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**BIOPOLITICS AND (NON-)MODERNITY.  
POPULATION MICRO-POLICY,  
EXPERT KNOWLEDGE AND FAMILY  
IN LATE-COMMUNIST POLAND**

**Abstract**

This article seeks to investigate the problem of modernity in post-war communist Poland (People's Republic of Poland, Pol.: *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) through the prism of concepts and ideas of model family and possibilities of shaping it, as promoted in the expert discourse and guidance practices. On the interpretation level, it is important to refer to modern – that is, rational and expert knowledge-propelled – social control methods, strictly connected with the concepts or ideas of modern society. The crucial aspect is the tension between biopolitics understood in terms of actions and strategies of modern dictatorship devised to control a population and the concepts of modernity that appeared in expert discourses in the context of, *i.a.*, decreasing natality, modern birth control methods or practices related to maternity/paternity. Analysed are experts' opinions proving dominant in the discourse, including the arguments put forth at sessions of the Family Council and the Planned Parenthood Association.

**Keywords:** biopolitics, modernisation, pro-natalistic policy, People's Republic of Poland, history of family

I  
INTRODUCTION

A spirited debate on the demographic dimensions of the development of Polish society and the related threats and opportunities ran through the Polish mass media beginning with the early 1970s. Experts proposed their most diverse, oftentimes extremely different stances; however, opinions advocating the need to resume a proactive policy in support of reproductiveness and development of the country's 'population potential' prevailed:

Juvenility in the streets of our cities, young people literally storming the tertiary schools and workplaces, and the long years young couples have to wait to get a place to live – all virtually prevent the average citizen from cracking a thought that, as the case is with a number of other countries, the proportion of children in the society has decreased and the Polish society's demography has rather poor prospects for the future. This is the knowledge of experts and of those willing to know. The demographic data for the recent years and the procreative attitudes among young mothers tell us that the youthfulness of our society, so strongly outstanding, may quickly pass away and our streets will gradually be filled with maturity and senility. This is of concern not only for demographers, politicians, pedagogues and clergymen: it instils sadness to anyone who is enamoured of the street, breathing with life and youthfulness.<sup>1</sup>

Among the many utterances so neutral and (as indicated by the above quote) evidencing a fear of depopulation, published at the time by periodicals such as *Słowo Powszechne*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, or *Perspektywy*,<sup>2</sup> the opinion of Zbigniew Smoliński, who was enthusiastic about the social transformation then taking place in Poland, stood out. In his popularising articles, interviews and expert studies published in specialist periodicals (namely, *Studia Demograficzne* and *Wiadomości Statystyczne*), he assuaged the mounting worries by indicating that Poland has entered the area of *optimal reproduction*, the fertility of Polish families recorded those days at 2.2–2.3 children would ensure increasing peopling of the country at least to the year 2000.<sup>3</sup> In Smoliński's opinion, all the phenomena noticeable in Poland primarily attested the progressing modernisation: “the point is to quit a natural fertility

<sup>1</sup> Leon Dyczewski, *Rodzina polska i kierunki jej przemian* (Warszawa, 1981), 112.

<sup>2</sup> Warsaw, Central Archives of Modern Records (*Archiwum Akt Nowych* [hereinafter: AAN]), Press clippings of the Centre for Documentation and Programme Collections, TVP SA [Polish Television], 21/4, [section:] ‘Population’, incl. (*i.a.*): Edward Rosset, ‘O perspektywiczną politykę ludnościową’, *Perspektywy* (24 Dec. 1971); ‘Dlaczego liczba ludności Polski musi rosnać? Konferencja Demograficzna w Oddziale Stow. PAX we Wrocławiu’, ed. by Krystyna Drozd, *Słowo Powszechne* (15 June 1972); ‘Lata 1973–1978 zdecydują o przyszłości Polski. Rozmowa z doc. dr. Stefanem Kurowskim’, *Kierunki* (10 Dec. 1972); Jan Dangel, ‘Konieczność raportu’, *Słowo Powszechne* (27 Nov. 1973); ‘Portret statystycznego Polaka’, *Trybuna Ludu* (4–5 Jan. 1975); Krystyna Drozd, ‘Dziś lepiej, ale jutro’, *Słowo Powszechne* (11–12 Dec. 1976).

<sup>3</sup> Zbigniew Smoliński, ‘Reprodukcja ludności w świetle postaw prokreacyjnych nowożeńców’, *Studia demograficzne*, lxi–lxii, 3–4 (1980), 133.

in favour of the rational one". Natural fertility, with the resulting multi-children families, "implied primitive conditions of living, a low civilisation and cultural standard, almost complete lack of medical care, low sanitary and sexual culture, undereducation, and a procreative mentality and lifestyle shaped in such conditions".<sup>4</sup> "The changes that have taken place in this respect are an objective and irreversible process, testifying to the fact that Poland now ranks among the developed countries as far as population relations are concerned."<sup>5</sup>

The idea of modernity suggested by this demography and female fertility expert can be regarded as universal to the European reality of the time. Smoliński equated modernity primarily with knowledge-based civilisation, with special focus on medical knowledge and egalitarianisation of the living standard which ensured common access to the achievements of medicine. Such revisited 'attitude toward procreation' can be regarded as one of the important signs of modernity of socialism as a social-political system.

Central to the expert utterances of the period was, most of the time, the Polish family and the issue of how to control it by means other than the demographic potential. This essay seeks to take a closer look at the problem of modernity in the post-war communist Poland through the prism of concepts and ideas of model family and possibilities of shaping it, as promoted in the expert discourse and guidance practices. On the interpretation level, it is important to refer to modern – that is, rational and expert knowledge-propelled – social control methods, strictly connected with the concepts or ideas of modern society. In my view, the crucial aspect is the tension between biopolitics understood in terms of actions and strategies of modern dictatorship devised to control a population and the concepts of modernity that appeared in expert discourses in the context of, *i.a.*, decreasing natality, modern birth control methods or practices related to maternity and paternity. Analysed are experts' opinions proving dominant in the discourse, including the arguments put forth at sessions of the Family Council (*Rada do spraw Rodziny*)<sup>6</sup> and the Planned Parenthood Association

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<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, 'W kierunku nowoczesności', *Trybuna Ludu* (20 Dec. 1977); cf. *idem*, 'Najlepszy jest "złoty środek"', *Trybuna Ludu* (12–13 May 1979).

