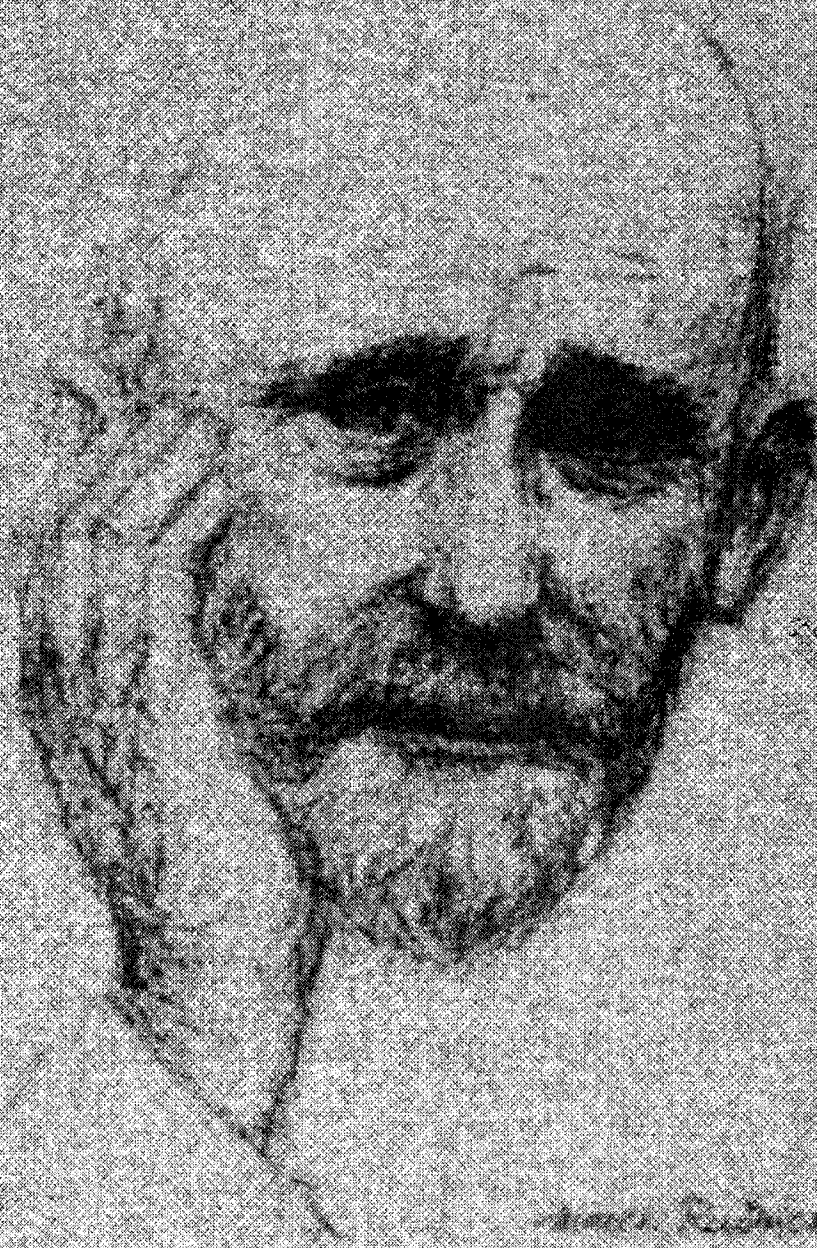


THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
**JANUSZ KORCZAK**  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA



## Our goals

The objectives of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada are as follows:

- \* To foster the recognition of Janusz Korczak's life and work.
- \* To familiarize Canadians with his heroism during World War II, and his staunch defense of children's rights.
- \* To disseminate Korczak's pedagogical ideas as well as their effect on children's education.

## Our Tasks

### Projects developed in 2004

- \* Lectures on Janusz Korczak's legacy followed by discussions.
- \* Programs on Korczak's life and legacy on the Multicultural Broadcast Station.

### Projects to be developed in 2005

- \* Further promotion of Korczak's legacy in Canada.
- \* The International Exhibition of Children's Drawings "My World and I".

## Membership fee

The membership fee of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada is \$10 per year, payable in cheque form. Please mail to:

Mrs. Gina Dimant  
#203 - 5455 West Boulevard  
Vancouver, BC V6M 3W5 Canada  
New members are very welcome!

## Our contacts

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#203 - 5455 West Boulevard  
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## Thank-you

H. Altman	L. Dimant
M. Bleszynska	R. Dimant
L. Boraks-Nemetz	M. Edge
L. Broitman	R. Goldman
A. Buchowiecki	H. Halpern
B. Czaykowski	Natasha Haskins
The Dabrowski Family	(a 10 year-old)

In a few weeks, the Consul General of the Republic of Poland Krzysztof Czapla is leaving his diplomatic post in Vancouver.

Shortly after coming to our city Consul Czapla developed a keen interest in the activities of the Janusz Korczak Association and soon become a great supporter and honorary member of the Board of Directors.

The financial support of the Consulate was instrumental in the production of the three issues of the Association's yearly newsletter.

With the hope that our organization will have a good friend in Warsaw, we wish Consul General Krzysztof Czapla all the best in his personal and professional life.

*Members of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.*



*Consul K. Czapla (far right) and members of the Board of the Association (left to right): Olga Medvedeva, Gina Dimant, Lilian Boraks-Nemetz, Jerry Nussbaum, Malgorzata Burczycka, Krystyna Bohdanowicz. Photo by Krzysztof Szafnicki.*

## On the cover

Janusz Korczak's portrait by Marek Rudnicki, French artist and a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto.

I. Haskins	L. Wejgman
E. Kozar	I. Weksler
M. Parnes	M. P. Wilenski
K. Szafnicki	(in memory of her Mother)
The Margalit Family	S. Wilson
The Marko Family	J. Wosk
Z. Nussbaum	J. Zalewski

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**Editor:** Olga Medvedeva  
**Logo:** Andrzej Brakoniecki

**Editorial Board:** Lilian Boraks-Nemetz, Malgorzata Burczycka, Marta Burczycka, Krzysztof Szafnicki  
**Design:** Antoinette Jackson, www.antoinette.ca



## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Dear Friends:

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada is planning to organize an **International Exhibition of Children's Drawings: "My World and I"**. The exhibition will be held in Vancouver B. C., Canada in November 16-29, 2005.

**Our goals:**

1. To give children the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings on a world that is governed by adults.
2. To help adults better understand children, to come to know children's vision of the modern world, their observations and dreams.

Drawings dedicated to Janusz Korczak's life or illustrations relating to his books would be greatly appreciated.

**Theme of drawings:** open

**Age of participants:** 4 to 12 years of age

**Drawing's size:** no restrictions

**Technique:** any

**Drawings should be submitted by October 1, 2005**

Drawings for the exhibition will be chosen by artists, art historians and educators - members of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

Participants will receive Certificates of Participation in the Exhibition.

**Drawings should be sent or delivered to:**

Mrs. Gina Dimant/The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada  
#203-5455 West Boulevard Vancouver, B.C. V6M 3W5 Canada

If you have any further questions, please contact us by phone:

Mrs. Gina Dimant 1 604 733 63 86

or by e-mail: jkorcakassn@shaw.ca or khadimolga@yahoo.com

We would appreciate it if you would convey this information to other educators, particularly if you do **not** have any personal contact with children who could participate in this event.

*The Executives of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada*



### Application

to be filled by participants of the Exhibition of Children's Drawings  
"My World and I", Vancouver, B.C., Canada, November 16-29, 2005

1. First Name
2. Last Name
3. Age
4. City
5. Country
6. Title of the Drawing
7. Size and Technique

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA

## Korczak Event in Vancouver

### *Janusz Korczak: Tolerance and Forgiveness*

by Olga Medvedeva

A public talk was delivered at the Holocaust Education Centre on the 27th of June, 2004. The talk was followed by a discussion.

*Who was Janusz Korczak and why are members of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada (a small group of people) putting their efforts into making his name and his ideas better known in North America?*

Janusz Korczak - the pen name of Henryk Goldszmit - was born to Jewish parents in Warsaw in 1878. However, to the Jews he was an outsider. He did not speak either Yiddish or Hebrew, he did not attend synagogue, did not observe Jewish holidays, and was integrated into Polish society. To the Poles he was an outsider as well because he was a Jew by birth.

In reality Korczak belongs to both communities, whether or not this fact was accepted by the Poles or by the Jews. In modern terms, we can say he was a man with dual national identity. Korczak himself - as if predicting the future discussions about his identity, wrote in his *Diary*: "A problem of a human being is always more interesting for me than a problem of a Jew".

And this is the point.

There are two fundamental principles in Korczak's understanding of being a human: tolerance and forgiveness. Symbolically this makes him a link that brings together people of different origins, cultures and religions.

Let me give you two examples related to the Middle East - one of the most volatile regions of the world. Korczak's life and pedagogical heritage are topics featured in meetings of both the Arabic and Jewish teachers and students at the Ghetto Fighters Museum in Israel. The daycare Jardin de Paix - Gan Hashalom - Raoud Al-Salam, for both Arabic and Jewish children named by Korczak was opened with the participation of the Janusz Korczak Association of Switzerland and has been operating for the last few years in Jerusalem. It has remained open even on days of extreme violence.

