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Legal and Societal Obstacles to Obtaining Equal Rights by Women: The Way to Equality of Rights according to Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit

Prawne i społeczne przeszkody w uzyskaniu równych praw przez kobiety. Droga do równouprawnienia według Pauliny Kuczalskiej-Reinschmit

ABSTRACT

The paper presents the road to equal rights outlined by Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit, who was one of the most prominent feminists of her time (she was the editor-in-chief of the "Ster" magazine and one of the founders of the Association for the Equal Rights of Polish Women). For Kuczalska, women's suffrage was only a means to achieve the goal of women's equality. The paper analyses the provisions of the Napoleonic Code that took away women's right to self-determination, independence and autonomy. The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries also saw a gap in educational opportunities of the same quality as those available to men. Another problem covered by the article are habits and customs. According to Kuczalska, the most important thing on the road to equal rights was to change these habits and customs, because they gave an advantage to men in all spheres of life. Only the active attitude of women could change this situation, which is why, this was encouraged on pages of "Ster" by the founder of that magazine.

Keywords: equal rights for women; discrimination; women's rights; voting rights

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INTRODUCTION

The situation of Polish women in the 19th and early 20th centuries was very complex and complicated in many areas. The lack of Polish statehood at the time did not facilitate the pursuit of women's rights to be equal with those of men. The most important thing for Poles in general and for most Polish women at that time was Poland's independence, not women's rights. Legal conditions provided different opportunities for women to participate in public life depending on where they lived. At the beginning of the 20th century, despite many adversities, the issues of equal rights for women and the healing of Polish society in terms of morals, ethics and customs became a key issue for many feminist activists. One of those most active was Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit, called by her fellow members of the movement the "Commander", "Fighter", "Helmswoman", leader or even "the Pope" (e.g. by Cecylia Walewska or Romana Pachucka).[1] The research thesis is Kuczalska's holistic approach to the issue of equal rights for women. The paper aims to show that Kuczalska's view on equality did not focus solely on advocating women's suffrage, but also covered many more issues, from legal change to the evolution of women's self-awareness and their social role.

In order to present this issue, it is necessary first to outline the profile of this activist, because her life in a sense reflects the problems of women she wanted to solve. Kuczalska was born in 1857 in a Polish gentry family. Her later activity was influenced by Ewelina's mother, née Jastrzębiec-Porczyńska, who was closely associated with "Entuzjastki" (the first Polish group of feminists).[2] She instilled in her daughter her passion for learning and interest in social problems. After her father's bankruptcy and death, the situation of the family changed drastically. The mother, together with her two daughters, moved to Warsaw. In 1879, Paulina married Stanisław Reinschmit, a clerk in Landowner's Credit Society (Pol. Towarzystwo Kredytowe Ziemskie), but the marriage proved to be unhappy.[3] The fruit of this union was a son, Leon, who later became a columnist. Once the spouses split up, Leon was raised by his father (according to A. Zawiszewska, the spouses did not live together, but there is no evidence of divorce or legal separation). Kuczal-

[1] A. Górnicka-Boratyńska, *Stańmy się sobą. Cztery projekty emancypacji (1863–1939)*, Warszawa 2015, p. 97. For more details, see A. Zawiszewska, *„Ster" pod redakcją Pauliny Kuczalskiej-Reinschmit Lwów 1895–1897 (z antologią i bibliografią zawartości)*, Szczecin 2018; A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc (eds.), *Kobieta i społeczeństwo na ziemiach polskich XIX w.*, Warszawa 1990; eidem, *Kobieta i edukacja na ziemiach polskich XIX i XX w.*, Warszawa 1993; eidem, *Równe prawa i nierówne szanse. Kobiety w Polsce międzywojennej*, Warszawa 2000; A. Górnicka-Boratyńska, *„Chcemy całego życia". Antologia polskich tekstów feministycznych z lat 1870–1939*, Warszawa 1999.

[2] J. Hulewicz, *Kuczalska-Reinschmit Paulina (1859–1921)*, [in:] *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 16, part 1, Wrocław 1971, p. 69.

