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## UNCONVENTIONAL PEDAGOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES AT CHOSEN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS DURING THE PERIOD OF CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC (1918-1939)

ABSTRACT. Lukáč Eduard, *Unconventional Pedagogical and Educational Approaches at Chosen Alternative Schools During the Period of Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1939)* [Niekonwencjonalne podejście pedagogiczne i edukacyjne w wybranych szkołach alternatywnych w okresie istnienia Czechosłowacji (1918-1939)]. *Studia Edukacyjne* nr 39, 2016, Poznań 2016, pp. 511-530. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-3088-5. ISSN 1233-6688. DOI: 10.14746/se.2016.38.28

The reform pedagogical movement in the period of the Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) helped educators to change standard pedagogical and educational approaches, which were typical of the Herbart-type schools. The paper concentrates on the analysis of pedagogical activities of chosen members of this movement in the first decade of the new state. They were inspired by the ideas of important world personalities such as J. Dewey, M. Montessori, E. Key, H. Parkhurst, etc., and were active in individual alternative classes, resp. schools, but their activity was limited to them only as they did not find any continuators of their effort in the period under consideration.

**Key words:** reform pedagogical movement, alternative classes, alternative schools

### Introduction

The first decade of the existence of Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1939) is a period of creation and of short existence of alternative schools, which were fully connected to and dependent on the effort and everyday work of their individual founders and organizers.

Under the influence of turbulently-developing surrounding pedagogical world, beside official school line, new ideas gradually rooted also in CSR and they were bringing the change of view on the activity at a conventional school. First alternative classes and schools gained later general name – re-

form pedagogy, reform pedagogical movement, resp. alternative classes and schools.

The term reform pedagogy represents „general name for various theoretical conceptions and practical effort creating models – alternative schools. They were developed mainly in the first half of this century by the pedagogical reformers, for example by J. Dewey, M. Montessori, P. Petersen etc.; in our area by V. Příhoda etc.<sup>1</sup>

Alternative schools from the period of the first decade of CSR existence can be generally divided into two groups. The first group was represented by schools that understood the development of a pupil in harmony with their social environment and order, which a child could have co-created in the future. The schools in the second group preferred total freedom of pupil's development and a teacher created adequate conditions for this development without an exact curriculum stated in advance.

The basic difference is in the aims of the effort: schools of the second group concentrated on an individual child whose education was replaced by a belief in their spontaneous development that did not need to be encouraged but, on the contrary, natural needs leading to activity should have matured, and the first group wanted to create a new society with the help of its graduates (school understood as a starter of a new society). Their aim was not an individual, but a society which should have been formed by these individuals.<sup>2</sup>

The first pioneer of a work within reform pedagogy became *Frank Mužík* (1881-1966) through his activity in an alternative elementary classroom. He founded this classroom at the beginning of the school year 1921/22 in Prague and it existed for three years. He described his experience from the first year in this alternative classroom in a paper „A year in alternative school“ (1922). „Based on a romantic approach towards child's liberty and freedom he promoted educative individualism based on knowing the family environment.“<sup>3</sup> He invited not only parents, but also relatives and neighbors of his pupils, who were performing – 12 boys and 9 girls, to the meetings that took place every two weeks and to Sunday debates. During these meetings he informed the attendants about his results of children observations and also tried to instruct them professionally about the children diagnostics and the newest pedagogical literature. F. Mužík introduced weekly education of the wholes connected to a complex idea instead of individual classes without fixed timetable in the class where there were not classic school-desks but

<sup>1</sup> J. Průcha, E. Walterová, J. Mareš, *Pedagogický slovník*, Praha 1995, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> R. Váňová, *Úsilí českého učitelstva o školskou reformu. Pokusné školy 20. let*, Pedagogika, 1992, XLII, 2, p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> K. Rýdl, *K tradicím tvořivosti. (Frank Mužík)*, Učitelské noviny, 1991, 94, 17, p. 9.

worktables with a free choice of place. These wholes contained painting right from the beginning and he started to teach writing with counting, which was on the program from the second half-year in the form of games, competitions and fun.

Mužík tried to interconnect school and life as naturally as possible, without a violent learning of the given learning material, considering gradual natural development of a child. His walks with children through town and nature became known because they provided rich informational material, trained observing and thinking of children, created relation to a real life and provided topics to discuss during the next days in school.

Patience, devotion and love towards children, gradualness, resolution, non-violence and cooperation with family members of pupils brought F. Mužík first success. By the end of the year 1921/22 „the pupils of Mužík were obedient on the basis of their own internal self-discipline created from work, activity and interest for this activity.“<sup>4</sup> Despite this evident success, his experiment ended after three years. The cause was

extremely romantic understanding of child's freedom“<sup>5</sup>, which Mužík tried to apply on pupils in higher classes, in which such understood freedom „did not have so positive impact on their motivation.“<sup>6</sup>

One of the first, markedly practically oriented propagator of the „new“ approach towards work in school, was *František Bakule (1877-1957)*, who came out of the ideas of J.J. Rousseau, J.H. Pestalozzi, L.N. Tolstoy and E. Key. They became a part of his pedagogical thinking and found their realization also in the individual practical activity.