<sup>5</sup> Smoliński, 'W kierunku nowoczesności'.

<sup>6</sup> Affiliated to the Council of Ministers, the Family Council was set up in 1978 on initiative of Edward Gierek, the then-First Secretary of the Central Committee, Polish United Workers' Party; the body functioned till 1988.

(*Towarzystwo Świadomego Macierzyństwa*, TŚM).<sup>7</sup> The timeframe of the analysis is, on the one hand, based on the ‘expert breakthrough’ of the Gierek decade (December 1970 – September 1980) – the phenomenon that, to my mind, should be an important element in the discussion on modernisation in Poland in the latter half of the twentieth century; on the other hand, it is set within the context of the deepening politico-economic crisis, which is an aspect of interest from the standpoint of modernisation postulates. It needs being emphasised that the debate on the topic of our interest intensified primarily (and expectedly) in the years 1970–81.

## II

### MODERNISATION PROCESSES AND BIOPOLITICS

The notions of ‘modernity’ and ‘modernisation’ seem omnipresent in the period’s discourse. A modern state, modern family, or modern construction industry were among the fixed elements of a common idea of the world and vision of the future that reappeared in various contexts of the public debate in the People’s Republic of Poland.<sup>8</sup> However, the present considerations ought to take into account also the concept of communist regimes as ‘modern dictatorships’. Although communism as such is often regarded in terms other than a ‘modern regime’ and named, after Johann P. Arnson, an ‘anti-modern’ or pseudo-modern formation, an incarnation of retardedness or economic/social regress(ion), it has to be accepted that the postulate of communist ideology was originally rooted in the postulate of modernity.<sup>9</sup> No systematic considerations in this particular area

<sup>7</sup> The Planned Parenthood Association (established 1957; 1971–8: as the Polish Society for Family Planning; since 1979: Society for Family Development) was an organisation composed of physicians and social/political activists, which offered family counselling as well as gynaecological and obstetrics services. In its early years, the Association consciously built upon the heritage of pre-war social organisations propagating birth control: Warsaw-based League for the Reform of Mores and Morals and Cracow-based Planned Parenthood Association.

<sup>8</sup> Section II and III hereof refer, *i.a.*, to the findings and reflexions on ‘modernisation’ and the notion of ‘modern family’ proposed in my study entitled *Rodzina, tabu i komunizm w Polsce, 1956–1989* [Family, taboo, and communism in Poland, 1956–89] (Kraków, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Johann P. Arnson, ‘Communism and Modernity’, *Daedalus*, cxxix, 1 (2000), 61–90.

have yet been proposed with respect to post-war Poland (except for Wojciech Musiał's book which, however, focuses on the economic dimension of modernisation – this aspect being of secondary importance in the context of the issues in question<sup>10</sup>).

In my opinion the notion of 'modern dictatorship', introduced into the historiographical vocabulary by Jürgen Kocka, seems on-point. Viewed in terms of the conviction that the world is cognisable, ensuing from belief in science and the potential to control nature, rationality is usually regarded as the basic characteristic feature of modernisation. Rationality moreover implies the development of contemporary bureaucracies, that is, methods of administering based upon detailed and clear rules. The catalogue of basic features of modernity lists, necessarily, industrialisation and urbanisation, increased social mobility, and economism – the latter being directly correlated with increased production and consumption.<sup>11</sup> However, Kocka argues, modernity is not, and does not have to be, synonymous of 'democratic', 'progressive', or – in broader terms – 'good'.<sup>12</sup> He thus quits the valuating context of the notion, describable as 'realisation of the idea of progress, the peak of the development of Western civilisation'.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, Kocka reminds us that in the twentieth century modernity was often connected with processes leading to destruction and tragedy. The processes being most frequently associated with modernisation, such as industrialisation or development of education, were not infrequently imposed with use of brutal methods, causing in effect the annihilation of whole social groups. The inadequacy of the employed methods, evident against the attained socio-political effects, renders enormously difficult formulating a definite evaluation of certain phenomena related to modernisation. All the more, then – in Kocka's opinion – it is legitimate to apply the notion in the Eastern Bloc context. A modern nature of a dictatorship, Kocka argues, is primarily based on a bureaucratic administration, modern methods of social control and mobilisation (from propaganda to an extensive supervision and invigilation system),

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<sup>10</sup> Wojciech Musiał, *Modernizacja Polski. Polityki rządowe w latach 1918–2004* (Toruń, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, 34.

<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Kocka, 'The GDR. A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship', in Konrad H. Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-cultural History of the GDR* (New York and Oxford, 1999), 19.

<sup>13</sup> Musiał, *Modernizacja Polski*, 35.

or the leading role of a mass political party. A linkage occurs between modernisation of the state in terms of industrialisation, and a turn toward a knowledge-based social policy, as a broad concept.

In its version carried out by Edward Gierek's team, the modernisation of the state appeared multifaceted. The process, usually identified with a rampant industrialisation, was implemented in parallel with a turn toward a knowledge-based social policy, which in my opinion is describable in terms of 'expert turn'. The leadership team welcomed the cooperation with scientific milieus, making attempts to directly harness them to the mechanisms legitimising the modernisation leap policy.<sup>14</sup> Many a specialist emphasised a beneficial climate for studies in Polish family, which was characteristic of the period; a number of interdepartmental institutions or teams were set up to coordinate the expert research.<sup>15</sup> Financial support provided by the state enabled to start up a centralised family research scheme, run by Zbigniew Tyszka of Poznań.<sup>16</sup> However, in spite of enormously increased interest in these issues, experts close to the central institutions did not always highly respect the research's outcome. Maria Trawińska, member of the Family Council, summarised the trend in severely critical terms, in 1980: "in spite of increased interest in the research amongst sociologists, psychologists, or pedagogues, the development of theoretical research (particularly as far as sociology of family is concerned) proved adequate neither to the theoretical nor practical needs of the social policy".<sup>17</sup>

A structured and extended institutional system was meant to implement the ideas based on the foundation of the sociologists' and

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Daniel Wincenty, 'Socjologia nieposłuszna w PRL? O funkcjonowaniu Zakładu Socjologii Norm i Patologii Społecznej w Instytucie Profilaktyki Społecznej i Resocjalizacji w latach 1972–1976', in Paweł Łuczeczek and Daniel Wincenty (eds.), *Jedna nauka – wiele historii. Dzieje subdyscyplin socjologicznych w Polsce* (Gdańsk, 2010), 36–57.