[3] *Ibidem*.

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ska sold the remaining part of her property and left for Geneva (1885–1887), and then Brussels (1887–1889), where she studied exact sciences. During her studies, she came across feminist movement slogans and activities. Upon returning home, she became actively involved in the women's movement. She founded the first international women's organization in Poland called the Union (Pol. Unia). It was a conspiratorial organization.[4] Later, other women's organizations were also established with her involvement, including Women's Labour Market (Pol. Bazar Pracy Kobiet), the Social Committee at the Charity Society (Pol. Komitet Społeczny przy Towarzystwie Dobroczynności). She was also one of the co-founders of Association for the Equal Rights of Polish Women (Pol. Związek Równouprawnienia Kobiet Polskich), legalized in 1907. Starting from 1881, she was also a journalist on a regular basis. Her debut was in "Echo", and thereafter she used to write for "Przegląd Tygodniowy", "Ogniwo", "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" or "Kurier Warszawski".[5]

During her stay in Lwów in 1895–1897, she began publishing her first periodical, titled "Ster".[6] Kuczalska knew the history of women's movement, she was interested in current international developments in this regard. From 1904 onwards, she focused more on political issues and the question of equality. She started to publish the magazine "Ster" in Warsaw, the content of which differed from that of "Ster" published in Lwów.[7] "Ster" took on a more bellicose nature, focusing on gender equality and women's emancipation. The magazine was a very important element in the struggle for equality. The Warsaw-published "Ster" addressed the issues of women's rights, but it had almost no political content. It must be emphasised that it was also not affiliated with any political party. This was probably due to the fact that "Ster" and the community linked to it were under regular surveillance by the political police.[8] Kuczalska was very cautious and some feminists criticised this attitude.[9] She argued that the women's organisation founded by her could not trust parties that only supported women's movements for their own ends. It used to appear, however, that political organisations were quick to move away from the foundations on which the idea of gender equality, i.e. the slogan "no gender difference", was based.

"Ster" was called a "porte-parole of women's equality" and was first a monthly magazine, and only from 1911 onwards a biweekly.[10] Reports on the activities of the Association, the texts of papers delivered at meetings organised within the Associa-

[4] *Ibidem*.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 70.

[6] An analysis and compilation of works by Kuczalska-Reinschmit from the period of publishing "Ster" in Lwów are contained in A. Zawiszewska, *op. cit*.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 23. The author stresses that Kuczalska's thought was transforming. This is clearly seen when we consider, e.g., the content of Lwów and Warsaw editions of "Ster".

[8] M. Gawin, *Spór o równouprawnienie kobiet (1864–1919)*, Warszawa 2015, p. 150.

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 149.

[10] "Ster" 1907–1914.

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tion, and finally the Association's opinions on current issues were regularly published[11] in "Ster". Until 1910, the magazine was headed by Kuczalska-Reinschmit, but she had to resign due to health problems. Since then, the chief editor function was held by her friend and closest associate Józefa Bojanowska. As R. Pachucka recalls in her diary: "While Kuczalska was the brain of Polish feminism, Bojanowska may be referred to as its heart. When the former made plans, the latter grasped her ideas to make them real".[12] Kuczalska died in 1921. She was buried in Warsaw's Powązki Cemetery. An inscription was engraved on her tomb: "Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit / Chairwoman of the Association for the Equal Rights of Polish Women / Editor of "Ster" / You, who lived for the idea / glory to you", which emphasises her role in the development and activities of the Polish women's movement.[13]

What, according to Kuczalska, was the aim of the reforms towards winning more rights for women? This agenda was intended to bring about a change in the rules governing families in Polish society, which were based on patriarchy. The path to the elimination of these phenomena was carefully outlined by Kuczalska, from legal changes, education, to the very important changes in customary practices. Kuczalska included in the idea of women's equality the entirety of necessary, in her view, social changes. An important step was to strive to eliminate moral duality between men and women. All the proposals put forward by Kuczalska interpenetrate, complement each other, and are intended to implement the idea of equal rights. As C. Walewska wrote: "Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit was first to throw to the public a slogan equating a woman with a man in absolutely all areas of law and political-economic-social life".[14]

DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN

According to Kuczalska, a milestone was certainly the elimination of total dependence on men and obtaining of independence and empowerment by women. The state of inequality primarily resulted from existing legislation.