The main ideal bases, which Bakule used in his everyday educative work, were: belief in native good of a man; conviction of general talent of each psychically normal child; priority of nature and practical life as sources of incentives and information before theoretical knowledge gained by passive reception from textbooks; irreplaceable place of educative environment for individual development of a child.

He began his pedagogical career by activity at school in Družica (1897-1900) and continued with it in Kozly (1900-1901), but he became markedly known by pedagogical society because of his work during his activity at school in Malá Skále (1901-1913) near Turnov.

At this school, under the strong influence of L. N. Tolstoy,

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<sup>4</sup> S. Vrána, *Základy nové školy. Výsledky práce českých pokusných škol*, Brno 1946, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> K. Rýdl, *K tradicím tvořivosti*, p. 9.

he refused all old pedagogical forms: dictated discipline, memorizing, meaningful planning of learning material etc. and he relied mainly on internal power of a child, their abilities and intellectual property that he wants to catch and lean on and use them to identify weaker pupils.<sup>7</sup>

Bakule as a teacher created relation to children by „power“ of his non-formal authority, by love towards them, his interest in children not only during teaching process but also beyond it. He used the power of beautiful surrounding nature and tried to uncover in each pupil their „hidden“ abilities that he wanted to identify according to observation of behavior and various means of expression. According to Bakule's own words, a teacher is „an educative artist,

who „not only cannot be educative worker that implements his pedagogical effort only from books and from lessons that are well prepared, but, on the contrary, is an improviser, who is able to solve every educative problem in every situation in a right moment.“<sup>8</sup>

Bakule was forced to leave the school in Malá Skála because of disagreements with a school inspector concerning Bakule's specific understanding of „Tolstoy's“ freedom in school and not accepting given curriculum – „I taught how to understand the book of nature and life more that the content of school textbooks.“<sup>9</sup>

In 1913 he accepted the offer of MUDr. Rudolf Jedlička and became a tutor in Institute for physically disabled children in Prague, in which he created Child operating association in 1917. The most known products of this Association were moving toys. Also pupils' self-administration took part in life of Jedlička's Institute and its activity was appreciated also by a famous American pedagogue C.W. Washburne. Gradually, with the arrival of physically disabled adults into Jedlička's Institute, the tendencies of a standard school started to be adopted there. The loss of freedom of creation during educative activity was the main cause of Bakule's leaving of Institute in 1919.

Twelve physically disabled children – 11 boys and 1 girl – also left the Institute with him and they had to learn how to take care of themselves materially. This „Bakule's group“ ensured the most necessary finances for living by production and selling of various things (wooden toys, painted boxes, candleholders etc.) and in summer 1920 they were all active as tutors in holiday camp in High Tatras.

<sup>7</sup> F. Pražák, *Počátky české školy pokusné*, Praha 1927, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> V. Příhoda, *Třicet let Bakulovy práce pokusné*, Praha 1927, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> V. Spěváček, *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*, Praha 1978, p. 32.

After coming back to Prague the same year, Bakule created his own educative Institute where he tried to educate physically disabled and healthy children together. He presented his idea about such kind of educative institute at first meeting of Czechoslovak pedagogues and friends of school that took place from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1920 in Prague. The Institute provided place for extra-curricular educative activities for tenths of children from Prague suburbs (mainly Košíře and Smíchov) in various directions – reading of fiction together, visiting of expositions, practice of theater performances etc.

But probably the most famous became „Bakule's singers“ – singing choir created from children from Prague suburbs that gain appreciation home and in many countries abroad. During the teaching of singing, Bakule's unconventional approach appeared again. He did not teach in classic way through exactly stated musical score of the individual songs. He came out of the conviction that „children are not only the ones that reproduce prepared songs, but they also participate in the whole process of creation, they study and experience their text.“<sup>10</sup> Bakule and his singers tried to actively process each song based on its feeling, internal processing and acquiring. In the name of children's musical feeling, Bakule often interfered into processed songs, „he is not afraid to change the rhythm and to prolong or shorten the tones.“<sup>11</sup>

The results of the work, reached through such selected method, were excellent. The proof are many trips of the singing choir and numerous enthusiastic responses to individual performances – USA (1923), Germany (1925), Denmark (1926), Switzerland (1927), France (1929) and Hungary (1930). Many of these concerts were held for the occasion of international pedagogical congresses, resp. trips and for other important events for pedagogy, on which also F. Bakule presented his work. Performances were often accompanied by exposition of works and products of physically disabled children from Bakule's Institute and they also documented the success of Bakule in the field of his educative activity.