<sup>15</sup> Józefa Pielkowa, *Rodzina samotnej matki jako środowisko wychowawcze* (Katowice, 1983), 18.

<sup>16</sup> The first programme run by Tyszka in 1976–80 was entitled 'Family in the period of construction of a developed socialist society' and attracted a hundred research scholars from all over the country. The subsequent scheme, 'The condition and transformations of Polish family in 1976–85', was conducted in 1981–5 as a follow-up of its predecessor. The third ('The condition and transformations of contemporary Polish families') encompassed the research done in 1986–90. For more on the team's research output, see Klich-Kluczevska, *Rodzina, tabu i komunizm*.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Trawińska, *Obszary niewiedzy o rodzinie w Polsce* (Warszawa, 1980).

economists' knowledge. What it implied was quitting *ad hoc* interventional action in favour of meeting the concrete soci(et)al purposes, as a basis for the building of a broad welfare state. The development of bureaucracy was other characteristic (and consequent) trait of this vision. In 1972, a Ministry of Labour, Wages and Social Affairs was established, to which the Social Insurance Institution (*Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych*) reported; thus, a bureaucratic system was developed, which became known as 'the state's social administration'.<sup>18</sup> At last, once the resumption of an 'active demographic policy' was trumpeted, a special Governmental Commission for coordination of interdepartmental population policy-related actions was established (in 1974).<sup>19</sup> In such a way motherhood and maternity were inserted into the machinery of modern social control. Population policy was moreover associated with the internal migration policy, with the underlying assumption that population movement ought to be masterminded in a way to make Poles migrate to smaller urban hubs and resolve to set up families with one or, possibly, two children (so-called 'moderate concentration policy').<sup>20</sup>

Modern democratic, as well as authoritarian, political regimes are said to bear a potential of making use of biopolitical mechanisms which, to my mind, constitute – along with modernity – another important context for analysis of the concepts about family in the late-socialist People's Republic. Almost all biopolitics theoreticians admit that the notion, however ambiguous, has carved out a pretty respectable career during the last decade. As Thomas Lemke puts it, the notion of biopolitics

[a] few years ago ... was known only to a limited number of experts, but it is used today in many different disciplines and discourses. Beyond the limited domain of specialists, it is also attracting increasing interest among the general public. The term is used to discuss political asylum policies, as well as the prevention of AIDS and questions of demographic change. ... Some argue strongly that 'biopolitics' is necessarily bound to rational

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<sup>18</sup> Jan Rosner, 'Podmioty polityki społecznej', in Antoni Rajkiewicz (ed.), *Polityka społeczna* (Warszawa, 1975), 66–7.

<sup>19</sup> Mikołaj Latuch, 'Wpływ przeobrażeń demograficzno-społecznych na politykę ludnościową w Polsce Ludowej', in *idem* and Maria Namysłowska (eds.), *Polityka społeczna. Uwarunkowania demograficzne, zadania, potrzeby* (Warszawa, 1980), 67, 70–2.

<sup>20</sup> Kazimierz Dziewoński, 'Problemy ludnościowe w polskim planowaniu regionalnym', in *Polityka społeczna. Uwarunkowania demograficzne*, 103–6.



decision-making and the democratic organization of social life, while others link the term to eugenics and racism. The term figures prominently in texts of the Old Right, but is also used by representatives of the New Left. It is used by both critics and advocates of biotechnological progress, by committed Marxists and unapologetic racists.<sup>21</sup>

I will refer to biopolitics following Michel Foucault's description whereby it is a form of exercising power, a system in which natural sciences, humanities and the normative concepts determine political goals, whereas human life becomes subject to sober assessment.<sup>22</sup> The latter attitude calls for a knowledge that enables management of not individuals but a collective entity – that is, population; such knowledge is primarily offered by statistics and demography, which enables to create various strategies of correcting errors and developing optimal solutions through implementing concrete normative, disciplining, or therapeutic solutions.<sup>23</sup> The previous analyses of biopolitics – for example, the one done in the context of twentieth-century history of Germany – attested to a critical difference between biopolitics practised under democratic and authoritarian conditions. In Dickinson's opinion, as far as interactions between specified social groups and individuals are concerned, politics in democratic circumstances 'lives a life of its own' and becomes subject to alteration – not always to the technocrats' liking. This is how a phenomenon occurs which he describes as 'participative biopolitics', as utterly contrasting with non-modifiable politics of authoritarian countries, controlled from higher-up. This approach has been nuanced by Erik G. Huneke who, in his interesting analysis of family counselling in the communist East Germany, takes advantage of Daphne Hahn's observation that the local authorities gradually departed from a repressive policy, promoting instead the regulation of births on one's own (through access to birth control agents, abortion, and sexological consulting): a 'soft' policy that suggested certain solutions rather than imposed restrictions on solutions. The theory of potential negotiability of biopolitics is, seemingly, closer to Foucault's concept, if one takes into account his conviction that the 'authority' operates not through a negative

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics. An Advanced Introduction*, trans. by Eric F. Trump (New York and London, 2011), 1 ('Introduction').

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 33.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.



repression but rather, through producing 'positive effects'. Thus, it acts by way of inspiration and encouragement, facilitation, offering of possibilities, production of models to follow and of desires in the spaces of everyday realities.<sup>24</sup>

The use of analysis of the biopolitics in post-war communist Poland is advantageous in that it makes us take more note of processes proving common to socio-political transformations taking place in Europe in the latter half of the twentieth century. What it also does is demonstrate the unobvious reasons behind the diminishing role of ideology, at least in terms of political pragmatics, owing to the increasing role of rational knowledge – a 'practical knowledge of life', in this particular case.

