn Opiekuna Społecznego* 1960/1, p. 33-34.

¹⁹ See CHACZKO, K., "Polska w soczewce. Ewolucja oraz modernizacja systemu opieki i opieki społecznej w perspektywie instytucjonalnej", ["Poland in the lens. Evolution and modernisation of the social welfare and care system in the institutional perspective"], *Rocznik Administracji Publicznej* 2016/2, p. 8-10.

Millions of people belonging to mass organisations became permanent elements of the propaganda of the Polish People's Republic. However, details of the membership structure were often ignored. If one took a closer look, they would see that the community members very frequently belonged to several organisations at once, with each entity including these activities (often literally the same activities) in statistics.

Among the newly formed organisations, one should mention the Polish Committee for Social Welfare, created on 7 May 1958, which was meant to supplement the State's activities in the field of social welfare. Its primary scope of activity included educating, encouraging and organising citizens to help those in need, especially the elderly and people unable to work²⁰.

The year of 1960 saw the creation of the Polish Society for the Fight against Disabilities – a social and scientific organisation, which devoted a significant part of its activity to issues of social work with disabled people for decades. The main areas of its activity were the prevention of disability, rehabilitation and organisation of social facilities for disabled persons.

Women's League was a women's organisation typical of the period of Polish People's Republic. It offered, for example, free help to women in difficult circumstances who were not able to cope with their problems on their own²¹.

Also, the various forms of activity conducted by members of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association included those that concerned the support of people in need. They were based on the traditional, scouting principle of "helping others" and included activities to help farmers in the harvest time and aid the elderly and the sick²².

In turn, the charitable work of the Church, which had previously played an important role in supporting the social welfare system, had no prospects of rebirth. The property issues remained unchanged – the hospitals, educational institutions, schools, kindergartens run by Caritas, religious orders and dioceses remained state-owned after they had been taken during the Stalinist period together with other buildings and land. Also, dissolutions of the properties of the already nationalised Caritas occurred after 1956²³. The authorities allowed only for the re-activation of some of charity associations and the provision of assistance only in parishes²⁴, but most Catholic charities shared the fate of other church-re-

²⁰ *Pomoc społeczna w Polsce*, part 1, op. cit., p. 67-68.

²¹ See ZAWADECKA, S., "O działalności Kół Gospodyń Wiejskich", ["About the Activities of Rural Housewife Groups"], *Nowe Drogi* 1960/3, p. 94-101.

²² GRZELAK, W., RZĄDCA, P., *Drużyna i ja. Podręcznik drużynowego drużyny młodszoharcerskiej*, [Team and myself. A guide for a junior team leader], Warsaw 1966, p. 15.

²³ ŻUREK, J., "Kościelny Październik '56", ["The Church's October of 1956"], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, 2006/10, p. 75-76.

²⁴ KRZYSZKOWSKI, J., *Między państwem opiekuńczym a opiekuńczym społeczeństwem. Determinanty funkcjonowania środowiskowej pomocy społecznej na poziomie lokalnym*, [Between a welfare state and a caring society. Determinants of the functioning of environmental social support at the local level], Łódź 2005, p. 55.

lated associations that were not allowed to be reborn. The thaw meant a limited opportunity for pastoral care in hospitals and sanatoriums in the case of the Church's activity²⁵.

On the other hand, the nationalised Association of Catholics Caritas, which administered educational and care institutions for around 15,000 people and day-care homes and social kitchens, continued to exist. The 7,000 people employed in the Association included 2,300 sisters and brothers from 49 orders, 340 doctors, 490 nurses, 950 educators and 1000 unlicensed assistants²⁶. Caritas activities were largely financed by the state²⁷.

In accordance with the ministerial goals, the social welfare after 1956 was supposed to lead to professionalisation. The official name of the profession "professional social worker" was officially introduced by the Minister of Education on 4 November 1966.²⁸ As a result of the introduction of a new occupation, the term "social work", common at the time, was given additional characteristics that differed from the name "social service" that had been used to this point in time. Attempts were made to replace charitable activities with social welfare based on regular state funding and professional operation of social structures²⁹. The practical implementation of these goals often encountered organisational chaos and under-funding. However, attempts were made to make the professional social worker of the Polish People's Republic a state-paid servant who did their work on a professional basis and was confident of the financial resources available to them for the provision of help. They were not volunteers because this model of social work was considered obsolete. The creation of a new profession meant the opening of State Schools for Social Workers in the same year. The schools offered education at the secondary level and the first two schools were established in Warsaw³⁰ and Poznań³¹.