From the beginning of his pedagogical career, František Bakule refused to use formulas or to search inspiration in theory. He created his own pedagogical approach according to requirements of actual situations, events and people who he was meeting. His ideas were not the results of unconventional fantasy, but they rooted in continual observation of the real matter of fact.“<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> L. Diartová, *František Bakule a jeho pěvecký sbor*, [in:] *Reformní hnutí v ČSR ve 30. letech*, ed. R. Váňová, Praha 1996, p. 60.

<sup>11</sup> V. Příhoda, *Třicet let Bakulovy práce pokusné*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> F. Faucher, *František Bakule – enfant terrible české pedagogiky*, Praha 1999, p. 43.

The director of school for youth with physical disabilities in Jedlička's Institute became in 1920, after the leaving of F. Bakule, *Augustín Bartoš* (1888-1969) who was working there the whole quarter-century. The school, whose part were also workshops (e.g. for hand-binding of carpets, art industry, orthopedic workshop etc.), provided education for children until they were 14 years old. In this school there was not classic timetable and when children started to attend the school, they were not placed into classrooms according to age, but according to their talent and abilities, determined by intelligence test. Teaching material was taught in form of cycles, wholes, based on the interest of pupils, through individual approach towards them.

Individual expression of a child is a demonstration of their own free thinking, the only one reliable criterion of hidden abilities, an expression of effort for independent work that they should develop in life.<sup>13</sup>

Bartoš refused a conservative view of the society on physically disabled people, he did not want to raise a burden of society from them, but, on the contrary, he wanted to raise individuals with strong self-confidence able to ensure themselves economically and in common life.

From this view comes also Bartoš's great emphasis on the role of work activities in development of an individual, what found its realization also in school practice in form of 13 craft study branches, in which children could have prepared for future life.

Under his leadership, new workshops were created in Jedlička's Institute connected to: tailoring, smithery, book-binding, wood, embroidering, production of carpets, orthopedic workshop for production of orthopedic machines and aids.<sup>14</sup>

However, A. Bartoš did not see work only as a complement to standard teaching, but, as he states:

Work in general (there is actually no exact border and difference between psychical and physical work and it is not possible to imagine physical work without psychical cooperation), each free creative children work is a principle of every education in an exact way as the free creative work in general is a principle of development and life<sup>15</sup>

Like in other alternative schools of this period, also in this school there existed pupils' self-administration that came out of the natural need of children's cooperation. An incentive of its creation became common activity of

<sup>13</sup> A. Bartoš, *Cestou k životu. (Feuilletony vychovatelovy)*, Praha 1923, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> V. Spěváček, *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> A. Bartoš, *Cestou k životu*, p. 23.

children during practice and individual play of marionette theatre, as well as during managing of finances gained as entrance fee. So an interest organization of children gradually became an organ called Self-administration of Jedlička's Institute with own regulations and regular meetings. „It is a pioneer act of Bartoš that he pointed to the fact that in this period a school was only the neighborhood of individualities, but not an organized society.“<sup>16</sup> Bartoš did not interfere to the activity of Self-administration directly, it had a freedom of action, but he indirectly and non-violently created and developed it.

Augustín Bartoš states three stages of school education that present: the method of elementary education, the method of self-education and the method of study of things and matters of life beyond school walls. This effort to ensure his pupils the richest possible spectrum of sensual perception and knowing and sensual experience gained outside school gave A. Bartoš an idea to travel with his physically disabled pupils through country. A preparation for the trip was a close study of geography and sights of the visited areas, planning of financial ensuring of the trip and division of roles connected to it among pupils. Český raj, Máchovo jazero, Říp, Kladno, Křivoklát, Karlštejn – these were only some destinations of the trips, providing new inspirations and knowledge to pupils.

A. Bartoš was also active as a painter (he proposed new toys for children), musician (he was the co-founder and the first chairman of Orchestral organization of Prague teachers), scenarist (for the movies „School in Nature“ and „How Vašíček gained legs“), writer for children (the author of fairytales, e.g. „Wanderers“). He published his ideas for example in papers „The school of work“ (1921, 1923), „On a way towards life“ (1923), „Car as an educator“ (1931), „Unusual writing“ (1943).

The results of Bartoš's work showed that also handicapped and physically disabled children could have been raised for various occupations that were inaccessible for them until that period.<sup>17</sup>

*Josef Bartoň (1865-1945)* was the director of Town school for girls in Husovce in the suburb of Brno during 1910-1925. He based his pedagogical activity not only on his excitement towards pedagogical reform movement and love towards children, but also on quality theoretical preparation gained for example also during his study and stays in Jena, Budapest, Berlin or at experimental institute in Leipzig. He is the author of papers such as „Moral education at school. The first try in theory and practice.“ (1923),

<sup>16</sup> V. Příhoda, *Vědecká činnost Augustina Bartoše*, Komenský, 1958, 82, 8, p. 487.