The lack of equality in civil law approach to men and women can be seen in numerous provisions of the Napoleonic Code[15] (which was in force briefly in the Duchy of Warsaw). Although the French codification declared equality before the law

[11] P. Kuczalska-Reinschmit, *1907 r.*, "Ster" 1907, no. 1, p. 1. Kuczalska wrote about the development of the women's movement. In April 1907, the Association was founded, and in July of that year, the Association for the Equal Rights of Polish Women was registered. See P. eadem, *Zadania ruchu kobiecego w Poznańskim*, "Ster" 1908, no. 3, pp. 108–113.

[12] R. Pachucka, *Pamiętniki z lat 1886–1914*, Wrocław 1958, p. 160.

[13] A. Górnicka-Boratyńska, *Stańmy się sobą…*, p. 97.

[14] C. Walewska, *W walce o równe prawa. Nasze bojownice*, Warszawa 1930, p. 16.

[15] See *Kodeks Napoleona z przypisami. Ksiąg trzy*, Warszawa 1810.

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between men and women, it in fact did not provided women with the same rights as men. The Napoleonic Code provided for the complete subordination of the wife to her husband; in the Polish embodiment of the Code, the inequality between men and married women was further emphasised. The most apparent inequality was in personal relationships between spouses, as well as in property and parenting relationships. The vows to be taken by both spouses obliged them to "be faithful, supportive and helpful", but only the wife was obliged to "follow her husband wherever he goes".[16] A woman without her husband's permission could not appear in court (except in criminal and police cases) and had no capacity to perform acts in law.[17] The wife, even at the time of her husband's sentence, did not have the right to appear in court or enter into any contracts on her own, but had to first obtain permission from the court.[18] The unequal treatment of spouses is also noticeable in the provisions concerning the grounds for divorce and the care of children during and after the cessation of marriage. Adultery as a ground for divorce due to the fault of the husband required that the concubine live together with the spouses in their common home.[19] The children always stayed with the husband during the divorce procedure, unless the wife requested that the children stay with her and the court (tribunal) allowed it.[20] When the ground for divorce was adultery committed by the woman, she would be confined to a house of correction for at least three months.[21] Regarding the property, the wife had no right to manage anything if there was a community of property, but she still remained a co-owner. Even if the spouses had a property separation and the wife owned her property, she could not freely dispose of it without her husband's consent – she was deprived of the ability to buy, sell or pledge her property.[22]

The Napoleonic Code was replaced by the Civil Code of 1825 adopted by the Sejm of the Congress Kingdom of Poland and amended in 1836 by the decree of Tsar Nicholas I on marriage of 1836.[23] It should be noted that the changes did not have the effect of improving women's rights, and the new provisions were even stricter.[24] Similar provisions discriminating against women were also included

[16] Articles 212 and 213 of the Napoleonic Code. For more details, see A. Korzeniewska, J. Słyszewska, *Prawo małżeńskie w Kodeksie Napoleona*, "Studia Prawnoustrojowe" 2004, no. 3, pp. 169–192.

[17] Articles 215 and 216 of the Napoleonic Code.

[18] Article 221 of the Napoleonic Code.

[19] Articles 229 and 230 of the Napoleonic Code.

[20] Article 267 of the Napoleonic Code.

[21] Article 308 of the Napoleonic Code.

[22] Article 217 of the Napoleonic Code.

[23] A. Fastyn, *Problem powstania i charakteru prawa małżeńskiego z 1836 roku*, "Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne" 2012, vol. 2, pp. 193–209.