²⁵ ŻUREK, J., *Kościelny Październik '56*, p. 75-76; SIKORSKI, J., *Duszpasterstwo więzienne. Spojrzenie wstecz – rzeczywistość – perspektywy*, [Prison ministry. Looking back – reality – perspectives], [in:] *Kościół w Polsce wobec potrzebujących*, ed. M. CHMIELEWSKI, Lublin 1994, p. 202-203.

²⁶ ROZCISZEWSKI, A., *Powstanie i likwidacja Zrzeszenia Katolików Caritas*, [Formation and liquidation of Association of Catholics Caritas] 2007, online access as of 1 September 2017 at www.old.caritas.pl/zalacznik.php?id=78.

²⁷ *Notatka w sprawie zakładów opieki społecznej prowadzonych przez Caritas*, [Memo on social welfare institutions run by Caritas], Department of Administration, Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Warsaw, 22 April 1960, Archives of Modern Records, Poland United Workers' Party, ref. 237/XIV-180, k. 3.

²⁸ *Order of the Minister of Education of 4 November 1966. (No. SZ2-0101-48/66) on the change of the nomenclature of professions and specialisations which vocational schools conduct preparation for*, Official Journal of the Ministry of Education of 1966, no. 16, item 193.

²⁹ Cf. KAMIŃSKI, A., *Funkcje pedagogiki społecznej. Praca socjalna i kulturalna*, [Functions of Social Pedagogy. Second corrected and supplemented], 2nd corrected and supplemented issue, Warsaw 1974, p. 75.

³⁰ See HIBEL, C., *Tenth year of education of social workers in the Warsaw school (Dziesiąty rok kształcenia pracowników socjalnych w szkole warszawskiej)*, *Opiekun Społeczny* 1976/1, p. 9-15.

³¹ See BLOCH, T., "Społeczno-wychowawcze funkcje szkoły pracowników socjalnych. Refleksje pedagogiczne w oparciu o doświadczenia szkoły poznańskiej", ["Social and educational functions of a school for social workers. Pedagogical reflections based on the experience of the Poznań school"], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1976/1, p. 29-33.

Upon the inclusion of the social worker specialisation in the list of professions, it was possible to hear voices calling for the concentration on the of social and educational activity oriented at shaping the attitudes to prevent or eliminate the effects of social maladjustment. This activity was understood as the appropriate satisfaction of social needs, the selection of suitable work and assistance in crisis situations by professionals (e.g. probation officers and clinics). A special role in this respect was attributed to the social welfare provided by the workplace, which included the organisation of leisure time, summer camps, winter holidays, the activities of day centres and educational and cultural institutions, as well as financial assistance in fortuitous events³².

Social welfare as a health system element

The social welfare system introduced after 1956 based on a network of professional social workers proved ineffective. The causes of this phenomenon were twofold. First of all, these were honorary employees who carried out their duties for free and voluntarily, and such an employment was not enough to meet the difficult tasks that often required immediate action. Another reason was the age of social workers, the majority of whom were elderly people without professional education who were unable to adequately classify the needs and perform effective interventions despite the good intentions. Acquiring young people for these positions did not produce much results³³.

In April 1960, there was another major change in the organisation of the social welfare system. The office of the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare was abolished and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare took over the responsibilities of the ministry in the area of social welfare, occupational rehabilitation for the disabled and the orthopaedic industry³⁴. This was the beginning of the changes introduced within the next decade that involved combining social welfare with health care.

The 1960s and 1970s in the Polish People's Republic is the period of the integration of social services into the scope of the health care system. This was justified by the existence of a large common target group of the two systems – the elderly. The necessity to use social welfare was often caused by the health of the elderly, who were becoming a growing group in the population due to demographic changes³⁵. The elderly and those with disability category 1 and 2 accounted for as many as 80% of all social welfare beneficiaries. Apart from them, the recipients of social welfare included also poor families, people suf-

³² KOWALSKA, A., "Studium Służb Społecznych i Wychowawczych Towarzystwa Wolnej Wszechnicy Polskiej", ["Study of Social and Educational Services of the Free Polish University Society"], *Biuletyn TWWP* 1968/1, p. 163-164.

³³ KAŻMIERCZAK, T., "O wojewódzkich ośrodkach opiekuna społecznego – raz jeszcze", ["About Voivodship centres of social welfare – once again"], *Praca Socjalna* 1989/1, p. 38-39.

³⁴ See Art. 13.3. *Act of 13 April 1960 on the creation of the Labour and Wages Committee and the changes in the social security, pensions, provisions and social welfare*, Journal of Laws 1960 no. 20 item 119.