<sup>17</sup> V. Spěváček, *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*, p. 42.

“Way towards child and parents” (1932), “Reading book for the first class of town schools” (1925), “Reading book for the second class of town schools” (1926).

Love towards children, creation of a honest relation among teacher and pupils based on the mutual trust, respecting of the individual characteristics of a pupil, school as a part of life, scientific study of pupils-girls, active participation of schoolgirls and parents in everyday operation of the school – these were the characteristic features of activity of Town school for girls in Husovice. These were not the transformations of the external features of school – the timetable, textbooks and curriculum were preserved, but Bartoň concentrated mainly on the internal world of the school, on the transformation of the individual spirit of the school.

For this transformation he also gained his schoolgirls, when each class with its own name created a self-governing unit. At its head were elected girls – a chairperson with her board, who took care of the class, externally communicated with other institutions, took part in school life with school council and organized expositions and debates.

The participation of individual parents, who took the role of an active factor in children education during regular meetings of parent board, was also noticeable. Together they discussed current education problems, parents critically expressed their opinions about the activity of school and they visited Institute for research of a child in Brno. The aim of these meetings was to encourage and partially to professionally prepare these parents for cooperation with school in solving pedagogical problems. J. Bartoň stated:

The role of the school is to bring new opinions into families, different from family traditions and knowledge of the new pedagogy and its advisory sciences, psychology, biology, sociology etc. This is the only way to make differences in opinions on education disappear, because they break the harmony in education; only in this way a necessary and desirable agreement in children education concerning health, rational and moral side will come.

In education, there was an emphasis on creating of feeling of responsibility for own actions, which should have been directed by generally valid ethic principles. In this way, months with various virtues that should have been demonstrated in everyday practical activities of pupils, were announced – love towards a fellowman, help for poor and older people, protection of nature, veracity etc.

„We decided that we wanted the school to be the Home of Love and Joy for us and for the children in our charge.”<sup>18</sup> J. Bartoň named his school

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<sup>18</sup> S. Vrána, *Základy nové školy*, p. 60.



Home of Love and Joy, in which a child was the highest value, their natural development for which the teachers in cooperation with family should have created the best possible conditions. „Teacher resembles a gardener, children resemble human buds growing in his garden and his Love resembles the sun that brightens and warms everyone. Children – little flowers grow on their own, the teacher only helps them and prepares comfort for their growth as good as he can and he never hinders them in development. If he finds a soul that has unusual dispositions and characteristics, he does not consider it to be unnatural and he cares for it with higher attention. Either a new different being can grow from it, especially beneficial for the nation, or through his care a burdened soul can get rid of its burden.“<sup>19</sup> Home of Love and Joy after retiring of the director J. Bartoň in 1925 transformed into standard town school again.

Creation and activity of alternative school in Kladno is narrowly connected with high concentration of proletariat in this town and with political activity of social democracy that represented the opinions of the majority of working class. Since May 1919, after with reference to image of Russian soviets, political activities in Kladno were directed by the Board of working, agricultural and military representatives.

Communal election of 15<sup>th</sup> June 1919 in Kladno ended in victory for social democracy that enforced nationalization of teaching institute, recall of nuns from girl schools in Kladno and „on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1919, Free socialistic school of work was opened.“<sup>20</sup> The status of school, whose author is *František Náprstek (1877-1955)*, stated the mission of the school as follows:

The role of the school will be to educate youth as informed members of human society. It will be an alternative school that will search and create such school that would represent socialistic ideals.<sup>21</sup>

The status gave important role to working activities from various areas that should have had an irreplaceable place in children and youth education. According to status, pupils should have become through self-administration and participation in school boards an important part of directing of school, teaching process should have had various attractive forms (debates, visits of theaters, expositions and concerts, excursions, trips etc.), with emphasis on own activity of pupils, amount of children in class was maximum 20.

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<sup>19</sup> J. Bartoň, *Cestou k dítěti a rodičům. Výchovný směr a ukázky ze školní praxe v letech 1910-1925*, Praha 1932, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> V. Sklenář, *První socialistická škola v ČSR*, *Pedagogika*, 1971, XXI, 4, p. 512.

<sup>21</sup> V. Sklenář, *Kladenská škola revoluce*, *Pedagogika*, 1953, III, 2, p. 93.

After elimination of general strike, Land school board in Prague in declaration from 27<sup>th</sup> December 1921 accepted changed status of the school, which deleted parts concerning promotion of socialistic ideas from its name and from the whole text. The school had during its whole existence 4 classes and the administrator of the school since 1920 until its end in school year 1932/33 was *Čeněk Janout (1888-1965)*, who also belonged to the leading persons during school creation. The school tried to motivate its pupils during their whole stay that often prolonged until evening. The reason was also fruit orchard, given to school by town board, which was taken care of by gardener and by individual pupils. Parts of the orchard were also greenhouses and garden-frame that were used to grow vegetables. Vegetables and fruit represented after selling a great financial profit for the school's activity.