[24] J. Lisiecka, *Ewolucja czynnego i biernego prawa wyborczego kobiet*, Łódź 2022, p. 98. For more details on the Civil Code and the regulations contained therein that restrict women's rights, see J. Lange, *O prawach kobiety jako żony i matki (według przepisów obowiązujących w Królestwie Polskim)*, Warszawa 1907.

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in other legislations. Prussian law (introduced in the Prussian partition in 1794), provided for the "male predominance in the family".[25] The secondary, non-decisive role of women in marriage was emphasised by the Austrian Civil Code, in force in the Austrian partition since 1811.[26] An example of this phenomenon was a woman adopting not only her spouse's surname but also his social group affiliation. This may have meant lowering the social status of the woman.[27] Women had no parental rights and only the father was entitled to them; he decided on the upbringing of their children, choice of profession for them or their marriage.[28]

In all the partitions, women were treated in a way that did not give them the right to decide about important issues relating to their lives. Coming out from under the wings of their father's decision-making, family heads became dependent on their husband's will. The decision on the choice of the future husband was most often made by the girl's parents (slightly more freedom was given to women coming from, e.g., the spheres of intelligentsia).[29] As mentioned above, it was the husband who had the decisive voice in the marriage on virtually every topic.

This treatment of women, their objectification, was strongly opposed by Kuczalska.[30] She argued: "Young women cannot ask off whom they will live, because by the very nature of our case, the answer must be: off themselves, with their own strength, with the resources of their own selves, which they have the right to enrich with knowledge, work and love of ideals".[31] And she continued: "The right of daughters to personal independence and their emancipation as a natural manifestation in the development of the family should be recognised".[32] She spoke firmly against the patriarchy, and the restrictions imposed on women were due equally to the applicable law and to customs and traditions. That is why it was so important for her to demonstrate and reduce all inequalities between women and men, including in education.

[25] A. Miłoszewska-Kiełbiewska, *Obraz kobiety XX i XXI wieku w wybranych polskich czasopismach i poradnikach dobrego wychowania*, Warszawa 2015 (doctoral dissertation), p. 8.

[26] A. Gawin, *op. cit.*, p. 15 ff.

[27] M. Materniak-Pawłowska, *Status prawny kobiet w wielkich kodyfikacjach cywilnych XIX wieku*, "Studia Prawa Publicznego" 2023, no. 1, p. 56.

[28] [S.], *Mężczyźni i kobiety w Austrii wobec ustaw (odezwa)*, "Ster" 1909, no. 4, pp. 149–150.

[29] For more details, see A. Urbanik-Kopeć, *O małżeństwie nieromantycznym*, Wołowiec 2022.

[30] *Ankiety Związku Równouprawnienia Kobiet*, "Ster" 1907, no. 7, p. 298. In this survey, the Association wanted women to answer the question: Have you ever? When? And under what circumstances have you felt constrained by the limitations of the existing civil law (on the issue of independent residence? education? choice of profession? disposal of property? care of minors, hiring servants?), etc.

[31] P. Kuczalska-Reinschmit*, Młodzież żeńska i sprawa kobieca*, Warszawa 1900, p. 36.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 37.

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DISCRIMINATION IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Restrictions on women's educational opportunities due to the lack of legal options for educational choice and access to schools of all levels was another issue addressed by Kuczalska. To illustrate the problem, example statistics should be mentioned. As of 1882, there were 55% of illiterate women and 42% of illiterate men.[33] It should be noted that different provisions on compulsory education applicable in individual partitioned lands resulted in quite vast diversity. In 1918, there were on average 4.2% of illiterates in the former Prussian partition, 31.7% in the former Congress Kingdom of Poland (while 64.7% in the Eastern Borderlands) and 31.5% in Galicia.[34]

Kuczalska strongly stressed the importance of education. This certainly had to do with the fact that she herself was an educated woman – she studied in Geneva and Brussels. She advocated changing the approach to girls' education. In order to make the changes, she analysed existing obstacles in this area.