³⁵ OLESZCZYŃSKA, A., [no title], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1974/ 2, p. 54.

fering from chronic illnesses (e.g. tuberculosis and alcoholism) and people with intellectual disabilities³⁶.

The process of integrating social welfare into the health care system was deepened in 1969 when the social welfare centres, usually located near district medical clinics, were established. The aim of the centres was to improve the cooperation between the health service and social welfare, improve qualifications of workers and consequently enhance the level of social and health care services in the local environment³⁷. The division of both types of benefits (aid and medical benefits) made it possible for the established environmental team (a physician, community nurses and a social worker) to get a broader knowledge of people in need and thus be able to respond more effectively to emerging needs³⁸.

As a result, centres that were meant to supplement the existing social welfare system clearly started to dominate it within a few years, thus becoming dependent on it, which resulted in the gradual reduction of funds on the social welfare for the benefit of health care expenditures³⁹. Not all centres could function as originally intended. Local authorities and managers of medical clinics often treated these centres as secondary entities, which resulted in housing, financial and organisational shortages that prevented effective execution of social welfare tasks⁴⁰.

In spite of many imperfections, the process of transformation of social welfare in the 1970s brought about a significant change – the social worker's activity became more professional. True, there was still a network of voluntary social workers, but the main social welfare tasks – the diagnosis, assistance plan and the provision of support were already a responsibility of a full-time social worker (assistant) employed by a social welfare centre⁴¹.

The 1980s in the Polish People's Republic was a period of economic crisis and its consequences – a marked increase in the number of people in need. There was a significant deterioration in living conditions of the population – increased costs of living, drastical-

³⁶ CHROSTOWSKA, H., "Niektóre aspekty środowiskowej opieki społecznej", ["Some aspects of environmental social welfare"], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1980/3, p. 20.

³⁷ See also: RAK, S., "Rola i zadania ośrodka opiekuna społecznego", ["Role and tasks of the social welfare centre"], *Biuletyn Opiekuna Społecznego* 1969/3, p. 23; *Instruction no. 1/69 of the Minister of Health and Social Welfare of 31 January 1969 (CS 671-3/69) on the social welfare centre*, Official Journal of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of 8 March 1969 no. 4 item 12; OLESZCZYŃSKA, A., *Pracownik socjalny w opiece społecznej*, [Social Worker in Social Welfare], Warsaw 1978, p. 29.

³⁸ *Pomoc społeczna w Polsce*, [Social assistance in Poland], ed. J. STARĘGA-PIASEK, part 1, Warsaw 1984, p. 46-48.

³⁹ ZALEWSKI, D., *Opieka i pomoc społeczna. Dynamika instytucji*, [Social care and assistance. Institutional dynamics], Warsaw 2005, p. 125.

⁴⁰ RAK, S., "Niektóre uwagi o działalności ośrodków opiekuna społecznego", ["Some remarks on the activities of social welfare centres"], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1971/1, p. 20-21.

⁴¹ WÓDZ, K., *Śłużby społeczne w Polsce. Geneza, kierunki rozwoju, metody pracy*, [Social services in Poland. Origins, directions of development and methods of work], Katowice 1982, p. 33-35; ŚLIWIŃSKI, M., "Do opiekunów społecznych", ["To social workers"], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1979/2, p. 1; KARCZEWSKI, M., "20 lat ofiarnej i owocnej pracy", ["20 years of sacrificial and fruitful work"], *Opiekun Społeczny* 1979/2, p. 6.

ly raised prices of products (including food) and decreased the purchasing power of money. This led to a sharp increase in the number of people receiving social welfare, mainly in a material form. Despite progressive changes in the area of social security, such as the dissemination of the right of working persons and their families to social security, the material support continued to be an important complement to the income of many households⁴².

The last years of the Polish People's Republic are undoubtedly a regression in the area of social welfare resulting from the general collapse and poor financial standing of the state. The effectiveness of social welfare benefits fell sharply. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that in the last decade of the Polish People's Republic, a number of non-governmental initiatives emerged or were reborn to help those in need, which compensated for the failure of the state in this regard. Many bottom-up initiatives were launched to provide a variety of assistance. At this point, one should mention the activity of Marek Kotański, the Adam Chmielowski Aid Association, the Labour Protection Committee and Free Trade Unions, which also included social assistance in their postulates.