Here, in multicultural Canada, where so many people with dual (if not triple) national identity live, we do not face violence. But one can never have too much tolerance.

Korczak was a pediatrician, an educator and a writer.

He was a respected doctor, but did not operate a medical clinic because most of his professional life he worked as an educator.

He was an outstanding educator and recognized psychologist but did not have a degree in either education or psychology.

Korczak did not consider himself a philosopher, but nowadays his legacy is the focus of numerous studies in the field of philosophy.

He was a writer but he did not adhere to any literary group. He was known mostly as an author of children's books. However, his books are also very useful for adults who want to understand children's thoughts and feelings.

As a public person he was alienated from the right wing of the Polish society as a radical reformer, and was also alienated from the left wing because he was a children's rights fighter who did not believe that the rights of children would be automatically included as a law in social reforms.

He did not father any children (he was single) but, in fact, he had hundreds of them. He was "a childless father of an uncountable number of other people's children" (Father Jan Twardowski).

He called himself "a man of solitary path."

He was controversial. He was unique. He was just himself.

Korczak's literary heritage runs to about 20 volumes. The most popular of them -

the book for educators and parents *How to Love a Child* and a modern fairy tale *King Matt the First* - were translated into dozens of languages, including English. Through his books and in his work Korczak contributed a great deal to the relationship between children and adults relations, especially regarding the concept of respect for a child.

Again one can say: we live in Canada, in a country where most likely there are fewer child abuse cases than anywhere else in the world. That is true. But one can never have too much respect for a child.

Korczak's books are about children and about constructive and destructive relations between children and parents, kids and adults. Opposing traditional educational practice, Korczak believed that the worst mistake is to believe that pedagogy is something about children - while it is really about human beings.

Thus, Korczak's pedagogy is an art of dialogue which connects a child with an adult, a student with an educator, and generally - a human being with another human being.

The most famous of Korczak's aphorisms is: "*There are no children - there are people*".

Korczak formulated the main principles of education in a very simple way:

The most essential of them:

1. The child's right to be respected.
2. The child's right to be what he or she is, i. e. to be him or herself.
3. The child's right to be treated by adults as a person with his own valuable life today, not tomorrow.

The right to be respected, in fact, means the right to be listened to. Not only speaking, but - even more - listening humanizes people. Of course this listening has to be authentic; Korczak mentioned that very often adults are not aware that they do not listen to children and do not answer the questions that are essential for them. Korczak gives an example of this sort:

## Janusz Korczak: Tolerance and Forgiveness

*continued from previous page*

A kid asks his Mother: "What do you think, Mom, whom does a bow tie suit more, a cat or a dog?" Mother replies: "O my God, you have torn your trousers again!" No need to explain that this kind of "listening" leads to miscommunication, ruins the dialogue and, subsequently, the relationship between a child and a parent.

When you ask this mother whether she respects her child or not, she would for sure answer positively. Nobody will admit that they do not respect their children. But Korczak emphasized that very often adults do not realize that they treat children as objects. Children are permanently humiliated by adults, and not only through severe punishment. For instance, an adult does not ask a child: "Would you mind sitting on my knees?" Instead they just grab the child. They are always sure that what they do to children is right. (Korczak liked to give extreme examples. He believed they were more convincing).

According to Korczak, respect for children means giving them freedom, trusting that they are able to choose their own path and to be responsible for their choice.

Korczak wrote repeatedly: a child is a person in each moment of his or her life and in every stage of his or her development. "Children are not just people-to-be in years to come, they are people - now". And adults have to respect them now - not in the future, which is nothing but a ghost.

Korczak was an advocate for the cause of every single child.

The Declaration of Children's Rights, known as the Geneva Declaration, that was proclaimed in 1924 and expanded in 1956, was based on ideas Korczak started to formulate at the beginning of the 20th century and practiced until the very last day of his life.

On the day of the opening of the Orphan Home in 1911, Korczak, at that time a popular physician and a renowned man of letters, abandoned his attractive career and moved with the orphans to a newly constructed building. From that

time on, Korczak completely devoted his life to the children.

What can be of particular interest for Canadians is that the Korczak Orphan Home was built and continuously financed by the Jewish organization "Help the Orphans". The President of that organization was Izaak Eliasberg, whose descendants now live in Vancouver.

The Eliasberg family was known for their great charity and contribution to both the Polish and Jewish cultures. They have also contributed to the only Korczak landmark in Vancouver. This object is an obelisk erected in the Jewish cemetery in the memory of those who perished during the Second World War, and Korczak's name is inscribed on it.

Korczak's Orphan Home was in a way a "children's republic". It had its own self-government, a court of peers where not only children's cases were heard but also the cases of adults who had violated children's rights. But the foundation of court's Code of Law was the concept of forgiveness.

During the Nazi occupation, while confined to the Warsaw Ghetto, Korczak desperately tried to protect his children and struggled with hunger, cold and disease.

It could be of interest to you that during the Second World War Korczak asked his former pupils for help. Amongst them was at least one Canadian. A post card written by Korczak and his associate Stefania Wilczynska to their former ward Leon Gluzman, who had left Poland for Canada before the war, is preserved in the Korczak Archives in Israel. The postcard was sent from the Warsaw Ghetto on the 10th of September 1941.

### *Address in German, Polish & English:*

#### **From:**

Judenrat  
Postkarte

Warschau  
09.12.41

"Dom Sierot" [the Orphan Home]

Krochmalna 92

obecnie [now] Chlodna 33

#### **To:**

Mr. Leon Gluzman

257 Rochester Street

Ottawa On.

U.S.A. (America)

Ueber Lissabon

Stamped with the Deutsche Reichspost swastika symbol.

It was sent to Ottawa in the U.S.A., because Canada was by that time in a state of war with Germany and correspondence to Canada was impossible. So people used an "American" address. The postcard was written in Polish.

*Kochany Leonie!*

*Prosimy, o ile mozesz, o paczki zywnosciowe pod adresem Dom Sierot Warszawa, Chlodna 33 dla dzieci niedomagajacych (slabszych, ozdrowiencow po przebytej chorobie). - Zawiadom innych, ktorzy pamietaja jeszcze swe lata dziecinne.*

*Pozdrawiam serdecznie*

*Podpis Goldszmit (Korczak) i Stefa*

*Dear Leon,*

*Please send us food parcels. Our address is the Orphan Home, Warsaw, 33 Chlodna St. This is for weak children recovering from sickness. Inform others who still remember their childhood.*

*Cordially,*

*Goldszmit (Korczak) and Stefa*

They wrote: "the children were weak and recovering from sicknesses". This in fact was a code. Since all mail from the ghetto had been censored, they could not write how desperate the real situation in the orphanage was.

Until his deportation, along with his co-workers and 200 children Korczak lived according to what the Jewish wisdom says: 'When everyone acts inhuman, what should a man do?' - the answer was: 'He should act even more human.'

Korczak certainly had the same thoughts, but his thoughts were in Polish.

*Olga Medvedeva*



# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA

## The Old Brown Suitcase

by Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

*My novel for young people, The Old Brown Suitcase (Victoria, 1995), is the story of Slava Lenski and is based on my own life in Poland during the war, surviving in the Warsaw Ghetto. My father would often take me for walks in the ghetto, and sometimes we would visit homes for orphans some of whom my father had helped to get off the streets, feed, and clothe.*

*How I would love to have a photo taken of me together with my father when I was a little girl! Unfortunately in the chaos and horror of the Warsaw Ghetto, all my childhood pictures taken of my parents and me were lost.*

*Only the photo on the right and one other photo survived in the hands of a relative.*

*In those days my father spoke a lot about Janusz Korczak. He truly admired the Doctor, for his writings, his work and the manner in which he was raising the orphans under his care. One day, father took me to Korczak's Orphan Home and I only remember fragments of that visit. I mostly remember feeling at peace there, away from the dreadful ghetto streets, and I remember feeling thankful, that I still had my parents and a home such as it was in the ghetto. This however was a short lived thanks giving. Soon, I was sent out of the ghetto to live in a village without my parents. I thought of Dr. Korczak and the children, wishing I could have been in his home instead of where I was. When I found out that the orphans perished together with their Doctor in Treblinka, I felt and still feel an unspeakable sadness.*

*As a result of all this, Dr. Korczak had become my hero, and when I was in school in Montreal, just after we had arrived from Poland, I wrote a brief essay on Korczak and the Orphan Home. The essay (in my then very poor immigrant English), was very well received by the home teacher. No one knew at that time, who Dr. Korczak was, and in Canada there was, and still is, a huge gap in this knowledge, which I hope that our Janusz Korczak Association will someday be able to bridge.*

*Here is the essay which Slava Lenski, a teen and the main character of the book, wrote. For this essay Slava wins a school prize, her first triumph in the English language.*

### The Gardener of Children

*(with a few alterations from the original text)*

There once was a man who loved children. He cultivated them, as a gardener would cultivate flowers. He believed that children need plenty of greenery, fresh air, sunshine and love, to grow up happy and healthy in both body and spirit. Violence had no place in his garden and no flower was inferior to another.