She repeatedly pointed out the great difficulties in admission for higher education since, apart from legal and societal obstacles, the problem was the lack of appropriate educational background of girls in contrast to the preparation provided by male high schools. As early as in 1893, Kuczalska proposed changes to the core curriculum of women's schools and its standardization. In "Przegląd Tygodniowy" she argued that the content of education depended on the type of school attended by girls: it was different in schools run by religious orders, other in state-run schools and yet another in private-owned schools. The latter introduce too many subjects, which still do not give the opportunity to properly prepare for higher education. According to Kuczalska, the only solution was to attend extra-curricular courses, which was time-consuming and therefore only a small group of girls did so.[35] In the Kingdom of Poland, girls were mainly educated in girl's private schools, the graduation from which did not allow them to be admitted to Tsarist universities. It was not until the State Duma resolution of 1912 that it was possible to establish eight-year schools.[36]

For the above reasons, one of the primary aims of the Association for the Equal Rights of Polish Women founded by Kuczalska was to "raise the intellectual level

[33] A. Wójtewicz, *Kobiety w przestrzeni dziewiętnastowiecznego społeczeństwa. Rekapitulacja*, "Litteraria Copernicana" 2017, vol. 22(2), p. 113.

[34] As cited in M. Herbst, A. Kaliszewska, *Zabory a edukacja. Początki szkolnictwa na terytorium Polski w kontekście współczesnego zróżnicowania osiągnięć szkolnych*, "Studia Regionalne i Lokalne" 2017, no. 2, p. 17.

[35] P. Kuczalska-Reinschmit, *E pur si muove*, "Przegląd Tygodniowy" 1893, no. 38, p. 405.

[36] S. Walasek, *Szkolnictwo średnie ogólnokształcące na ziemiach polskich w latach 1914–1923*, Wrocław 1996, p. 19.

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(…) among women" by establishing "female or mixed schools".[37] The Association, in line with its stated aims, organised matriculation preparation courses with the curriculum analogous to that applicable in male secondary schools.[38] This was due to the existing restrictions. In the Kingdom of Poland at the turn of the 20th century, only the Flying University (Pol. Uniwersytet Latający) provided women the opportunity of higher education. In 1906, it was registered as Higher Education Courses for Women.[39] Kuczalska advocated the introduction of free widely-available education, co-educational schools and access to higher education for women. However, it was not until 1894, when four women, upon the approval of the authorities of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University, began to study pharmacy at the Jagiellonian University as auditing students, while the first full-fledged female students began their studies in 1900.[40] And in 1909, the University of Warsaw opened its gates to girls by launching the Higher Female Courses. Only after regaining independence by Poland were women allowed to be full-fledged students.[41]

DISCRIMINATION IN POLITICAL RIGHTS

In Kuczalska's opinion, even in 1904, expressing the demands concerning women's rights caused a smile on many faces.[42] It should be noted that already in 1891, the petition to grant active and passive suffrage to women was signed in Lwów by 4,000 people.[43] A conference held in 1906 showed that there were politicians in many political milieux who were in favor of granting women electoral rights.[44] However, given the apolitical nature of the Union for Women's Equality, as mentioned above, this was of little relevance to its activities.

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[37] [R.B.], *Z życia zrzeszonego*, "Ster" 1907, no. 2, p. 122.

[38] "Ster" regularly published notices on courses available to women. For example, see *Kursy naukowe i fachowe dostępne dla kobiet*, "Ster" 1908, no. 7–8, pp. 318–320.

[39] Z. Chyra-Rolicz, *Pionierki w nowych zawodach na początku XX wieku*, [in:] *Kobieta i edukacja na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku. Zbiór studiów*, eds. A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc, Warszawa 1992, pp. 228–229.

[40] J. Kolbuszewska, *Polki na uniwersytetach – trudne początki*, "Sensus Historiae" 2017, no. 1, p. 35.

[41] J. Schiller-Walicka, *Cesarski Uniwersytet Warszawski: między edukacją a polityką 1869–1917*, [in:] *Monumenta Universitatis Varsoviensis 1816–2016*, ed. T. Kizwalter, Warszawa 2016, p. 679.