### III

#### THE IMAGINED MODERN FAMILY

In 1990, Zbigniew Tyszka thus summarised the fifteen years of research in Polish family:

Family has attracted attention of many, researchers included, as social group and institution of high importance and subjected to violent change. ... The political/constitutional transition, the change in the family legislation, exponential industrialisation and the related urbanisation carried out in a once-typically agricultural country, intensified geographical mobility caused by the industrial and urbanisation change and the shifted eastern, western and northern frontier of this country, massification of female career opportunities, heavily altering the rhythm of everyday life and the arrangement of social positions within the family, and the fast and remarkable evolution of mores-and-morals: all this has caused intensive in-family processes, altering the situation of family in microstructural and macrostructural arrangements as well as in the entire global society, and impacted the models of family life and the family values. The positive changes were accompanied by conflicts and tensions.<sup>25</sup>

Finding the answer to the question of how the Polish family changed through the country's modernisation imposed by the political system

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<sup>24</sup> Ewa Bińczyk, 'Nieklasyczna socjologia medycyny Michela Foucault: praktyki medykalizacji jako praktyki władzy', in Włodzimierz Piątkowski and Anna Titkow (eds.), *W stronę socjologii zdrowia* (Lublin, 2002), 182.

<sup>25</sup> Zbigniew Tyszka, *Ukształtowanie się i rozwój socjologii rodziny w Polsce* (Poznań, 1990), 11.

was the basic task sociologists posed for themselves beginning with the late 1950s. That the country's families changed was a certainty. Did equality of rights, egalitarianisation and democratisation of the relationships spread? Was the patriarchal family replaced by its 'modern' nuclear counterpart? Did the citizens take advantage of the development opportunities offered by the state?<sup>26</sup> A number of studies on urban and rural families in the communist Poland opened with a statement that the change was great and undisputable, some of the descriptions of the change being emotional and striking with optimism.

A transformation of family was thus made part of the modernisation project for Poland – resulting from economic and political changes, on the one hand, and as an autonomous, though not isolated, process of transformation of societal ideas and practices in the private space. That the state ought to ensure the family the right to privacy was basically not subject to doubt.<sup>27</sup> In their analyses of the progress of modernisation, Polish sociologists made use of the methods of the American sociology as far as empirical research into family in industrialised space was concerned. The visible effects of the transformation might thus have included: increased divorce rate, dissemination of birth controls and decreased size of family, diminished authority of husband/father, increase in extramarital sexual contacts, increased numbers of wage-earning married women, greater personal freedom of family members, the state taking over the custodial functions, laicisation of the morals, and a new way of functioning of the household.<sup>28</sup>

It was on this substratum that a peculiar ideal of modern egalitarian Polish family was elaborated: a family that was small, two-generational, where the husband and wife, both working and equal to each other, formed a durable intimate relationship. They consciously brought up

<sup>26</sup> "Promotion only depends upon the individual's aspirations and labour, whilst education and personal qualifications are the indicators of social position"; cf. Barbara Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce* (Warszawa, 1974), 11–12.

<sup>27</sup> As viewed by A. Dodziuk-Lityńska and D. Markowska, the right to privacy was an important element of the modernisation vision. Being a modern state that planned a soci(et)al policy, Poland should have respected the right of its members to privacy; see Anna Dodziuk-Lityńska and Danuta Markowska, *Współczesna rodzina w Polsce* (Warszawa, 1975), 8.

<sup>28</sup> Tyszka, *Ukształtowanie się i rozwój socjologii*, 13; the author refers at this point to William F. Ogburn and Myer F. Nimkoff, *Technology and the Changing Family* (Cambridge, MA, 1955). Z. Tyszka was a scholarship holder in the U.S. in the academic year 1962/3.

and educated their children (usually, two per family) being assisted to this end by public (state-run) care and education facilities. Referring to scholars investigating American urban areas, Renata Siemieńska complemented the pattern with the importance of consumption. Modern consumption eliminated production of goods in the private space and extra-family relations of individual family members.<sup>29</sup> As a model, Polish socialist family was thus nothing particular when seen in the context of the sociological thought of its time. As part of the so-called first modernity, family in European and American countries was meant to be moulded by industry and the state. "It was then that the 'regular (that is, nuclear) family' was shaped, deviations from which were labelled [by experts] as aberrances, if not pathologies."<sup>30</sup>

Most Polish sociological studies carried out in the last two decades of the communist Poland was based on comparisons of the reality against the ideal thus described, which had been developed out of a standardised model of urban intelligentsia family. Thus, the bar was set pretty high – much higher than Poland's complex socio-political and cultural reality, not much prone to such generalisations, could reach. The findings claiming that the nuclear family model proved victorious are particularly doubtful today, also among sociologists. Already then most such generalisations were counterpointed by numerous objections. With the theoretically dominant 'small-sized family', as Barbara Łobodzińska observed, even in urban conditions it was often the case that scarcity of residential facilities or the necessity for the elder generation to care about their offspring's children caused that many a young family continuously resided together with their parents. Among the concrete examples quoted by the scholar, 67 per cent of the polled aged over sixty-five in Piotrków region still lived with their children. This was true not only for farmers (78 per cent) but for white-collar workers as well (55 per cent).<sup>31</sup> A dominant share of three-generational family has also been found by Anna Kotlarska-Michalska or Maria Trawińska (up to 60 per cent). A well-informed conclusion is that most people aspired for a nuclear family but proved to be incapable of fulfilling this model.

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<sup>29</sup> Renata Siemieńska, *Nowe życie w nowym mieście* (Warszawa, 1969), 333–4.

<sup>30</sup> Tomasz Szlendak, 'Interpretacje kryzysu rodziny w socjologii. Między familijnym fundamentalizmem a rewolucją stylów życia', *Studia Socjologiczne*, 4 (2008), 37.

<sup>31</sup> Łobodzińska, *Rodzina w Polsce*, 31.