The curriculum of the school was in agreement with curriculum of the schools of the same type, but the teacher was given total freedom concerning way to achieve his goal. There was not stable timetable at school, various organizational forms of teaching were used and pupils were not given homework mainly because „a family should not have been another school, parents should not have taught their children.“<sup>22</sup>

Pupils often corrected each other's papers and tried to find as many mistakes in a classmate's paper as possible. Another time they wanted their papers to be marked, „but this was usually not realized in our conditions (it means in school – author's note)“<sup>23</sup>, to be sure if they understood the material correctly and learnt it on required level. The parts of the teaching process were also courses that widened the content of a classic curriculum, providing practical information from a common life. The courses such as first aid course, medical course, accounting course or scouting course belonged to them.

A great emphasis was put on direct working activity of pupils that worked in above mentioned garden and greenhouses and workshop, they prepared theater and marionette performances for which they created marionettes on their own; they prepared food, cleaned the school, cared for animals (hares, pigeons, poultry etc.) and produced and sold ornamental things.

After receiving of permission for teaching at higher level the school tried to implement new teaching methods into teaching process. Since school year 1926/27 it was Dalton plan, later a project method and „so-called method of courses where related subjects were joined into groups.“<sup>24</sup> 4 blocks of sub-

<sup>22</sup> J. Hostáň, *Jak jsem učil na Volné škole práce na Kladně*, Komenský, 1929, 57, 3, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> J. Hostáň, *Jak jsem učil na Volné škole práce na Kladně*, Komenský, 1929, 57, 4, p. 139.

<sup>24</sup> V. Sklenář, *První socialistická škola v ČSR*, p. 525.

jects were created that alternated after a week's interval: technical education, naturalistic education, social education and education in nature. All these efforts for unconventional teaching methods failed because of unstable and insufficiently professionally prepared pedagogical staff as well as because of lack of finances.

The school issued pupil magazines "Youth," "Svitánie" and in their own edition the book "Primeroses" containing essays and art works of pupils was issued in 1932. The pupils contributed with their works also to other children magazines and children corners of various newspapers; they exchanged letters with other schools, performed in the school theatre and played marionette theatre. The parts of knowing were also trips of pupils home and abroad (Germany, Italy and Yugoslavia) that were ensured from finances gained for assistant works of children on field and in school garden.

Children self-administration was active in each class but also as a whole-school organ with managing representatives for individual classes and it had its specific branches:

a) financial - cared for savings in school bank and for their meaningful use;

b) press - ensured correspondence with other schools and sending of pupils' papers into children magazines, cared for agenda while organizing of excursions;

c) entertaining - organized debates, theatre and marionette performances, events with parents, expositions;

d) medical - cared for cleanness (there were no cleaning ladies at school) and for health state of pupils;

e) judicial - solved disagreements, fights between pupils, gave appreciations.

Classes sent their representatives also to meetings of teachers and common meetings of all pupils and teachers took place once a week.

Free school of work in Kladno was not found "from the initiative of school administration or from an effort of individuals, but from the will of proletariat in Kladno." (Sklenář, 1971, p. 509) The school of Kladno tried to keep these principles in its activity:

1. "To keep childhood for children as long as possible, to let them live, act and create according to children's imagination.

2. To base teaching process and education on children's interests and abilities.

3. To enable talented children faster and individual development.

4. To lead children not only to spiritual, but also to physical work.

5. To cooperate with parents constantly.

6. To give advice concerning occupational choice to children finishing the school.

7. To follow them also after having finished the school.

8. To emphasize moral education: to teach children to think independently and creatively, to create friendly relationship among teacher and pupils, to lead to fearlessness, to awareness of rights and duties, to personal responsibility, to elimination of social differences, to a sense for practical life, to a sense for managing of collective property, to the feeling of solidarity and responsibility of a whole, to get used to frugal life, to love towards nature, to cleanness, truth and beauty and to lead to humanity."<sup>25</sup> It was a private school financed by Organization of friends created mainly from parents of its pupils, which tried, as well as other alternative schools, to cooperate with parents of its pupils. The school organized debates with performances and expositions of pupils' works for community to present its own activity.

The names Ladislav Švarc, Ladislav Havránek and Ferdinand Krch are essentially connected with the activity in Home of childhood that was founded in Horní Krnsko near Mladá Boleslav. At first it was founded in 1919 as a medical home and institution for child orphans in age of 2-14 years after legionnaires from the First World War.