Marek Kotański's activity is certainly an example of an effective aid in the face of state's powerlessness. The invention of relatively simple ways of producing "Polish heroin" and morphine in 1976 and heroin in 1979⁴³ resulted in the appearance of at least several dozen thousand addicts over a period of just a few years⁴⁴. The effects of spreading drug addiction had dramatic consequences in the 1980s, when the HIV virus, the most common cause of which was intravenous drug abuse, was identified⁴⁵. The aid offered by the state to drug addicts involved mostly ineffective hospitalisation and the authorities tried to marginalise the phenomenon of drug abuse. A new model of drug therapy was created by Marek Kotański, who registered a centre under the name of "Monar" in 1981 after several years of working with addicts. The centre pursued an effective programme of rehabilitation of drug addicts using innovative methods based on creating conditions that shaped independence, responsibility and involvement in patients.

Summary

Social welfare in Polish People's Republic (1944–1989) underwent significant transformations; however, they cannot be referred to as continuous development or continual evolution of the system, i.e. continuous changes *in plus*. The process of the nationalisation of all institutions and the elimination of non-governmental organisations pursued by

⁴² ZALEWSKI, D., *Opieka i pomoc społeczna...*, p. 125-126.

⁴³ ANDREJEW-FRĄCZEK, D., "Narkomania w Polsce", ["Drug addiction in Poland"], *Biuro Studiów i Ekspertyz* 1992/19, p. 2.

⁴⁴ KOTAŃSKI, M., *Wstęp*, [Introduction], [in:] *Problemy narkomanii. Zarys metod resocjalizacji i profilaktyki „Monaru”*, Warsaw 1984, p. 5-6.

⁴⁵ CYBULA, A., et al., *Najważniejsze pytania o HIV i AIDS*, [Key questions about HIV and AIDS], Poznań 2007, p. 13, 21.

the communist authorities brought about the situation where the only administrator of the aid was the state. This led to devastating consequences. Poles were deprived of the ability to organise themselves in associations that offered a disinterested help despite the fact that this type of activity had had tradition spanning hundreds of years and also unquestionable effectiveness, and united a large part of the nation not only in material but also in the social dimension.

Another negative effect of the monopolistic policy of the authorities was the strengthening of the demanding attitude against the state and its bodies in some part of the society, which proved difficult to eradicate. In practice, the pre-war understanding of social work as a support, not a relief, provided to individuals in times of difficulty, was abandoned. In addition, the system of workplace benefits was sometimes developed to the point of absurdity. Originally, the benefits were meant to compensate for the material situation of the poorest workers but in practice they led to the widening of the gap and providing additional privileges to those already in privileged positions.

Both the institutional and social rules of operation of the social welfare system in Polish People's Republic had an impact on problems and solutions existing in the Third Republic of Poland in this area⁴⁶. Among the consequences of the social policy of the Polish People's Republic which can still be felt even today is the attitude towards persons with disabilities. The previous ideology persistently ignored the issue or focused on disabled work leaders, such as people without hands that exceeded productivity norms. This did not facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into the environment and created many timeless stereotypes.

One of the ideas of the "people's" authorities about reforming the social welfare system was to combine it with the health care system. In practice, this led to both under-funding of social welfare because of the priority given to health care services and focusing on the benefits that were close to the health care.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive view of the history of social welfare in the period between 1944 and 1989 encourages some positive conclusions. These undoubtedly include the research conducted after 1956 in the field of social sciences. In spite of the necessity of adjusting the research work to the conditions set by the authorities, the institutions, institutes, departments and faculties working on this subject in academic centres thrived.

The period under discussion also saw a professionalisation of the services working in social welfare institutions. Schools were established to educate social workers at the secondary level and workers were also given the opportunity to undertake well-profiled studies at universities. Training courses and sessions were organised and guides and magazines for social workers were published.

There is no doubt that the social welfare system in Polish People's Republic did not fully realise its traditional goals. One should associate this with the general condition of the state. One of the weaknesses of the Polish People's Republic, which also concerned

⁴⁶ See PŁASEK, R., "Przemiany polskiego systemu opieki społecznej w latach 1945-1989)", ["Transformations of the Polish Social Welfare System between 1945-1989"], *Profilaktyka Społeczna i Resocjalizacja* 2014, no. 24, p. 96-97.

social welfare, was the shortage of competent officials – the aid was often distributed improperly and thus did not reach those who needed it the most. Another problem was the lack of financial resources that delayed the start of some projects (e.g. the construction of public nursing homes), which not only increased the number of people without proper support but also caused financial losses – for example, due to shortage of places in public nursing homes, disabled persons occupied hospital beds.

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