Family was, moreover, a very important element of the period's models of novel modern city versus rurality, a pair that formed a dichotomic image of the social reality of the time, which in fact was much more complex. Kazimierz Dobrowolski, a leading Polish sociologist at the time, had the most significant role in developing the paradigm. Based on source material dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Dobrowolski had already in the 1930s proposed a description of rural community which in his perception was "small, isolated, illiterate, and homogeneous, with a strongly developed sense of group solidarity". The rural community, he observed, was governed by a conventionalised lifestyle with no room for legislation or intellectual reflexion.<sup>32</sup> For the rural environment, kinship and family is central, the sphere of the sacred dominating over the secular. As emphasised by Izabella Bukraba-Rylska, this was one of the then-prevailing observations whereby traditional culture was archaic and primitive, simple and sustainable. The model of traditional peasant culture was to act as an ideal system where all the products or works, "objects, value systems, sets of social norms and rules of institutional organisation, as well as types of personality characteristic of this particular culture, all form a coherent structure of mutually conditional phenomena and facts; or, at least, detectable in them is a shared permanent pattern: a testimony and expression of their attribution to a certain style".<sup>33</sup>

The model that permeated the thought of Dobrowolski and his circle was the first factor that contributed to an almost complete dominance of expert model observance of the phenomena occurring in Poland, with use of a dichotomous cultural clash perspective: traditional rural vs. modern urban. The historical experience of internal/external migrations, development of popular culture (Franciszek Adamski's research being an exception) or emergence of new hybrid cultures were not taken into account. Added to that was anti-ruralism, based on a conviction that "rural environments are the mainstay of conservatism and forces inimical to progress, ... pre-condemned to liquidation". Such a vision of the rural environment meant a schematic and simplified perception of rural community, neglecting any diversity and marginalising

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<sup>32</sup> Izabella Bukraba-Rylska, 'Na styku kultur: kategorie poznawcze i dylematy moralne', *Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne*, iii, 1 (1997), 149.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 150.

the ever-present social mobility. As a result, sociologists developed a fixed, schematic image of the countryside which, as Bukraba-Rylska points out, had in fact never been the case.<sup>34</sup> A 'simplified image of the countryside' – or, rather, a specific static perspective assumed in the analysis of rural environment – was identified by Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, who emphasised that the rural family had been subject to change since the late nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

#### IV POPULATION MICRO-POLICY

##### 'Small-sized healthy family': *resource optimisation and disciplining*

Biopolitical practices are observable with the peculiar barometer of state birth control policies and/or promotion of knowledge on sexuality, as embodied by the Planned Parenthood Association. It was a unique institution among the organisations active in post-war communist Poland, although its history does not formally divert from those of other centrally controlled associations that operated within the framework of censorship-determined public space of the four and a half post-war decades. Dating its tradition to the interwar period, the Association re-entered the public space after the 1956 Thaw as, essentially, an entirely new organisation that had moreover to operate under conditions extremely different from those which had shaped its image twenty-five years before. The functioning of the Association was for quite a long time identified with the post-October '56 anti-natalist policy pursued by the Polish government, which is commonly believed to have begun with the law admitting legal abortion, put into effect as from 7 April 1956. The date marked, in parallel, a symbolic end of the Stalinist policy that promoted fertility and natality under

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<sup>34</sup> For more on this point, see *eadem*, *Służebna i służalcza rola socjologii oraz inne kwestie. Wybór artykułów z lat 2007–2009* (Warszawa, 2009), 7–41.

<sup>35</sup> Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, 'Kobieta w warstwie chłopskiej i przemiany jej pozycji w II połowie XIX i pierwszej połowie XX wieku', in Anna Żarnowska (ed.), *Pamiętnik XV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich, ii: Przemiany społeczne a model rodziny* (Gdańsk, 1995), 33–7; *idem*, 'Intymność i sfera prywatna w życiu codziennym i obyczajach rodziny wiejskiej w XIX i w pierwszej połowie XX wieku', in Dobrochna Kałwa, Adam Walaszek, and Anna Żarnowska (eds.), *Rodzina – prywatność – intymność. Dzieje rodziny polskiej w kontekście europejskim* (Warszawa, 2005), 105–21.

the slogan of rebuilding the Polish population, following its destruction during the war.<sup>36</sup>

According to the extant documents and accounts of activists associated with the Cracow and Poznań branches of the organisation, the latter initially focused on implementing the aforesaid law, with a vast majority of (female) patients reporting at the clinic with an abortion referral. Hence, the Association propagated the awareness of contraception and its use, employing a variety of means to this end: from pamphlets through to educational footages,<sup>37</sup> approaching the campaign as a form of counteracting abortion. Since a broad spectrum of actions aimed at disseminating various contraceptives (pharmacological and mechanical, made by Securitas, a manufacturer name-sponsored by the Association) among Polish women proved inefficient – which is somewhat astonishing today – some radical ideas cropped up to apply special sanctions against those women who tenaciously “resist the use any reasonable prevention method and instead report several times for having an abortion”: for example, by imposing an extra fee for the procedure.<sup>38</sup> Appeals were made on a regular basis to enhance the quality of contraceptive produced at home, launch automatic dispensers offering contraceptives, importation and application of foreign oral contraceptives – particularly in the latter half of the 1960s, when the contraceptive pill was approaching its heyday in the Western markets.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Barbara Klich-Kluczevska, ‘Making up for the losses of war: Reproduction politics in Postwar Poland’, in Ruth Leiserowitz and Maren Röger (eds.), *Women and Men at War: A Gender Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe* (Osnabrück, 2012), 307–28.

<sup>37</sup> The first instructional footage entitled *Jak zapobiegać ciąży?* (How to prevent pregnancy?) was produced on the Association’s commission by the Educational Film Studio (*Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych*) in 1960.

<sup>38</sup> Poznań, State Archives (*Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu* [hereinafter: APP]), Society for Family Development, Branch of Poznań (*Towarzystwo Rozwoju Rodziny Oddział w Poznaniu* [hereinafter: TRR Poznań]) 4809/7, Records of the Provincial Board of TŚM in Poznań, Record of 23 March 1961, 24.