Since 1921, this was concerning organization a 2-class municipal mixed school where the 1<sup>st</sup> class was attended by 6-10 years old pupils (the teacher was L. Švarc) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> class was attended by 11-14 years old pupils (the teacher was F. Krch). Beside them there were also some 2-3 years old children in the Home of childhood. L. Havránek started to be active there in 1922 (since March), which is together with the following year 1923 considered the bloom of Home of childhood.

The choice of the name Home of childhood explained its co-founder L. Švarc as follows:

We wanted to avoid the word school that reminded us of teaching according to curriculum elaborated in advance that did not consider children's interests; we tried to found a new institution with a new base where a child would have been respected more than an old school could and should allow. The name Home of childhood was also chosen because we wanted to avoid the word orphanage.<sup>26</sup>

This is also the reason why a stable working plan was not elaborated; educational activity assimilated to current situation with the aim of free individual development of a person.

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<sup>25</sup> S. Vrána, *Základy nové školy*, p. 67.

<sup>26</sup> V. Spěváček, *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*, p. 70.

The main teaching method became directed and free game and the main tools were art works. Everything came out of pedocentric principles of love towards child and his or her freedom of expression.<sup>27</sup>

Teachers tried to develop abilities adequate to the age of a child, aesthetic perception, to create moral qualities (e.g. honesty, veracity) and a relationship to created values.

Teachers „leaned on principles of free school and pedocentric pedagogy, they understood the role of a teacher as a role of an artist; pedagogy was an art for them.”<sup>28</sup> Each of the teachers tried to specifically impact on children – orphans and to create from Home of childhood an environment rich of positively developing incentives, environment closely imitating family background.

*Ladislav Švarc (1883-1947)* intensively dealt with painting and with using of art education respectively paintings to enrich internal life of children. L. Švarc understood spontaneous artistic expression as an expression of child's perception of the world, child's fantasy and feelings.

Two tasks were solved in this school: to create such environment for the orphans where a love of caring tutors would create a big happy family and to give creative pedagogues all conditions for efforts with a new school in which all positive talents and abilities of children could have fully developed, a school of child's activity, working school, pleasant school.<sup>29</sup>

Švarc described knowledge and observation of children and their artistic expressions in his paper “Artistic expressions of a child” (1918).

*Ladislav Havránek (1884-1961)*, having the same artistic feeling, founded already at his previous workplace in Všelisy a Folk atelier – school for creation of artistic works and development of aesthetic feeling of children and adults. Artistic expressions inspired by him came out of a more real life, of observation and capturing of everyday life situations. “Havránek sees child as a beauty in a given life, in his or her sorrow, tribulation and in child's problems, as well as in child's work.”<sup>30</sup>

*Ferdinand Krch (1881-1973)* concentrated on study of influence of music on children, issued songs and proverbs and a magazine “Golden gate.” He earned the biggest trust of children that were telling him about all of their

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<sup>27</sup> K. Rýdl, *Reformní pedagogika a český učitel. Individualistické pokusy dvacátých let*, Učitelské noviny, 1990, 93, 17, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> S. Solarová, *Úsilí o realizaci pracovní výchovy v pedagogických pokusech dvacátých let*, Pedagogika, 1967, XVII, 5, p. 603.

<sup>29</sup> L. Švarc, *O sobě a své práci*, [in:] *Cesta Ladislava Švarce*, ed. V. Penc, Praha 1975, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> F. Pražák, *Počátky české školy pokusné*, p. 60.

problems. In contrast with L. Švarc who promoted the idea of freedom and liberty in teaching process (without timetable, without division of teaching material into subjects), F. Krch divided teaching material into necessary three parts: reading, counting and language education – and to other subjects with free timetable according to interest and needs of pupils. e.g. art education, music education and homeland study.

Educational program of Home of childhood in Horní Krnsko, a document that was written by L. Švarc and F. Krch and was approved by Ministry of Education and National Edification on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1919, defined the aim of education as follows:

The role of education is to educate and free everything nice and generous in a child. Right education peaks by knowing of oneself. If a child wants to know themselves, they need to understand the life of people and life of a nature, of an environment where they live.<sup>31</sup>

Education should have been realized by totally non-violent way, by respecting of a natural development of a child, based on using of interests and activities of children, of influence of natural environment with the aim of a harmonic development of personality.

According to evaluation of Stanislav Vrána, it was “the most precisely prepared pedagogical effort in the first decade after First World War”<sup>32</sup> and it had convenient conditions for its realization – adapted building of castle, adequate surrounding natural environment, adequate number of children (maximum number in Home of childhood was 45), enthusiastic pedagogues, freedom in work. It was also visited by famous university professor from Chicago Dr. Carlton W. Washburne.