He was a doctor of medicine, a pediatrician, and an author of children's books. Although born a Jew with the name of Henryk Goldszmit, he was better known by his pen name of Janusz Korczak. Throughout his life Dr. Korczak tried to bridge the differences, between the Jews and the Christians of Poland. Before the Second World War, he ran one home for

the Polish orphans and another for the Jewish ones. During the Second World War, in the Warsaw Ghetto where hundreds of thousands of Jewish people were incarcerated by the Nazis, the Doctor cared for his Jewish orphans. There were many orphans on the ghetto streets dying from hunger and disease. Each day, the trains to the death camps carried off hundreds, and ultimately thousands of Jews.

Like a gardener whose flowers were being choked by the evil weeds of violence and disease, Dr. Korczak and his assistants tended the sick, the sad and the lonely children of the ghetto. He was their doctor, teacher and parent.

The orphanage resembled a miniature society unto itself, based on Dr. Korczak's beliefs that children have rights, deserve respect, and should be offered choices. He



felt that they needed to earn self-respect by carrying out tasks that contribute to the welfare of others, and be rewarded. At the heart of this society was the Children's Court, whose code of honor encouraged forgiveness, honesty, charity, and defense of the weak. The court was headed by five judges, and met every Saturday. It listened to all complaints and decided on all punishment. With the exception of one adult who was present to take minutes, the children held all the positions in the court.

Though strength and health were waning in his aging body, though food, clothing and medical supplies were scarce in the ghetto, Dr. Korczak was relentless in his efforts. He begged and borrowed to provide his children with essentials. He also tried to bring a little joy and a sense of belonging into the orphanage.

## The Old Brown Suitcase

*continued from previous page*

There were celebrations of Jewish holidays such as Passover and Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. The children would put on a concert or a play and invite visitors. Study of Hebrew was encouraged, among other subjects of interest to the children.

The first impression of visitors to the orphanage was a sad one with orphans who lived without a home of their own, parents or siblings. However, the visitors' sadness changed to admiration as they watched the children help with the daily chores, study, play and even laugh, a rare sight in those tragic days. As they left, the visitors could look up at a window of the orphanage, and they could see, if it was summer, the elderly, white - bearded Doctor watering flowers with the same care that he bestowed upon the children. The Doctor continued his work to the very end.

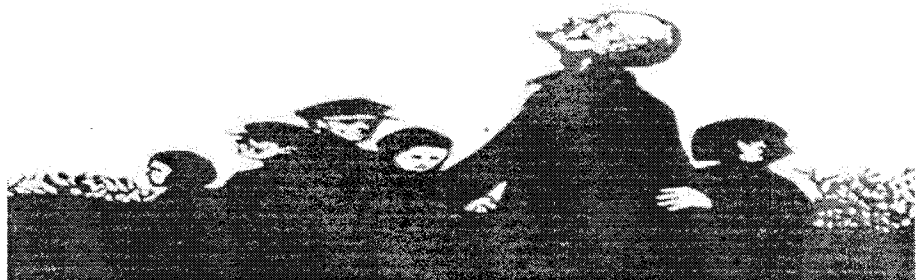
On the 5th of August, 1942, German soldiers came and ordered the orphans, the assistants, and Dr. Korczak to line up outside of the orphanage and march to Umschlagplatz deportation depot. Though they did not know it, their destination was to be a death camp. Dr. Korczak walked through the ghetto streets at the head of two hundred children, carrying one small child and holding another by the hand. Witnesses said it was the most orderly, dignified, and tragic march ever seen in the ghetto.

At the station, they were loaded into the crowded cattle cars that reeked of disinfectants, and were sent to the Treblinka Concentration Camp. None returned or were ever heard of again. It was said, that Dr. Korczak was given a reprieve from getting on the train to Treblinka, but refused to leave his children. "My children need me," he said. And so the legend of his heroism lives on. The legend of how he, the beloved doctor, planted stars in the souls of children who were forced to live in the Garden of Darkness. (pp.136-139).

*Lilian Boraks-Nemetz*

## Support for Korczak Friends in Poland

Ten parcels with toys and clothes have been sent to the Janusz Korczak Educational Centre for Children with Special Needs in Szerzawa/ Mogilno, Poland.



*Logo - Janusz Korczak Educational Centre for Children with Special Needs*

## Is there going to be a Korczak Street in Vancouver?

The Vancouver group of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada has applied to the Street Naming Committee at Vancouver City Hall in order to name a street in recognition of Janusz Korczak in Greater Vancouver.

### Honoring Janusz Korczak

Some members of our Association contributed to the Janusz Korczak monument in Warsaw.

### A Travelling Exhibit

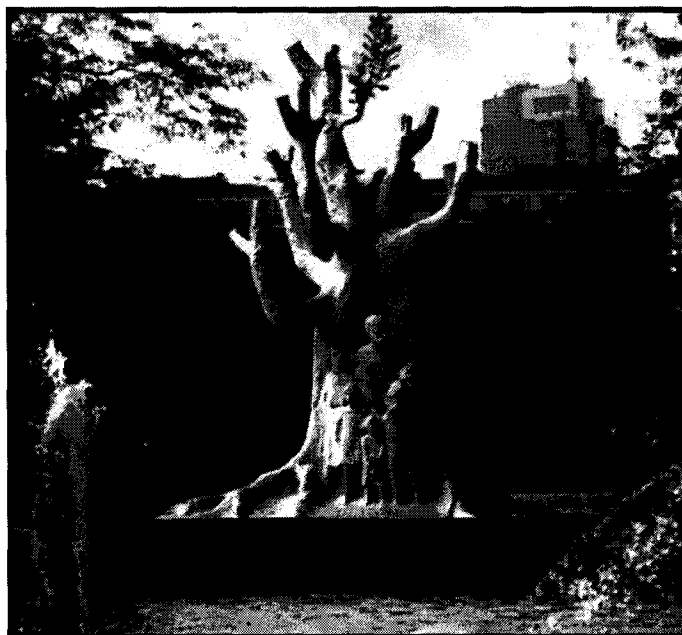
The exhibit *Janusz Korczak and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto* produced by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre with assistance from our Association has been on display at the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Centre of Central Florida, USA.



### A Letter to Steven Spielberg

Our Association sent a letter to Steven Spielberg, director of the movie *Schindler's List* inviting his participation in the project Janusz Korczak monument in Warsaw.

## The Janusz Korczak Monument in Warsaw and the Janusz Korczak Movement Worldwide



**Brief history of the project of the Janusz Korczak Monument in Warsaw**

**2000** - Idea of the construction of the monument was brought forward by Prof. Jadwiga Binczycka, President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Poland.

**2001** - Council of the Downtown Warsaw Community decided on the location for the monument.

**2002** - Results of the competition on the monument's project were announced.

**2003** - Inaugural stone of the monument was laid.

**Korczak friends all over the world were encouraged to give financial support to this project.**

**2005** - A letter related to the project was recently issued from the American-Polish-Israeli Foundation, 'Shalom' at Warsaw.

Below is an excerpt from this letter:

*"As a result of lack of financial means for the erection of the Janusz Korczak Monument in Warsaw "Shalom Foundation" and the Janusz Korczak Association of Poland appealed to the President of the City of Warsaw Mr. Lech Kaczynski to cover expenses of the construction of the monument."*

**January 20, 2005** - Ms. Elzbieta Jakubiak, Chief of the President's Office, declared that the City of Warsaw has agreed to fund the project.

**January 24, 2005** - Documents related to the project have been transferred to the City of Warsaw.

All's well that ends well. Hopefully our Korczak friends from different countries will shortly participate at the opening ceremony of the monument.

However let us direct your attention to the following point: in spite of an appeal for support to Korczak friends all over the world, Korczakians were not able to get enough financial aid for the realization of the project.

*We would appreciate your comments on the Janusz Korczak Monument in Warsaw and the Janusz Korczak Movement worldwide.*



## Great Britain: Korczak on Stage in London and Warsaw?

By Krzysztof Szafnicki

(Based on the PAP bulletin "Polonia dla Polonii", February 2005)



The play "Korczak", dedicated to one of the best known Polish teachers, was created by two British authors: Nick Stimson and Chris Williams. It was staged by Plough's Community Theatre, Great Torrington, Devon, UK last February.

Told through drama, music and song, the play concentrates not on the tragedy but on the positive legacy of Korczak, his children and how through love, respect and the power of imagination, he kept their childhood spirit alive.

In order to get better prepared for the task of making the musical, the 26-year old director Rob Pudner joined Sahra Pester, the co-director, together with Mike Nicoll - the actor who was going to play Korczak, and the cameraman Jay Nicholson in a trip to Poland last September. During their 4-week stay they visited the city of Warsaw researching the area where the Warsaw Ghetto once was. They also familiarized themselves with the Korczakianum, the Centre for Research and Documentation of Life and Work of Dr. Korczak. Finally they went to the site of the Nazi death camp, Treblinka, where in August 1942 the famous physician, pedagogue and writer was murdered. It is the real photos of the camp where more than 60 years ago tens of thousands of innocent people were exterminated, that will be used for the opening scenes of the play. A documentary

film shown before the spectacle will make it possible for the young generation to sense the drama of the war days.