<sup>39</sup> APP, TRR Poznań 4809/7, Records of the Provincial Board of TŚM in Poznań, Arguments proposed for the Second Provincial Convention, 18 Dec. [19]64. For more on dissemination of contraceptives in Poland, see Agata Ignaciuk, ‘Clueless about contraception. The introduction and circulation of the contraceptive pill in state-socialist Poland (1960s–1970s)’, *Medicina nei Secoli. Arte e Scienza / Journal of History of Medicine*, xxvi, 2 (2014), 509–36.

The inclination to penalise women and men who would have neglected the rational regulation of their own fertility was, beside the promotion of contraception, a very characteristic trait of the first, and pretty vital, stage in the Association's development in the 1960s. The conclusions from the First Convention of the Planned Parenthood Association as well as the detailed motions proposed at its Second Convention indicated a variety of ideas of how to control those who ought to be deprived of the right to propagation, and what sanctions to apply with respect to them; in terms of the Foucaultian concept, such persons would have been excluded from the biopolitical body in the name of the socioeconomic benefit of the community. Some of those actions are immediately qualifiable as rooted in the pre-war eugenics tradition. The Association activists, then mainly gynaecologists and midwives, also journalists and directors of State-owned enterprises, made efforts to collaborate in the mid-1960s, for instance, with the Anti-tuberculosis Society for free-of-charge distribution of contraceptives among the patients in order to prevent childbirths in a 'tuberculous environment'. Voluntary sterilisation and certain forms of coerced sterilisation were proposed – the latter "in schizophreniacs, imbeciles or confirmed alcoholics, whenever such individuals already had several children".<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the Association confirmed the project, widely debated on in the press, to introduce compulsory premarital examinations for both prospective spouses.

While in Poznań the focus was primarily on the aforementioned tuberculosis-stricken patients' milieu, the activists in Cracow pointed, as the target of activity in favour of 'rational fertility', to indigent mothers of several children – thus combining the research on new contraceptives carried out under the patronage of the Cracow Medical Academy's First Clinic of Gynaecological Disorders with counteracting excessive natality:

The [female] patients assigned for these examinations are selected from low-income circles, with numerous children; they cannot bear the costs and will themselves be subjected to scientific experiments. Given the calculated value of rendering of such services, a separate subsidy for the Clinic will be a must, so as to get the Clinic's budget balanced. It is envisioned that

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<sup>40</sup> APP, TRR Poznań 4809/7, Records of the Provincial Board of TŚM in Poznań, Arguments proposed for the Second Provincial Convention.



within a half-year period experiments will be carried out on fifty patients, the value of the examination being approx. 400 zł[oty].<sup>41</sup>

It is hard to clearly find today whether actions of this sort did in fact promote the Association as an avant-garde institution in the modern thinking of family – or, just the opposite, earned it opponents.

Endeavours for extending medical care and patronage to entire factory crews were of a similar nature – one example being the attempts made outside Cracow in the summer of 1966, including in the ‘Fablok’ Railway Engine Factory in Chrzanów. As one of the instructors reported, resulting from his strivings, the plant managers

are willing to organise at their place two or three lectures on family planning, for their staff. They want the lectures to be delivered by a physician of our Association. They can supply attendees and cover the expense according to the rules in force. The ‘site preparation’ done, they would like to have a TSM [= Association] Club set up and a gynaecologist invited from our Clinic, who would practise for some time, 1X [= once] in a week, in the local Clinic, in the morning or afternoon hours. On their part, they will provide an appropriately equipped consulting room with a nurse on duty, who could have been trained with the TSM prior to that. Women would be released to go and see a doctor during their working hours. The Works’ Council should like, in one throw, extend the care to women with many children (this would basically include consulting on contraception and, possibly, examination in view of early detection of cancer). The analytical laboratory operating in situ can perform some basic examinations. The Works’ Council is capable of allocating some funding for the purpose (2,000–3,000 zł[oty]).<sup>42</sup>

An example of controlling action was, in turn, an attempt to push through the principle that

a woman enjoying maternity leave receives from the physician a referral for a partial leave, after which she would be obligated to report at her doctor’s to obtain a further certificate entitling her to use the remainder of

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<sup>41</sup> Cracow, National Archives (*Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie* [hereinafter: ANKr]), Society for Family Development (*Towarzystwo Rozwoju Rodziny* [hereinafter: TRR]) 1435/16, Record 14/65, 15 Nov. 1965.

<sup>42</sup> ANKr, TRR 1435/16, Report on the site visit of 24 Aug. 1966 to the Railway Engine Factory in Chrzanów.

the leave, and she would simultaneously receive an appropriate instruction of how to prevent an unwelcome pregnancy.<sup>43</sup>

This was an exemplary attempt at a broader impact on the state's population policy. The proposals to simply reverse the Stalinist large-family propagation system were similar: it was postulated that allowances be abolished from the fifth child on. In contrast to the actions aimed at propagation of contraception, believed to have been pursued by the Association, the ideas to adjust the social policy have remained theoretical – similarly to the eugenics-inspired sterilisation ideas, which (perhaps somewhat exaggeratingly) can be interpreted today as a token of the authorities' mistrust toward that particular expert lobby. From the standpoint of abortion and demographic transformation statistics, the most efficient population-controlling action was the law – that is, the 1956 act, which – in contrast to modern pregnancy prevention methods propagated by the Association – did not introduce medical knowledge into the space of nuptial intimacy (and not only). Hence, it would be rather hard to give evidence in support of Zbigniew Smoliński's optimistic argument that links optimised reproduction on the individual level to the development of a modern sanitary and sexual culture.

### **'Happy nuclear family': corrective and therapeutic action**

and this is really bloodily important, that from what we do it may follow, exactly, how to live. That we're willing to model it up, that we want to show it off, and care much about it; that it is, in principle, a school of societal and political life, across its aspects.

This quotation from a 1977 featured documentary directed by Marcel Łoziński perfectly renders the turn that occurred in the thinking about family in the last two decades of the People's Republic. Uttered by a psychotherapist, these phrases suggest that the operations or procedures that were meant to shape the situation of humans and choices made by them within their closest (family/relatives) circle, appeared much more complex and deeply embedded in theoretical knowledge

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<sup>43</sup> APP, TRR Poznań 4809/7, Records of the Provincial Board of TŚM in Poznań, Arguments proposed for the Second Provincial Convention.

that it might seem. These words moreover confirm the need, as declared by the authorities, to influence the processes in question by intermediation of experts.