In spite of that, Home of childhood ended its activity after a short period of time. At the beginning of July 1924 F. Krch and L. Havránek left it. L. Švarc stayed in Krnsko and became administrator of a newly-founded orphanage. The main causes of the end of Home of childhood were lack of finances and disagreements between Supportive legionnaire fund (co-founder of Home of childhood) and management of Home of childhood. The knowing that education cannot be realized separately from real world in an idealized environment, on the basis of freedom in teaching process based only on interest of children also contributed to the end of Home of childhood. This fact was confirmed while examining of knowledge from individual subjects at public school. Home of childhood did not gain the right to

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<sup>31</sup> V. Spěváček, *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> S. Vrána, *Základy nové školy*, p. 49.

organize public examinations so the pupils had to be examined at some public school at the end of a class.

Alternative school in Holešovice at suburb of Prague started its activity at the beginning of school year 1922/23 under leadership of *Jaroslav Sedlák (1879-1958)* and *Karol Žitný (1889-1967)*. It consisted of two alternative classrooms (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classroom), joined to normal municipal school. It became a full 5-class alternative working municipal school in school year 1925/26 by gradual opening of other alternative classes.

A more dominant site in activity of J. Sedlák and K. Žitný were experiences and pedagogical praxis, "which according to their opinion corrects the theory and takes it to the corresponding bounds."<sup>33</sup> School of Holešovice, in which the alternative efforts only lasted for five year, took the following as the aim of its activity: "We want to create society of healthy people, harmonically developed physically and psychically, able and aware of pleasant physical and psychical work - for the general good. We want to raise stable moral characters containing devoted and effective feeling of a brotherly humanity, characters living and working "under angle of eternity" for better future. To reach this aim we want to found children society, children school community, living, working and developing on the basis of presented ideas."<sup>34</sup>

Founders of school in Holešovice took 6 *main principles* in the suggestion for founding public alternative municipal school that they wanted to use to reach the stated aim. According to these principles, it should have been a school with these characteristics:

1. educational - elimination of dominancy of to-that-time prevailing educational activities in teaching process;
2. alternative - avoiding dogmatism and rigidity with the aim of gradual prudent transformation of school with using all positive experience from the previous activity of school;
3. practical - replacing excessive theory and verbalism with practical activities, coming out of current social and economical conditions and needs of society;
4. social - providing of bases for gradual harmonic development of future adult humans, creating respect towards other children and ability to communicate with them as well as with adults;
5. united - ensuring of united polytechnic education, co-education, secular non-confessional education and other education of talented poor children;

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> J. Sedlák, *Pět let v pokusné pracovní škole*, Brno a Praha 1930, p. 15.

6. working – meaningfully and economically organized, mainly with the collective form of teaching.

The way of teaching in form of teaching standard subjects was replaced by teaching through concentrated teaching material and associating of subject, what was easier for children from the point of view of adequacy for their abilities.

In a system of separated subjects, each subject has its own progression and methods and does not care for other subjects, with which it is neither internally nor timely connected. ... Using this concentration, interesting and rich interest files were created that we followed often for a long period of time and we returned to them after a while again to complete them with new and new experience.<sup>35</sup>

The main part of the teaching process should have been own activity of pupils, when teaching material was placed into some respectively more of the following branches using the method of concentration:

a) branch of necessary knowledge – counting, mother tongue, homeland study, measuring,

b) branch of the most necessary abilities – mechanical part of counting, orthography, drawing, laying, writing,

c) branch of craft works – bases of work with paper, wood, clay, glass, metal etc.,

d) branch of modern physical education – games, gymnastic workout, rhythm dances, sports, scouting etc.,

e) branch of art education – singing, music, literature, painting education, recitation i.e.,

f) branch of observing and studying of nature, life and work in it – agriculture, traveling etc.

Like the school of Husovice, also J. Sedlák and K. Žitný invited parents of their pupils to help them, although these were also people with low education. Meetings of teachers and parents did not concentrate only on information about pupils, but also on broadening of knowledge of the parents.

Evaluation of pupils also differed from traditional ways. Only teaching language, writing, counting and physical work were evaluated from subjects and school report only had two stages of verbal evaluation, this meant ability or disability to progress to the higher class. School also disposed of well-equipped workshop, flowerbed to grow flowers and vegetables, pupils visited swimming pool, learned to take photos, went on trips in Prague and into nature (e.g. Železná ruda, Šumava, Šternberk etc.), pupils were examined by a doctor before the beginning of a school year.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 216-217.



Jaroslav Sedlák and Karol Žitný managed to create a pleasant environment that differed from normal municipal school. Teachers awakened a sense for cooperation among classes, mutual help and service there."<sup>36</sup>

J. Sedlák described his experience and opinions in papers „Five years in alternative working school” (1930), „From school desk into teacher's desk” (1960) and K. Žitný in papers „Ship with salt. Education of character in children community” (1931), „By the ravening flow of life” (1932) and „Saying goodbye. Pictures from school life” (1934).