One of the main reasons that the news about the new Plough Theatre production have been circulating across the country is due to the publication of the recent BBC opinion pool, indicated the alarmingly low level of awareness among young Britons about what happened during the Holocaust.

Even the producers of the play were not fully aware of the extent of the tragedy that took place there during the German occupation. While in Poland, they went through the Jewish Historical Institute materials that depicted the horrific scenes of people dying on the streets of the Ghetto and of Jews being transported in inhuman conditions to death camps. By seeing this and the thousands of small stones in Treblinka symbolizing those who perished - they could better appreciate the human drama underlying their theatrical project.

Since the musical is predominantly about Korczak's work with children, the majority of performers (app. 60 persons) are youngsters aged 8 - 18, mostly members of the youth theatre from Plough Arts Centre. Mike Nicholl is the only true professional among them.

Nicholl did not take part in the earlier production of "Korczak" but his experience as a spectator helped him in his role in the musical. He wanted to get his message across to the young generation home and abroad. He said, "I feel it is a remarkable story worth presenting to the whole world. It is a very demanding play but it can be very rewarding for the audience as well as for the young performers."

The Pudner and Nicholl endeavours were met with great interest among the Poles in UK. The Institute of Polish Culture expressed vivid interest and the Polish Cultural Centre in London offered the playhouse facility. A sponsorship was also offered by the MB Grabowski Fund. Moreover, the chances are that "Korczak" may be shown during the 8th International Festival of Children and Youth Theatres "Korczak 2005" in Poland.

**We are looking forward to more news about this bold artistic enterprise. Have any of our UK readers seen renditions of this play? Comments would be much appreciated.**

*Photos of the Korczak play productions in 1997 and 2005.*



# JANUSZ KORCZAK'S LEGACY

## New Year

Translated from the Polish by Olga Medvedeva

I knew a boy, who was always very excited each time he started a new exercise book.

- Oh, now I will work hard - he would say.

Indeed, he wrote very neatly on the first page, sometimes also on the second page. When he was not satisfied with his writing, he pulled out the first page, because he wanted to have everything nicely and neatly written in his new book.

After a week, his exercise-book was no longer a brand new one, so he messed it up and destroyed it - he did not care any more.

\*

I knew a girl who was always very excited when she wore a new dress.

- Oh, now I will keep it clean - she would say.

And she was very careful until the first stain.

But as soon as the first stain appeared - and that appeared shortly - the girl did not care about her dress any more.

\*

I knew many people who were very excited at the beginning of the New Year.

- The New Year is coming. I will be a hard working, a clever and an honest person this coming year - they would say.

The holiday lasts just one day but there are three hundred sixty five days in a year. There are thirty-one days in January only. And at the beginning of the year these people would say:

- The New Year is coming. I have to improve myself.

But if they failed once, they thought that there is no point to doing their best any more.

They were just waiting for the next New Year to start from the beginning.

\*

There are some people who are more careful. They believe they will start a new life next Monday.

- From Monday I will learn hard, I will work hard, just starting the next week.  
This is not good.

A wise person knows that something always may happen. A person wants to do his or her best, but all of a sudden everything goes wrong, not the way he or she wanted. A person knows that there is no point in waiting for something new, neither for a new exercise-book nor for a new dress, neither for a new year nor for a new week. He or she knew that it would be better to correct what can be corrected right away, and if there is no way to correct it, he or she should not be disappointed, but be more careful and do his or her best because there is no reason for procrastination.

\*

He, who thinks that what I am saying is false, let him take his own exercise-book and look at his writing on the first page and on the tenth page. If his tenth page is as good as the first one, it means that he does not belong to those who want to do their best once a year - only at the beginning of the New Year. Those who write neatly in their old exercise-book and are careful with their old clothes, those will be strong and courageous.

\*

A brave soldier loves his sword and his gun just because they are old.

A virtuous woman loves her old prayer book more than a new one.

And I knew a student, who had had the same pen for three years and kept saying that his pen is the best one in the world.

*This essay was published for the first time in Polish in the biweekly "Under the Sun" ("W słońcu") in 1922 and republished in Janusz Korczak's Complete works. Volume 11 Part 1. Warsaw 2003, pp. 248-250.*

## Korczak Seven Haiku

by Jiro Kondo

Translator from Japanese unknown

*Jiro Kondo is the founder of the Janusz Korczak Society in Japan.*

1.  
Fly, sparrows,  
twitter the song of Krochmalna
2.  
Crying birds  
that fell from the nest,  
I will rock your cradle
3.  
A star fell,  
fading into  
the Warsaw night
4.  
The cold echo  
of black boots  
sounds  
in the ghetto night
5.  
Alone with God  
in the tonguing fire  
of the seven flames
6.  
Cry, wind,  
for the dead children  
of Treblinka
7.  
Soft breeze, blow  
over the summer heat of Treblinka  
a requiem

## In the Garden of Memory (W ogrodzie pamięci, Krakow 2002)

By Joanna Olczak-Ronikier

A Polish author, Joanna Olczak-Ronikier is the granddaughter of the renowned Warsaw publisher Jakub Mortkowicz (1875-1931) and the daughter of Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa (1902-1968), who wrote the first biography of Korczak published soon after the Second World War, in 1949. From 1909 on Korczak had published his books mostly in Mortkowicz's Publishing House. For years, Korczak maintained a friendly relationship with the publisher and, after the publisher's death, with his widow and daughter.

In her book Joanna Olczak-Ronikier recalls a few instances of Korczak's connections to her family.

x

[In the first weeks of the war [ in September 1939]<sup>1</sup> Janusz Korczak visited us every day. From the orphanage on the distant Krochmalna Street he would come running, excited, in an officer's uniform that he got for himself just before the war in hope that he would be recruited.

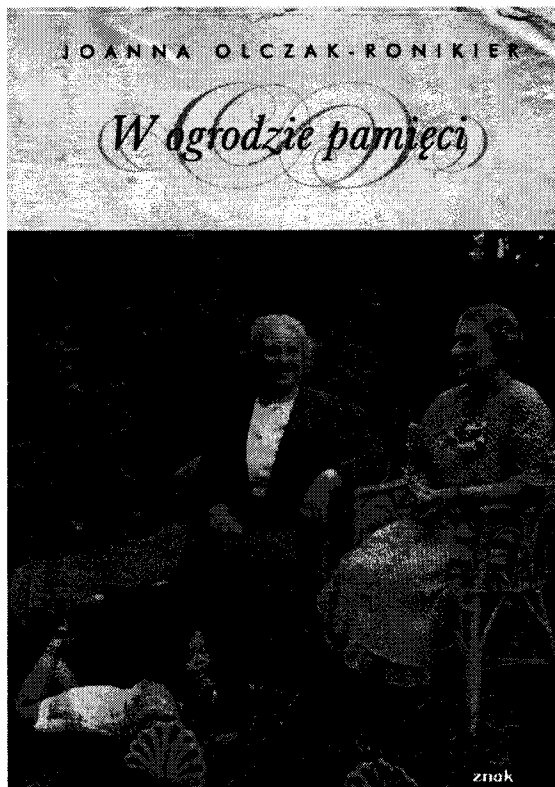
In contradiction to the apocalypse, he assured us that 'the moments we are living in now are wonderful and creative; in their fire and blood the truth will be made for a new, and beautiful life.' He kept saying, 'only the weak and the villainous break down and doubt'. (p. 268).

x

In the spring of 1940 construction began on the wall that would divide Downtown Warsaw from the part of the city where Jews would be living. Repression and chicanery towards Jews increased. The fear for their future was growing.

That was around the time when a boy from the orphanage brought my grandmother a bouquet of fragrant spring lilacs from Janusz Korczak, with a note: 'When forests are burning, we should remember roses'. (pp. 270-271).

Translated from the Polish by Malgorzata Burczycka and Marta Burczycka



The accuracy of this short testimony is confirmed by other documents quoted in the book Janusz Korczak's Life and Work Day by Day by Maria Falkowska (Warsaw 1989, p. 340). In spite of the chaos and turmoil of the first days of the war and later on, when Korczak faced even more hardships, he remained strong, and demanded from his pupils to be well organized and confident. Korczak believed in prevalence of sense over absurdity and good over evil.

### Memoirs of F. Tetelbaum-Moshel

Korczak together with his senior pupils and co-workers are on duty day and night on the roof of the house, putting out ignited firebombs. These had destroyed the summit wall and created much minor damage. There was one victim as well - former pupil and cashier Jozef Sztokman, responsible for the upper level of the building...

Stefania Wilczynska [Korczak's col-

league who worked at the orphanage. See p. 14, 15 of this issue of the Newsletter] (...) organized a first aid station in the basement of the house. The wounded, the homeless would come there. Ms. Stefa and the Doctor administered first aid, calmed people, gave advice. During those first days of war each child had a task to fulfill. Boys would bring water in buckets from somewhere. The sewer system did not work or was damaged and water was as rare as gold: everyone would get his portion of water in a small pot and this amount had to be enough for brushing teeth and washing hands. Girls would distribute buckets of dry sand to prevent the spreading of fire.

### Memoirs of S. Eliasberg

Discussions are held among friends: should we stay put and keep at the post or give the children back to their parents? 'If I do not get recruited to the army by Saturday, I will take responsibility for the orphanage and we will stay put', Korczak (...) said.