[42] "In the era of the first rallies and manifestoes in Warsaw in 1904, the mere mention of women's rights still provoked a chuckle, or at best a polite admonition: How can the solemnity of the deliberations at this historic moment be lowered by discussing such an issue!" (P. Kuczalska-Reinschmit, *Wyborcze prawa kobiet*, Warszawa 1907, pp. 22–23).

[43] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[44] *Ibidem*, pp. 22–25.

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Kuczalska stated in her report on the meeting that women's right to legislate stemmed from the fact that women, like men, were subject to statutory laws. She pointed to three factors that, in her opinion, impede the granting of suffrage to women.[45] The first is the threat to the financial interests of various groups and established practices. The second is the concern that granting suffrage to women will have the effect of weakening the clergy. And the last is the lack of public awareness of the activities of women's organisations. Kuczalska used to hold that the concerns mentioned above had no factual basis.[46] That is why the women's movement should be independent. This was also due to the special nature of women's socio-economic interests. Kuczalska noticed the need to separate women from male-dominated institutions. She also was the first to draw such a vision for the organisation and its activities. Obtaining women's suffrage was not the goal of the organisation in itself, but merely a means to the end of achieving the social and civil equality between women with men. It must be noted that women's suffrage was for Kuczalska only one step in the reconstruction of society. The arguments for women's suffrage were considered as an element of freedom, the path to "achieving the social and civil equality between women and men and then further, equal cooperation between them, the creation of a common, better social system".[47] She considered that obtaining these rights would increase the area of freedom in general. From 1910 onwards, the front page of "Ster" contained the motto: "Suffrage is only universal when women can vote".[48]

When encouraging Polish women to fight for electoral rights, Kuczalska gave examples of positive effects of granting suffrage to women in specific states of the United States of America. In Wyoming, after 25 years of women enjoying suffrage, the state parliament issued a proclamation arguing that "every civilized state" should grant voting rights to women.[49] In 1899, the Colorado Parliament also pointed out the public benefits of introducing women's suffrage: "more competent people took up public offices", the electoral system was made better, legislation improved, and "the awareness of political responsibility was raised".[50] Kuczalska believed that politically active women contributed to reducing alcoholism, closing houses of ill repute, introducing the punishment of torture and human trafficking, as well as to changes in the rights of spouses after divorce.[51] Moreover, another positive phenomenon was the increase in women's participation in the struggle for equality, as

[45] Eadem, *Prawa wyborcze kobiet*, "Ster" 1907, no. 1, p. 30.
[46] *Ibidem*, p. 32.
[47] *Ibidem*, pp. 30–31.
[48] *Ibidem*, p. 31.
[49] *Ibidem*, pp. 4–5.
[50] *Ibidem*, p. 5.
[51] *Ibidem*, pp. 6–7.

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well as the reduction in the number of illiterate women and the increase in those who wanted to continue their education.[52]

As a counterpoint to the positive consequences cited above, the Polish reality of the time must be described. More than half of Warsaw's total population did not have voting rights and predominantly were financially and morally dependent on men. In 1882, Warsaw women outnumbered men; there were over 20,000 more of them living in the capital city at the time.[53]

DISCRIMINATION IN THE AREA OF CUSTOMS

Another problem apart from existing laws limiting women's independence were cultural issues. Mainly the double morality of men and women. It was, in Kuczalska's opinion, evidence of gender inequality she repeatedly referred to. She criticised the widespread social acceptance of the existence of two moral norms: strict for women and unrestrained for men.[54] This dualism resulted in the breakdown of family ties, infidelity and prostitution. Kuczalska strongly opposed any moral inequality between men and women. She held that "the only (…) means for the comprehensive development of women's individuality is (…) to gain equality of women as human beings in their own right".[55] It must be borne in mind that the reason for leaving her husband was his "double morality".[56] The issue of morality of men and women is very prominent in Kuczalska's reflections. According to Kuczalska, women should of course be highly ethical, but they will be so if they are active and interested in the world around them. She encouraged all girls to think thoroughly about what they wanted to do with their lives, taking into account their "passions and abilities".[57] Going further, she also pointed to the possibility of undertaking specialised jobs by intelligentsia women, e.g. office work.[58] She opposed servant work of wife as a solution to the problems of high prices and lack of hired servants if the man "could not afford a lady for representation and entertainment".[59]

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[52] *Ibidem*, p. 7.