## Conclusion

J. Sedlák, K. Žitný, F. Bakule, J. Bartoň, F. Mužík etc., gave the alternative schools unique, inimitable form by their life philosophy and pedagogical enthusiasm. The main motives of founding of first alternative schools were effort to improve own school work, belief in non-violent development of a child under the influence of ideas of pedocentric movement and important role of activity of a child in their further development. They were found neither on order of school authorities, nor under influence of some massive movement, but they were the expression of personal efforts of teachers – reformers that often had to persuade supervising institutions with their results about meaningfulness of existence and activity of alternative schools.

Founding and operation of such a school needed a lot of effort from its founders – obtaining of permission, preparation of specific teaching plans (if they existed), self-study of new teaching methods, creation of new teaching aids and literature, overcoming distrust of parents and cooperation with them in common educational activity of school and family and extra-curricular activities with children. All these obstacles together with low understanding of supervising organs led to the fact that these schools existed for relatively short period of time.

„Spiritual fathers” and implementers of alternative schools in one person rarely, as it is usually the case, gained appreciation for their pioneer work. For the critics, the absence of common and generally valid conclusions from activity of alternative schools was more important than courage of “ordinary” teachers to implement their pedagogical dreams, their determination to use their own, specific way and their rich experience.

Also famous people of pedagogy of this period, who contributed to the general to-that-date non-appreciation of creditable work of the first “reform-

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<sup>36</sup> V. Spěvácěk, *Průkopníci českých pokusných škol*, p. 112.

ers," did not avoid such oriented criticism. For example Otokar Chlup states that: "All reforms in our educational system are random, incoherent and they make an impression of a mood or joy according to personal disposition of the given reformer."<sup>37</sup> Jan Uher, defending the traditions of national school and promoting mainly the change of spirit of school also had rather negative opinion on first alternative schools.

There were many tastes and nice work. But I think that the spirit was not always right. There was a lot of romanticism that expressed itself as excessive aestheticism and naturalism. There was not and is not stability and certainty.<sup>38</sup>

It is necessary to accept reflections against alternative schools from the point of view of their practical impact on activity of the majority of schools, which were said by Otokar Kádner:

It is not possible to entirely hide that results of these alternative schools did not correspond the superhuman effort of their founders and keepers and they had very little impact on practice of average municipal school in our conditions.<sup>39</sup>

Many municipal schools, mainly in villages and in smaller towns struggled with everyday existence and organization problems: lack of finances, inconvenient buildings of schools, a great amount of pupils in classrooms, teaching of pupils of various ages in one classroom in the form of departments, great distance of schools (mainly in villages) from the home of children, poor material equipment of classrooms etc.

It seems that the whole period of our pedagogy will be called the period of pedagogical romanticism that is expressed beside other things also in excessive individualism and aestheticism, in overestimation of the power of school in moral life of a child, in hanging onto reforming of internal school life without the support of other factors, in not using of professional pedagogy, sociology and mainly biology of a child and child pathology. This romanticism also caused that it led to separation of many reformers from the mass of pedagogues.<sup>40</sup>

A connection of internal school reform with reform aimed to main external conditions was missing – financial budget and the whole organization of educational system.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, p. 255.

<sup>38</sup> K. Rýdl, *Jan Uher a reformní pedagogické hnutí*, Pedagogika, 1992, 3, p. 365.

<sup>39</sup> K. Rýdl, *Tradice a současnost alternativního pedagogického hnutí v ČR a ve světě*, Prešov 1992, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> J. Hostáň, *Jak jsem učil na Volné škole práce na Kladně*, Komenský, 1930, 58, 5, p. 174.

The lack was also the fact that pioneers of reform pedagogical movement did not find continuators of their work, the efforts were fully dependent on individual teachers, on their focus (artistic, aesthetic, working) and teachers did not find continuators of their ideas – efforts ended after they had left the schools.

On the other side we cannot deny inspirational influence of these schools that impacted on pedagogical thinking of other teachers and practical activity of the schools, as Karel Velemínský stated:

However, nice work of K. Žitný, being issued now, shows almost on each page that even not the first, post-revolutionary experimenters waited and originally tried the whole line of new things. But, many of their results will fade if they were not presented to public by press, but, on the other side, it would be only beneficial for the modernization of our national school if the experience of these experimenters was well known.<sup>41</sup>

Individual efforts at schools from this period had an important role for the development of pedagogy in ČSR. They verified some new approaches in teaching, showed the possibility and necessity of joining parents into educational activity, concentrated attention on inevitability of school reform, awakened later activity of many teachers. They represented an important step towards further development of pedagogy and improvement of the individual educational praxis.

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<sup>41</sup> K. Velemínský, *Naše nynější reforma školská*, Věstník pedagogický, 1932, X, 7, p. 290.

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