### "Our Review", 1939, N 248

The children at the orphanage received some books and toys. As usual on Saturday, they went to visit their families. Responding to a letter from the 4th of September, 1939 sent to *Our Review* ["Nasz Przegląd"] by a boy, in which he asks 'what should I do?', Korczak wrote, '...we do not require long faces. We only need optimism, good humor, quiet merriment, a willingness to participate in every action'.

Translated from the Polish by Malgorzata Burczycka and Marta Burczycka

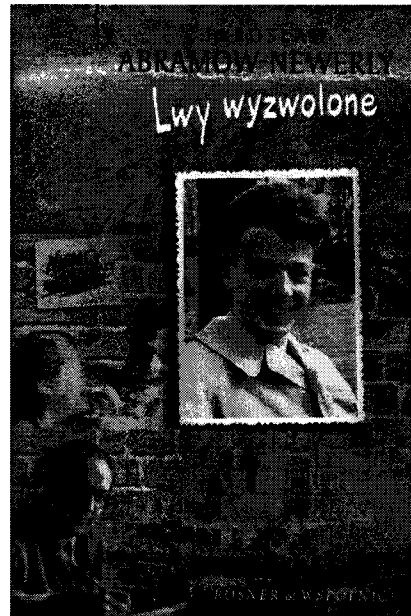
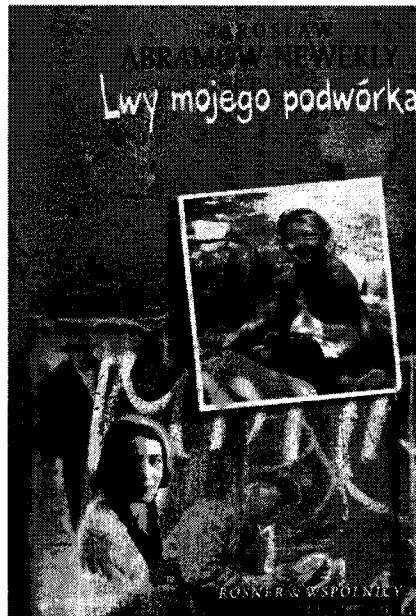
<sup>1</sup> Comments in square brackets belong to the editor

# HOW PEOPLE REMEMBER KORCZAK

## Lions of My Neighbourhood; Lions, Liberated

(Lwy mojego podwórka; Lwy wyzwolone, Warszawa 2002, wyd. II)

by Jaroslaw Abramow-Newerly



The Polish author Jaroslaw Abramow-Newerly is the son of the famous Polish novelist Igor Newerly (1903-1987) and Barbara Abramow, who was once a pupil at Korczak's orphanage and considered it her only home. Igor Newerly worked at Korczak's Orphan Home and was the secretary to Korczak. From 1930 he was also the editor of the children's newspaper "The Little Review" founded by Korczak. J. Abramow-Newerly wrote: "... "The Little Review" was Korczak's creation, his soul its guide, but on a daily basis, father ran the operation. Korczak often stopped at the editorial office and expressed a keen interest. Their close liaison grew into friendship, which father valued immensely. To the end of his life he saw the Doctor as a model figure and a master. He dedicated two of his books to Korczak, and in 1957, he prepared the first publication of Korczak's Selected Works. He was responsible for saving the memory of the Old Doctor, and for disseminating his ideas in Poland and around the world." (p. 37, V. 1 - this quote translated by Lilian Boraks-Nemetz). Igor Newerly was the one who saved (and later on published) *The Ghetto Diary* after Korczak had been deported to the Treblinka concentration camp together with children from his orphanage.

Since 1987 Jaroslaw Abramow-Newerly's life has been split between Canada and Poland. In one of his interviews he said: "I am more focused on my writing in Toronto. But I am writing there about Warsaw."

In his books *Lions of My Neighbourhood* and *Lions, Liberated* Jaroslaw Abramow-Newerly recalls his childhood, his parents, and what he had heard from them about Janusz Korczak.

### Korczak's principles of life and work<sup>2</sup>

One of the basic principles, which Korczak ruthlessly adhered to, was to forbid luxurious autos and carriages from parking in front of the orphanage. Korczak did not want to tease or humiliate the poor orphans. Mrs. Falska [Maryna Falska (1877-1944) - a director of the Warsaw orphanage "Our Home", where Korczak worked as a pediatrician and a pedagogical advisor] initiated the same principle. The patroness of "Our Home" was the wife of Marshal Pilsudski - Aleksandra Pilsudska, who frequently visited there... and always

adapted herself to that rule.

Father told me, that she would leave her car and the driver far away, and in her slippers, would traverse the Bielany park and sand to get to "Our Home", a lone building submerged in a sea of green orchards. (p. 35, V.1).

Father started out as Korczak's secretary, then took over *The Little Review*, a magazine created by children, and not just for children. Korczak had very much underlined this distinction. The idea of a review for children by children was uniquely his. Such a journal, written and published by

children, who knew best what should be written for them, did not exist anywhere in the world. Grownups after all knew nothing of what was needed here. As an editor, Korczak's role was that of a minimal consultant who did not want to interfere. And he fought long and hard for this bold idea. Most people thought him a maniac. - 'What? Children as editors? Writing their own material? Nonsense. That is what journalists are for. This will all turn out to be a big joke!' (p. 36, V. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Titles of the fragments and comments in square brackets belong to the editor.

## Lions of My Neighbourhood; Lions, Liberated

*continued from previous page*

### Those who worked together with Korczak

The Orphan Home moved from Krochmalna Street on the Aryan side, to a home located in the ghetto. The janitor who worked at the Krochmalna Street home for many years, Piotr Zalewski, begged the Nazis to let him and his wife move to the ghetto together with Dr. Korczak, Stefania Wilczynska, and the children. Their answer was to beat him up, and order him to stay behind. Mr. and Mrs. Zalewski were a childless couple. They loved one orphan girl in particular named Rozyczka-Rosie. They wanted her to stay behind with them, but her mother, a worker at the Orphan Home, would not agree. The couple was inconsolable.

They stayed on in their place at the Orphan Home and guarded the walls they had loved for so long. In the beginning they had hoped that Dr. Korczak will return. After a while, when they saw what was happening in the ghetto, they lost all hope. They suffered greatly when they learned of the deaths of Dr. Korczak, the caregivers, and the children. The couple loved them all as their own.

In the first days of August, 1944, Germans squelched the uprising in the Wola district of Warsaw. Soldiers under General Vlasov [General Vlasov played an important role during the defense of Moscow at the end of 1941. Arrested in 1942 by the Germans, he changed sides. In 1943 he created his own Russian Liberation Army and served the Nazis] and the Ukrainians under German command raided the house on Krochmalna Street. They dragged Piotr Zalewski, his father-in-law Wincenty Szymanowski and others, outside. They ordered them to stand next to the wall of the home and shot them.

Today in that same place, there stands a memorial stone dedicated to their memory and funded by the Korczak

Committee [Janusz Korczak Association of Poland]. (p. 60, V. 1).

Kazia [the daughter of Piotr Zalewski] survived in 1944... She and her mother witnessed the deaths of her husband and her father. Her sister Regina, who worked at the Orphan Home before the war, together with her husband Eugeniusz Kuczynski, managed to escape in the proverbial last minute to the city centre, plowing their way through dugouts and cellars.

As a matter of fact, Genio [Eugeniusz Kuczynski, son-in-law of Piotr Zalewski] was the Pole who delivered a lorry of potatoes to the ghetto, for the Orphan Home.

Genio, to the end of his life was loyal to Korczak. He considered the Doctor to be a saint: 'People like Dr. Korczak do not exist, - he said repeatedly to me - they do not exist and will never exist! That was a human being!'

... Even as an ailing old man whom no one ever invited to the Korczak events, he dragged himself without an invitation to all of them. He died in obscurity in 1992. (p. 61, V. 1).

### The last day

Mrs. Maryna tried to save Janusz Korczak's life whatever the cost. She prepared for him a secret place in Bielany. My father brought to her the Old Doctor's Diary, smuggled out of the ghetto. Like Korczak, she also gave her life for her children.

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1942, my father (Igor Newerly) remembers the following in one of his writings (*Za Opiwarda, za siodma rzeka*):

'From its earliest moment, the morning forewarned us of a bad day ahead. Phone calls from the ghetto were filled with fright about the imminent deportations. People were being evacuated from their homes en masse and herded to a square next to the Gdansk Station, then loaded into cattle cars heading for an unspecified location.

The perpetrators were now on their way to Korczak's orphanage...Mrs. Maryna telephoned from Bielany to ask whether we knew what was happening to the orphanage. We told her that we didn't know but were awaiting news.

Immediately afterwards, she came to our place in Zoliborz, thinking that she could get more information from me, as I had contacts in the ghetto. And so we waited. Mrs. Maryna, myself, my wife, and Jarek [Jaroslaw Abramow-Newerly], who was then nine years old, and had gathered much from all that was happening. He sat on the couch, his eyes following the lady, as she, austere dressed in black and silent like a nun, paced back and forth between the door and the window. Suddenly she said, 'it would solve nothing. No such arguments are possible.'