The theoretical retreat from a 'small-sized healthy family' marked a basic effect of depopulation threats and a resumption, attested since the late 1960s, of a 'moderate pro-natalist policy' (to use the period's phrase). A drop trend in the natality rates, primarily for educated and working women, was confirmed by the empirical studies done by demographers from academic institutions and the Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*, GUS) in 1966 and 1970.<sup>44</sup> Proactive intervention was moreover provoked by the findings based on the situation observable in the adjacent Soviet Bloc-member countries. The population situation in Czechoslovakia and Hungary was found particularly disturbing. Whereas experts emphasised that, owing to a longer period of influence of the effects of the compensational demographic explosion, Poland's situation was way better than that of Czechoslovakia or East Germany (GDR), where labour shortages appeared on the threshold of the 1970s. However, remedial actions taken in such countries were diligently followed.<sup>45</sup>

A radical turn in the priorities and Edward Gierek's vision of a Poland populated by forty million by the year 2000, proposed as a "task for Polish mothers to do" within the five-year period of 1976–80,<sup>46</sup> somewhat shook the Association activists, although, to my mind, it did not lead to its complete marginalisation. Whilst the organisation had ceased by then to be a player capable of proactively contributing to a natalist policy, and thus raising or acquiring funds

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<sup>44</sup> Kazimierz Romaniuk, 'Konferencja poświęcona współczesnym problemom polityki ludnościowej, 15–18 marca 1972, Jadwisin', *Studia Demograficzne*, xxxii (1973), 117.

<sup>45</sup> Kazimierz Dzienio, Andrzej Józefowicz, and Mikołaj Latuch, 'O przesłankach i programie badań demograficznych oraz polityki ludnościowej w Polsce', *Studia Demograficzne*, xxxii (1973), 99, 108. Economics-oriented actions – such as increase in pecuniary benefits granted for the maternity leave period, child allowances/benefits, one-off childbirth benefit, relieves for families with children, baby layettes, etc. (as e.g. in Czechoslovakia) – were perceived in a positive manner. Administrative instruments, as characteristic e.g. for Romania, were described as inefficient in the longer run.

<sup>46</sup> Mikołaj Latuch, 'Problemy demograficzne w aspekcie ekonomiczno-społecznego rozwoju kraju', in Elżbieta Tomza (ed.), *Rodzina – zakład pracy – osiedle* (Warszawa, 1978), 25.

for a wide propagation of birth control, it did benefit as a milieu that promoted modern methods of 'family treatment':

Further to the numerous articles published in daily and periodic press with respect to demographic forecasts, our activists have to explain at the meetings that the Association deals with no demographic policies but it does focus on the happy family, one for which planning ... is crucial.<sup>47</sup>

Renamed now as the Society for Family Planning, the organisation had thus become, primarily, an integral part of the family counselling system that was described ten years later by Maria Trawińska, sociologist and a leading expert with the Government, as 'life counselling': an activity that was theoretically meant to fulfil the prophylactic function of 'social didacticism', rather than merely offer assistance or care.<sup>48</sup> The activists had also to take into account the incessant competition on the part of the Catholic Church whose family counselling offer, in the Christian morality spirit, was developed well enough for the government-sponsored Family Council to promote it as a model for the secular clinics to follow:

What I have to tell you is that, in an ideal fashion, I've only seen such counselling in just one place in this country, that is, in Niepokalanów, at the Franciscan Friars'. I happened to visit the place this May, with a group of foreigners who wanted to visit the [Fr. Maksymilian] Kolbe museum; at that point we found that a crowd of people had gathered there, families with their children, and so on, and I could see how it works. There is a psychologist, a musicologist, there's everybody and they offer advice in a variety of matters. And you get a glass of tea free, everyone's entitled [to get one]. So, this is the form of operation, I could see it for myself, and those masses of people coming along and writing testify that there's a need for such comprehensive counsel. Can we possibly get [things] rationalised in our place?<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> APP, TRR Poznań 4809/18, Family Planning Clinics 1971–80, Minutes of the Meeting of the Board, Society for Family Planning – Branch of Poznań, 27 Oct. 1970, c. 6.

<sup>48</sup> AAN, Family Council (*Rada do spraw Rodziny* [hereinafter: RdsR]) 1/10, Session of the Presidium of the Family Council. Finally, in the face of the developing crisis, the need to provide help and assistance will prevail, with the counselling system evolving towards rescuing functions rather than modernising ones (in the spirit of socialism) as initially ascribed to it.

<sup>49</sup> AAN, RdsR 1/10, Session of the Presidium of the Family Council, opinion pronounced by Antoni Rajkiewicz.

Indeed, the latter half of the 1960s and the subsequent decade saw in the circle of those involved in propagation of 'Catholic family-related morality' an intensifying mobilisation to act, which was rooted in the belief that the traditional patterns of family life had faded away resulting from Western mass culture that penetrated Poland and, to an equal degree, from actions and negligence of the state whose institutions were accused of propagating liberalised trends in mores and morals. Karol Wojtyła (in office as Pope John Paul II since 1978) developed a scheme to counteract those trends, which he found disturbing. Hence the initiative to set up a Family Ministry Section as a separate entity, which initiated prenuptial preparatory sessions held in the parishes (the couple attended three meetings with the priest and were bound to learn the ethical 'birth control' methods); moreover, the Institute of Family was established (affiliated to the Pontifical Faculty of Theology), whose task was to train specialists to form the ministry's competence base.<sup>50</sup> Similarly as with the Planned Parenthood Association, physicians, obstetricians and nurses became the focal milieu. A special role was assigned in this respect to Wanda Póltawska,<sup>51</sup> who eventually did not prove successful in this particular field. Yet, she heavily contributed to the Kler-Med initiative that was based on inputs from a team of advanced-stage medicine and theology students, who were nicknamed 'Póltawska's soldiers' by some mischievous people in Cracow.