[53] A. Wójtewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

[54] M. Gawin, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

[55] P. Kuczalska-Reinschmit, *Współzależne dążenia*, "Czystość" 1907, no. 2, p. 20.

[56] A. Zawiszewska, *op. cit.*, p. 57. Kuczalska was infected by her husband with a sexually transmitted disease and lost an eye as a result. It must be added that she was ailing all her life, she suffered from asthma from an early age.

[57] P. Kuczalska-Reinschmit, *Co robić po skończeniu pensji? Słowo wstępne*, "Ster" 1913, no. 12–13, p. 2.

[58] Eadem, *Żona czy służebnica rodziny?*, "Ster" 1913, no. 3, pp. 1–2.

[59] *Ibidem*.

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CONCLUSIONS

Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit had undoubtedly enormous merits in paving the road to equality by addressing difficult topics at that time. As a representative of feminism, she followed the model of reforms introduced in other countries of the world. Kuczalska realised that only a comprehensive reconstruction would bring about changes in women's lives and rights. She encouraged women, regardless of their social background, to change their perceptions of themselves and then their approach to marriage, education and work, which was shown above. All this took place in the unprecedented realities of the desire to rebuild an independent Polish state. The strength of the women's movement at the time is undeniably evidenced by the fact that immediately after Poland regained its independence in 1918, Polish women were granted the right to vote "without gender difference"[60] on 28 November. It was only from this moment on that women were able to participate actively in changes and counter legal, cultural and moral inequality. The means (i.e. suffrage) to achieve the objective of obtaining equal rights had been obtained. Nine female Sejm deputies were elected to the Legislative Sejm in 1919. Women could start struggling directly in parliament for changing laws that discriminated against them in so many areas of their lives. The Polish Constitution of March 1921 recognised the equality of women in social and political life.[61] However, this was only a step in the journey towards equality for women, which is still underway.

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[60] Article 1 of the Decree on the election ordinance to the Legislative Sejm (Journals of Laws 1918, no. 18, item 46) read as follows: "A voter for the Sejm is every citizen of the State, regardless of gender, who has attained the age of 21 by the date of the announcement of the election".

[61] Article 96 of the Act of 17 March 1921 – Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Journals of Laws 1921, no. 44, item 267) stated that "all citizens are equal before the law", and Articles 12 and 13 granted active and passive suffrage to all citizens without distinction between genders.

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ABSTRAKT

W artykule pokazano drogę do równouprawnienia nakreśloną przez Paulinę Kuczalską-Reinschmit, która byłą jedną z najbardziej znanych feministek tamtego okresu (była redaktor naczelną czasopisma „Ster" i jedną z założycielek Związku Równouprawnienia Kobiet Polskich). Prawa wyborcze stanowiły dla niej tylko środek do osiągnięcia celu przez kobiety, czyli równouprawnienia. W tekście analizie poddano przepisy Kodeksu Napoleona, które odbierały kobietom prawo do samostanowienia, niezależności i autonomii. Przełom XIX i XX wieku to także edukacyjna przepaść pomiędzy możliwościami dostępu do wykształcenia na takim samym poziomie, co mężczyźni. Kolejny problem, który poruszony został w artykule, to przyzwyczajenia i obyczaje. Zdaniem Kuczalskiej najważniejsza na drodze do równych praw była ich zmiana, ponieważ dawały one przewagę mężczyznom we wszystkich dziedzinach życia. Jedynie aktywna działalność kobiet mogła zmienić ten stan, dlatego do tego na łamach m.in. warszawskiego „Steru" namawiała jego założycielka.

Słowa kluczowe: równouprawnienie kobiet; dyskryminacja; prawa kobiet; prawa wyborcze

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