I felt she was reading my mind and responding to my thoughts. I was also adding up my conscience: had we really done all we could to save the Doctor? Maybe we should have taken a different form of argument in trying to persuade him to leave the ghetto...The phone rang. 'The procession has begun', - said Harry [one of the contributors of *The Little Review*] - 'They are going in the direction of Umschlagplatz. Mrs. Stefa, the Doctor, and the whole Orphanage...' I repeated the message. We waited for a very long time, until the same, but somewhat changed voice announced that 'they have been loaded onto the wagons, or are still loading, I don't know exactly.' Then a woman got on the phone and said that 'Harry can no longer speak, good bye.' What I remember best of that moment, was Mama, crying. (p. 31-32, V. 2).

### Post mortem

Till the end of her life, Mama had a portrait of Dr. Korczak hanging above her bed as if he were a saint. She didn't even remove it in the worst of Stalinist times, when practically all his students and orphans forsook Korczak, hailing another God of orphanages, Makarenko, a Soviet pedagogue. I don't wish to be malicious,

# IN KORCZAK'S CIRCLE

## Lions of My Neighbourhood; Lions, Liberated

*continued from previous page*

but the majority of Korczak followers who today acknowledge Korczak as a master and delve into his writings as if they would into a Bible, prayed to Makarenko. His book *The Pedagogical Poem* was their litany and Commandment. They threateningly waved it around, destroying Korczak. I will never forget one of my day-care teachers, who became the higher inspector of the Ministry of Education and a staunch supporter of Stalin, and her disgust when she saw Korczak's portrait on Mama's wall.

- I am surprised, Basia. Why won't you hang Stalin's portrait instead of Korczak's?

Stalin's? said my mother, surprised. But what for?

- How can you say that? He is so sweet. He fights for peace on behalf of us all.

- Sweet? said Mama shrugging her shoulders.- Maybe for you, my dear. For me Stalin is not sweet. Even though he fights for peace, I see no reason why he should hang in my room. For me the Doctor is sweet and never in my life will I exchange him for Stalin. If Stalin is sweet for you, then you look at him. I prefer Korczak.

- Oh my God, Basia, said the woman with pity in her voice. - You are always so naïve.

Mama was so angry with her that even though they knew each other in difficult times of occupation she terminated their relationship. Afterwards this friend naturally changed her mind, apologized to Mama, admitted that it was she who was the naïve one, and converted to a dedicated Korczakian. (...) Today, it is hard to believe that at that time only a handful of those who were faithful to Korczak, remained. (p. 334, V. 1).

*Translated from the Polish by Lilian Boraks-Nemetz*

## Speaking to Children and Educators

(*Slowo do dzieci i wychowawcow, Warszawa 2004*)

*by Stefania Wilczynska*



*Stefania Wilczynska with the Biber Family in kibbutz Ein Harod, 1938*

*Stefania Wilczynska (1886-1942) was Korczak's friend and colleague. From 1912 and for many years more she worked at the Orphan Home as a chief educator and organizer in its everyday life. Several times in the 30s Stefania visited former pupils of the Orphan Home in Palestine, and stayed in kibbutz Ein Harod. That was when she had an opportunity to record her observations on children and child-adult relations, on paper. Her essays and notes were published in the kibbutz's newspapers in Hebrew. Finally, in 1937 Stefania decided to move to Palestine. In 1938, after getting a certificate which allowed her permanent residence in Palestine, she left Poland. But in summer of 1939 she returned to Warsaw where she continued her work at the Orphan Home. Explaining her decision, she said: "My kids are in Warsaw. Warsaw is my place". In 1942 she was deported to the Nazi camp Treblinka along with Korczak, the other members of staff and the children, and they all perished there.*

*Stefania's pedagogical ideas were based on her great experience as an educator, common sense and generosity of heart, and first of all on her understanding of children. These are expressed in simple and clear words. For the times when they were formulated by Stefania Wilczynska, they sounded fresh and innovative.*

### Either / Or

In all children's institutions - beginning with a nursery for infants just removed from breast-feeding, through to daycare and schools, during ever-long 16 years [children of the kibbutz were moved to the dining room for adults at the age of 16]<sup>1</sup> children are forced to eat e v e r y t h i n g.

They have to eat e v e r y t h i n g, even food that they dislike. And despite that very often the taste of food is not adapted to the physical capabilities of children, during those sixteen years they are not allowed to leave anything on the plate. They can not grumble during meals.

It is not allowed.

Despite that in almost all other realms of children's life there is total freedom, sometimes even on the verge of carelessness; only between the walls of the dining room, during the meal there are cruel restrictions: each bit of food has to taste good. How many cries, futile tears? How much anger during those first six years? How many senseless arguments and quarrels during the next years? Enough about children.

<sup>1</sup>Comments in square brackets belong to the editor.



## Speaking to Children and Educators

*continued from previous page*

For educators how many conflicts and toil? How much waste of energy that could be used to more advantage and effect? This is not a place for describing how wisely children are defending themselves from adult abuse and how they fight back. This way, in order to bring up uncapricious children, the results achieved are quite the opposite. So after sixteen years of fighting "caprices", the pupil moves to the "grand" dining room. And with such ease he leaves on his plate carrots and/or radishes.... The hour of revenge is coming. It is very probable that even a ten-, twelve-year old child is carefully observing how adults are behaving in the dining room (since mother or father is an authority for him), their wastefulness of money and of someone's time. With such toil, for many long hours the kitchen is preparing meals in the heat of that sweltering place. And then, in one second food is moved from one's own plate to the dish for leftovers. I am not going to remind you about the road that coal travels and the food products and about the hard toil of people's hands... I am talking to adults and not to kids, so: either/or. Either we should bring children up differently for the first sixteen years or deal with them differently after those sixteen years.

Here is a real proposition: for children one should introduce meals not divided into portions. But if, for financial reasons, we cannot serve all the food in the dining room in this way, it is possible to put a clean dish on each table. If I do not like carrots or salad, before I start eating, I can remove this food with a clean spoon to the clean dish. It will be handy as a second helping for the more hungry or less spoiled.

I will be more than willing to help with putting my idea into life.

Stefa.

*Joman. Meszek Ein-Harod N 53, January 7, 1936 (pp. 86-87).*

### A Contagious Plague

Here is another very popular saying: "our children are difficult, very difficult". I do not know who is spreading it, or where to look for the source of that false state-

ment. Does it come from parents and educators here, or from day-care workers and teachers from outside the kibbutz? Could it come from visitors and tourists? I do not know its source, yet. It is very important to know from where that false knowledge has come; definitely untruthful. I am fully convinced about that, and I can prove with absolute certainty that the matter does not look like that. Your children are surely not "difficult" - but this is neither the time nor the place (for reasoning).

There are difficult children, the same as there are difficult adults, but why generalize? Why hinder in that way the bringing up of the children? There is no question that this premature judgment is definitely a hindrance.

And again, please think for a moment. Maybe it is not the children that are difficult, but the adults - who do not have the right approach and necessary patience. It could be that the children and the teenagers would say, if they could name the problem, "you are very difficult and tormenting people. You cannot come to an understanding among yourselves!? Sometimes it is 'difficult' to understand what you - adults - want from us!"

I have to mention that what I have written above relates not only to Ein Harod. In many other kibbutzes I have heard the following phrases:

"I am very tired"!

"Our 'difficult' children"!

Our responsibility is to eliminate these phrases like a contagious plague, like rats, like locusts.

Stefa.

*Joman. Meszek Ein-Harod N 60, January 15, 1936 (pp. 88-89).*

### A Question (1)

It is unfortunate, but many children from the younger classes call the German youth "Jeke" [offensive Jewish name-call for Germans] when they walk near their classroom on their way towards the barracks. But what is even worse, is that the older children who hear this name-calling do not pay attention and do not protest it. Many times I have heard that you are angry with Hitler, and that he is not kind

to Jews. But how kind are you when you willingly name-call ordinary Germans without any reason? And what would happen if the Germans name-called "Sabras" [name-call for Jews who were born in Palestine]?

During Seder a child asked the following question: 'Why is it that all over the world Jews are hated?' And I asked the question: 'Why is it that in kibbutz Ein Harod small Jews harass their German schoolmates and annoy them just because they were born in different country?'

But I may be wrong, maybe there is another reason, maybe you will talk about it during the Council meeting.

Stefa.

*Joman Beit-Hasefer Lemiszkei Ein-Harod we Tel-Josef, January 16, 1939 (pp. 171-172).*

### An Example

A rich man from America explained to me, how difficult it was for him to learn to give away money. In the end he understood that he needs to share with others. And he added, 'someone has to teach people how to give, since this idea never crosses their minds' - and you yourselves are like they.

Oh, but we do not have anything to give, some lamented. This is not true.

I heard Josefele T. and others talking about something while they were sewing, and everybody was listening with great interest. Many among you read a lot, know a lot, but are keeping it only for yourselves. Others would listen to you willingly; for example on Saturday, when there is a lot of time. There are some that play the harmonica beautifully, know many songs, work on various crafts, can draw, know mathematics better than others.

Is it only for them? Take the example of a rich American.

Stefa.