According to an influential representative of the Family Council, the numerous patients visiting the clinics run by Church institutions were substantially indicative of the Church's efficient influence on family, thus serving as a model to follow. Catholic clinics did have at their disposal certain instruments none of their secular counterpart could ever have. In the latter case, anonymity was not ensured, use of a consulting service was not compulsory in view of civil marriage (save for underage marriage candidates), and patients were sometimes charged for the service (100–300 złoty per visit).<sup>52</sup> A holistic approach

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<sup>50</sup> AAN, RdsR 1/10, Session of the Presidium of the Family Council, 294–5.

<sup>51</sup> Doctor of medicine, head of the Institute of Family Theology at the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow (1969–99), longtime co-worker of Karol Wojtyła.

<sup>52</sup> AAN, RdsR 1/10, Session of the Presidium of the Family Council, opinion proposed by Maria Trawińska: "The Laws allow for no anonymous counselling. For a therapy to be appropriate, the school headmaster and the National Council, and

to the patient was, all the same, not unknown to the Society clinics' staff; obtaining advice from a medical specialist – a psychologist or sexologist, having a basic procedure carried out, and ordering a laboratory testing (for instance, cytological), became part of the care standard required by the headquarters for urban hubs hosting the clinics in province (voivodeship) capitals. This was probably the reason why the Cracow-based clinic gave, on average, 35,000 pieces of advice per annum, which was much in excess of the assumed figure (22,000) and made the institution strive for even more spacious premises where to operate.

A holistic approach to the patient – which, in Agnieszka Kościańska's opinion, was characteristic of some leading Polish sexologists closely connected with the Association<sup>53</sup> – was reflected in modern family therapies applied by dedicated premarital and family clinics being set up at the time. A clinic in Poznań, established in 1972, was visited in the latter half of the 1970s by some 700 patients yearly – mainly married couples and those to become husband and wife. The clinic usually attracted patients struggling with sexological problems (such as frigidity or other) as well as problems such as lack of harmony in cohabitation or family animosities based on diverse characters or views regarding children's upbringing. It was customary that the doctors consulted the individual cases with the psychologists on duty; tougher cases were discussed among specialists. From 1976 onwards family and prenuptial counselling in Poznań was predominantly based on various forms of therapy applied by psychologists, psycho-corrective/psychotherapeutic 'talk therapies' among them: "Although calling for considerable effort, the latter form proves to be the most efficient; if spread over a period, it ensures lasting effect."

Encouraged by the positive effects and popularity of the clinic, Poznań doctors launched new forms of activity. In 1977, a method was initiated based on meetings with couples threatened with estrangement, lasting eight to nine hours each and thus called 'marathon [i.e. intensive] therapy'. In parallel, the standard, three or four-hour-long sessions were held once in a week for two to three

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the housing-estate community board have all to be aware, in line with the social care idea".

<sup>53</sup> Agnieszka Kościańska, *Płeć, przyjemność i przemoc. Kształtowanie wiedzy eksperckiej o seksualności w Polsce* (Warszawa, 2014), 39–41.

months.<sup>54</sup> The clinic furthermore employed other typical group techniques such as psychodrama, pantomime, sensitivity training, psychogymnastics, or constructive dispute resolution. The basic goal behind the sessions was “to improve the interpersonal communication between husband and wife, more completely identify one’s own and his/her partner’s needs or expectations, and bring about a change in the customary way of treating each other”.<sup>55</sup>

Antenatal classes or birthing schools was yet another form, worth mentioning at this point, of direct adaptation of knowledge (aspects of obstetric and paediatric knowledge, in this particular case) to everyday social practice. Although the first such schools appeared with the October 1956 Thaw, on initiative of Dr Jadwiga Beaupré, in the 1970s and 1980s they epitomised modernity and were documented on film reels as an almost utopian illustration of the desired style of family life in communist Poland.<sup>56</sup> Numerous attendance of males at Thursday classes in Cracow, broadly commented by the local press, prophesying the coming of an ‘era of fatherhood schools’, contributed to the popularity of such facilities in Poland.<sup>57</sup>

## V CONCLUSION

All the practices described above focused on married couple – an approach reflected also in the numerous sexual education projects: the Planned Parenthood Association activists had endeavoured to introduce aspects of sexual education as part of school curriculum since the 1960s, and this prevailed in their actions in the People’s Republic’s last decade. Again, physicians and experts argued that procreation was ‘the highest species-related and social good’:

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<sup>54</sup> APP, TRR 4809/18, Family Planning Clinics 1971–80, Report on the operations of the Premarital and Family Clinic affiliated to the Provincial Branch of TPR [Family Planning Society] in Poznań for the year 1978’, c. 29.

<sup>55</sup> APP, TRR 4809/18, Family Planning Clinics, 1971–80, Information re. group psychotherapy of married couples conducted at the Premarital and Family Clinic, TPR in Poznań.

<sup>56</sup> *Dojrzwianie do rodziny* and *W szkole rodzenia*, both directed by Zygmunt Skonieczny, 1982.

<sup>57</sup> ANKr, TRR 1435/18, Report of the Board, Society for Family Planning 1975 (1 Jan. to 31 Dec. 1975).



Young people have to be made clear, in the first place, about the fact that matrimony cannot possibly be considered as a means of securing for oneself a monopoly for sexual partnership with the beloved person, but the social and species-specific sense of marriage consists in giving birth to one's offspring and bringing them up as valuable people. The number of children ought to be consciously determined; they ought to come along in a time convenient for their parents, at planned moments.<sup>58</sup>

In parallel, the records under analysis testify to a very interesting mental change that stands out not in a general concept of modern family, which (has) remained relatively durable, but in the recommended and applied means of attaining a utopian ideal – thus, in practices regarded as modern or innovative. In the 1960s, these practices remained deeply rooted in authoritarian natalist practices typical of the former half of the century, while the subsequent decade was marked with a resolute openness to soft methods based on negotiation and cooperation. It has to be kept in mind, though, that in either case remodelling of the family as an important link in the soci(et)al chain was the utmost objective. The sources under analysis, let us emphasise, are still not satisfactory enough to give an answer to a series of important questions. The major one concerns the actual sources of the mental turn, the possible options including a generational change among the experts, intensified transfer of knowledge between the West and the East, and the context of a wider political transition.

trans. *Tristan Korecki*

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

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