*Joman Beit-Hasefer, April 1, 1936 (pp. 168-169).*

# IN KORCZAK'S CIRCLE

## Speaking to Children and Educators

*continued from previous page*

### When are we going to have our autonomous government?

1

- The brush! Where is that brush?
- The broom is missing again?
- Who took the floor rag?
- The can! Give me the can!

They are rushing, running, searching, wasting time, and getting angry. There is already an assigned place. There is a storage area for cleaning items, that would make it easier, but the storage is...locked. Why is it locked with a key? Why does it have to be locked, why - (it will go on) until we establish a habit of putting everything back in its place, without needing to be reminded.

Only when we will be able to stop locking up the tool storage area will the community of children be truly autonomous.

2

A few bicycles stand in front of Lei's classroom. They are silently waiting there for better time, for spring will come and when the children will ride them around the yard.

I do not know a thing about bicycles. That is why I am asking: are they in good shape, clean, oiled? Are they not rusty? Have the tires not dried out?

I don't know exactly but it was said that bicycles were given to girls with hesitation. I do not know how much fun the younger children had with bicycles. Neglected bicycles will be usable for a shorter time, and the number of children without them will grow.

I am asking - why? They say that if God permits, there will be a new ball. There once were toys, things lying on the playground - where are they now? This is important and is a worry not only for youngsters but also for the Cultural Committee. Only when children will take care of those items themselves, we will be truly autonomous.

3

One girl in the fourth grade behaved badly. It is true that she needn't have teased, disturbed and picked a quarrel. But should four children have attacked her and beaten her up? Couldn't they have turned to Nimrod, a pupil with influence in the classroom, so he could present this matter at the next meeting? Or to write in "Joman" who is it that disturbs the others most? But four against a single one? Strong against the weak!...

A boy from the first grade is spreading marmalade on his bread. It is true, that a student in the seventh grade has less free time. But has he the right to force the spoon away from a smaller child? Should this be discussed during the Council meeting? Could our Council make the decision, that first in line should not be students with stronger fists but ones engage in more activities? Let's have autonomy!

4

In the classroom, there is a pencil under the desk.

- Pick it up.
- I will not, it is not mine!

On the floor, in everyone's way, lies the brush. Four people go by, but nobody picks it up.

A girl is approaching the rack to take a sweater. On the floor there lies a cap that someone dropped, with a number. She could have picked it up and hung it back up. But she wouldn't! "I didn't cause it to fall, she thinks, and it's not my cap anyway."

It is difficult to understand, more difficult than physics, algebra and English.

I think that only children from the older grades understand that that "ours" means common, for all of us. For us, for them, and not "only for me."

It is really difficult, but we have to understand this, if we want to live in a community.

Stefa.

*Joman Beit-Hasefer, February 16, 18, 19, 24, 1936 (pp. 163-165).*

*Translated from the Polish by Malgorzata Burczykcka and Marta Burczykcka*

## On Janusz Korczak

*by Stefania Ney*

*Translated from the Polish by Esther Cameron*

If we take now the laughter of children and flowers,  
the chuckle of bird and brook,  
the smile of a doctor and poet -- we'll make  
a song about Janusz Korczak.

A song of one man in a time of darkness,  
when the madness of hate ran wild --  
his heart was bright and his mind was clear,  
and he dearly loved each child.

His children, on whom their elders poured  
cursing and famine all day;  
from the cradle-bed to a victim's death  
they dragged their brief, weary way.

They were driven along like scurvy dogs,  
blue, bloated, scarcely alive.  
And Janusz Korczak died for these,  
who were old at the age of five.

It was not for his mother, his brother, he died,  
nor for God and the land of his birth,  
but for children whom lice ate, most wretched and poor  
of all that lives on the earth.

He gave them his bread and his mind and his heart,  
shared their hunger, the dirt and the shame,  
and he died when children were killed because rogues  
have not yet become like men.

## Children My Love, My Pride and My Care

(Dzieci milosc moja, дума moja, troska moja, Warszawa 2002)

By Ida Merzan

*Ida Merzan (1907-1987) was an expert on educational matters related to children of preschool age. From 1926 she was a student of the Workshop for Orphanage Educators where Korczak was teaching, then an apprentice at Korczak's Orphan Home and later, up to 1933, worked there as an educator. During her long professional career she had been inspired by Korczak's pedagogical ideas.*

*Memoirs on Korczak were written in 1947.*

## Memoirs on Doctor Korczak



*Ida Merzan (in the centre) with her sisters at Korczak's Orphan Home, 1930.*

### I

The assignment was "Memoirs from childhood". It was 1926, during the Workshop for Orphanage Educators. I was one of the sixty students in the class. I saw Dr. Korczak for the first time when he gave a lecture on child development. He entered quickly, with a pile of our notebooks in his hands. He put them on the table and attentively looked at the entire class. He asked one of the students to distribute the notebooks. I opened mine, and it wasn't graded but there were lots of underlined words. I didn't understand anything - did I make so many mistakes? Korczak began his lecture: 'Ladies and Gentlemen...I read sixty memoirs and only two were happy - fifty-eight were sad. I underlined those parts'. I opened my notebook and, truly, in every underlined sentence was something I didn't understand, something that I was hurt by, something I struggled with, etc.

Korczak continued, 'A child is born in pain, when it comes to this world. It is hit

by cold air and bright light. It replies to this painful experience with his first reaction - a scream.'

'A human is born in pain' and 'from pain experience is born' - I frequently heard these sentences from Dr. Korczak.

### II

In 1927 I was accepted for the apprenticeship in the Orphan Home on Krochmalna Street. We [young educators]<sup>1</sup> had to keep an observational diary. Every Saturday, the Doctor reviewed our diaries and commented on our observations. Once, in connection with one note, he said 'The tiredness of educators in boarding schools manifests itself in three ways:

1. The educator becomes nervous, over-sensitive, argues with co-workers, and is not fair to children.

2. The educator becomes apathetic about discipline and children's problems.

3. The educator becomes paranoid about children's health and safety, and expects catastrophe.'

'These attitudes' continued the doctor, 'are frequently mixed, but those are the basic types.' When he finished, he gave us a penetrating look, and everyone felt that he saw us, ten or fifteen years into the future, when we will all be tired.

### III

During one apprenticeship class, I was not attentive. Suddenly I caught the doctor's eye and he smiled at me. I never saw a smile like it, and I took that smile with me for the rest of my life. That smile - so gentle, so full of love and understanding - raising my spirits, a smile given to a child who needs support.

### IV

Apprentices quite often commented that the Doctor was too busy to see us or really know us. Stefania [Wilczynska, Korczak's co-worker] would laugh and say 'the doctor only pretends he sees and knows about everything.' She was right.

The Doctor's last class was at 10:00 pm. At that time I was very tired (I woke up at 6:00 am) because I was working at the Orphan Home and taking the Course for Orphanage Educators. During that class I struggled to stay awake; I was rubbing my eyes, and pinching myself. One evening, I couldn't stay awake, and dozed off at the back of the class. I was sure he wouldn't notice because there were sixty of us. But, after a few days, when we were sitting around the table, the Doctor said to me: 'What a childlike and rustic (alluding to my country upbringing) [Ida Merzan originated from village Skrychiczyn] sleep you had in my class - but first you did this!' and he impersonated me in my battle with exhaustion. We exploded in laughter!

During a class I was teaching, when the Doctor entered with a notebook, sat down at the desk, and started writing, I was telling the children a fairy tale. I had a feeling that I was disrupting his work. Paula, a small girl who had recently come to the orphanage, interrupted me constantly. She kept making associations between the story and her own family home. I listened attentively, as did the other children. Suddenly the Doctor said 'stop interrupting you little

<sup>1</sup>Comments in square brackets belong to the editor.

# IN KORCZAK'S CIRCLE

## Memoirs on Korczak

*continued from previous page*

imp, you are interfering with the story!' I thought that the old Jewish legend must have been interesting to him if he reacted with such impatience.

The next day he saw me and asked

- Why did you allow her to interrupt your story?

- Because I was curious about the other children's reaction; they listened to Paula very attentively, I answered.

- How had they reacted? In chaos! With impatience!

Ashamed, with tears in my eyes, I replied: 'You are the Doctor, you know everything ahead of time. I don't know anything and I can't predict everything yet, I have only taught for two months.'

'Really?' he gave me a look, and left. I had a bad feeling that I had said something inappropriate.

Approximately two months later, during his lecture, to prove his thesis that 'The educator's experience is born in pain', I heard, to my great surprise; 'One of my young apprentices was right when she said she didn't want to use someone else's experience, she wants to gain her own, because only that kind of experience is valuable'.

### V

A large room, and next to it a small room - in the small room the Doctor, a child, a big diary on the table, and a bag of chocolate caramels. The diary was completely without emotion, noted in it was only which child won or lost. Every Sunday morning children enter and remember what a bet is all about (about screaming, lying, a court case, etc.) A child concentrates, tries to remember the events from the whole week. All the failures, all the victories. Tough job for a child! The Doctor respected those inner struggles. He advised not dealing with them too much all at once. He didn't blame anybody, he was full of understanding. If someone felt weak, he frequently suggested starting from the beginning... The conversation was always quick. The Doctor asked 'What was the bet about' He checked in the diary. 'How many times have you lied?' And after that, just a movement of the hand to the candy, and with joking or encouraging

tone of voice, he pointedly asked 'Do you want more? How many?' The Doctor looked and spoke differently with each child.

### VI

The Doctor used to buy the children's baby teeth. The rate was established - 50 pennies per tooth. We were intrigued - what was the purpose, and where did he keep them? Rumors spread that the teeth were to be used for building a house so small that only children could enter, never adults. After a few years, I had enough courage to ask him what was the real purpose for collecting these teeth. 'I make a powder that makes bricks stronger' was his serious answer. In the first moment I believed him, but, when I saw the sparkle in his eye, I exclaimed 'You're making a fool of me! Last year I would have believed you, but not now!' He looked at me attentively, then suddenly rolled his head back and roared with laughter - long, cheerful, and genuine laughter. He kept laughing. 'But last year you would have believed me - that's really funny.' I never saw him laugh like that again.

I remember this beautiful scene. The Doctor visited us at summer camp. The moment they could see his silhouette far down the road, the children from all four houses ran out holding matchboxes (these were the fashionable milk-tooth containers.) They swarmed around the Doctor, who seriously examined the merchandise. He often complained about cavities, questioned whether a tooth genuinely originated from the gap toothed giver. He didn't believe it, but had to examine the gum where the tooth came from. Now, I believe he just wanted the kids to have some money. He didn't want to give it to them for nothing, and that's the reason he wanted to buy the only things they had to sell.

### VII

There was an educational meeting of apprentices and teachers. The supervisor supports the suggestion of a young administrator who wants more frequent floor washing and more thorough cleaning. Unexpectedly Dr. Korczak speaks up: 'And why? Who needs it? Mrs. R on Mrs. E? In my room I have mounds of dust! Poor Barbara sometimes takes care of it, but somehow I am still alive and haven't died of tuberculosis.' We stare at each other in

consternation. Miss Stefania is obviously embarrassed, and tries to save the situation, and her own prestige.

'The Doctor always says something like that and people believe he says it seriously.' 'I may be exaggerating the amount of dust in my room, but... are we running a sanatorium, or... a little more or less cleaning doesn't change anything.'

Truly, I remember, a few days earlier, he took a scrubbing brush out of my hands and told me to go out on my date.

### VIII

In "Centos" [Board of Daycares and Orphanages for Jewish Children], in Otwock, September 1, 1939, I was wounded in the head by shrapnel. I didn't stop working, but took children to the shelter, and assisted with surgeries. However, they sent me to Warsaw for further treatment. I came back to the Orphan Home, to my little old room. Stefania was sitting on her bed crying. The Doctor, very agitated, was talking about the demonstrations in front of the British Consulate, about the mood of the people in the city, and about a pregnant woman whose delivery was imminent. I had a very high fever, but with the Doctor sitting on the bed, so agitated, in the afternoon, I realized that something momentous was happening. During the night, the bombing started. Children and the personnel went to the shelter. Being with the children was good, I forgot about my pain, and didn't drift into delirium. I kept myself together. The moment I was alone, I was overcome by panic and fear. Something was pulling me to go back to the children. In absolute darkness, I dressed myself and groped my way out of my room. Suddenly, I bumped into the Doctor. He said 'What are you doing here?' I was ashamed of my fear. I mumbled 'I feel lonely.' The Doctor, in a voice full of sadness, bitterness, and resignation, said 'Dear God, who is not feeling sad right now! The whole world is drowned in one deep sorrow!' All of a sudden, in a very sharp tone, he said 'Back to bed, right now! Who gave you permission to wander around with such a fever?'

That was our last conversation, and then it was only farewell - forever. And that's how I remember him. (pp. 58-63)

*Translated from the Polish by Iwona and Garry Haskins*

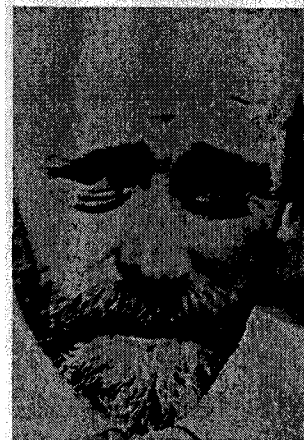
## Janusz Korczak in Theory and Practice.

### International Interpretation and Perception. On the retirement of Prof. Friedhelm Beiner

(Janusz Korczak in Theorie und Praxis. Beitrage internationaler Interpretation und Rezeption. Zur Emeritierung Professor Dr. phil. Friedhelm Beiner. Herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Silvia Ungermann und Konrad Brendler. Guetersloh, 2004)

Among the authors in this book published in German in Germany there are researchers and educators from Germany, Holland, Israel, Poland etc.

### Janusz Korczak in Theorie und Praxis



#### 1. Janusz Korczak's Life and Work

Rene Goertzen. Janusz Korczak as a Nonreligious Believer

Marc Silverman. Korczak's Understanding of World and God

Michael Kirchner. Sorrow, Loneliness and Tragedy in Korczak's Work

Nora Koestler. Poetry and Pathos in Janusz Korczak's Works

Zvi Rosen. A Concept of Alienation in Janusz Korczak's Works

Karl Garnitschnig. "School of Life" - One More Reformed School Concept

Rolf Goepfel. Janusz Korczak and Childhood Research of His and Our Times

Ilona K. Schneider. Childhood from the Children's Perspective

Johannes Gruntz-Stoll. Cheerful Pedagogy?! Laugh and Tears in Korczak's Work.

Marta Ciesielska. "The Little Review." Children's Newspaper of Janusz Korczak and Igor Newerly

Olga Medvedeva. "Such a Diverse World": Janusz Korczak's Pedagogy and Linguistics ("Rules of Life").

#### 2. Educational Practice

Silvia Ungerman. Educational Practice of Janusz Korczak from the Point of View of His Contemporaries - Appreciation and Critics

Yuval Dror. Korczak's Innovation in his Orphanage in Comparison with Theory of Non-formal Education

Jochen Nierman/Sigrid Tschöpe-Scheffler. Attentive Conversation with Children as a Training Goal of Parents Courses - Results of the Evaluation Study

Katja Maar. Main Principles of Contemporary Social Work on the Background of Janusz Korczak's Pedagogy

Wiebke Priebe. The Holocaust and Janusz Korczak. Topic for the Children of Elementary School - and of Special School?

Elisabeth Lax-Hofer. To Live and to Learn at Present. Janusz Korczak and Contemporary Discussions on Elementary Pedagogy

Herbert Hagstedt. A Teacher as a Children's Ethnographer. Korczak's School Experiment from the Point of View of Freinet Pedagogy.

Michael Langhanky. Observations of a Butterfly: Janusz Korczak and Pedagogical Diary

Theo Cappon. Korczak and Violence amongst Children

Sigfried Steiger. "Between two chairs a suitcase". Creative Handling of Korczak's Life and Work

Eliezer Marcus. Korczak and the Third Millennium.

### New Books in our Library

**Janusz Korczak. King Matt the First.** Translated by R. Lourie. Introduction by E. R. Codell U.S.A., Canada 2004 - *in English*

**Yerachmiel Weingarten.** "A velt in flamen". Canada, USA, 1942 - *in Yiddish*.

**Vertes Laszlo.** Janusz Korczak - elet a gyermekekert. Budapest, 1987 - from the author Dr. L. Vertes, Budapest, Hungary - *in Hungarian*.

**Ksiadz Janusz Tarnowski.** Janusz Korczak Dzisiaj. Warszawa, Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1990 - *in Polish*.

**Marek Jaworski.** Janusz Korczak. Warszawa, Interpress, 1978 - *in English*.

## BUILD THE FUTURE - TO REMEMBER THE PAST

### CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

*The International Janusz Korczak Movement was registered in 1978 when UNESCO announced the Korczak Year to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. However, Korczak's pupils and followers started the work of making his life and work widely known as early as 1945.*

*After 60 years Korczak Associations and Korczak friends exist in many countries such as Poland, Israel, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Austria, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, USA, Canada etc.*

*Among those who built this Movement were founders of Associations and the individuals, educators and social workers, medical doctors and psychologists, writers and translators, artists and composers, politicians and philosophers, former Korczak pupils and those who had never even seen the Old Doctor. All of them shared his ideas and were inspired by his deeds. They organized Korczak educational institutions such as schools, orphanages and day-cares. They wrote books and articles on his life and work, arranged conferences and workshops, translated his works into and from different languages, published his novels and stories, filmed them, staged them, and illustrated them...*

*Serving Korczak, they served, in one way or another, a child, with raising awareness of children's problems, the child - adult relationship, and of the necessity of dialogue as a main principle of interpersonal relations. They also served Jews and Poles, familiarizing people around the world not only with Korczak's educational philosophy, but with the values of the Jewish and Polish cultures as well.*

*Many of these people are no longer with us now, but they left for us their legacy. We believe that it is high time to tell the young people who join the movement about those who were at the source.*

*Your articles, recollections, notes, photos of Korczak friends who had worked or still work hard in order to popularize the Doctor's legacy would make a valuable contribution to this project. Any materials sent by you will be published in the special issue of our Newsletter, and will be much appreciated.*

*Olga Medvedeva, Editor*