

From the Diary of Stanislaw Adler on Janusz Korczak and his Work with Children

Korczak, tall and lean as a perch, with a bald, egg-shaped skull, was then more than sixty. This highly regarded author of the clever books *Koszalki-Opalki* (“Nonsense Talk”), *King Maciuś*, and numerous other novels and stories for children, was known in the areas of Jewish Warsaw as the editor of *Maly Przegląd* (Small Review) a weekly supplement of the daily *Nasz Przegląd*. Korczak’s newspaper differed from all other publications by the fact that his journalists were exclusively children. His editorial policy showed a complete absence of conceit, sentimentalism, or bombast found in the style of a newspaper. Korczak, however, had acquired his greatest fame as director of a colony for children and a home for orphans where he applied educational principles of the highest order. In his orphanage, there was no trace of exhibitionism; character building was of primary importance. Compulsory methods were not permitted. At the time of my visit, Korczak’s establishment was temporarily located on Chlodna Street after expulsion from its previous location. Subsequently, when that section of Chlodna Street was excluded from the ghetto, he transferred his establishment to 16 Sienna Street where resettlement struck it.

An austere order reigned in the Chlodna Street establishment. The children behave without fear and seemed calm and self-possessed. Since there was no room in Korczak’s place for demonstrations I did not expect the children to show off for me, but I witnessed a scene there that has remained deeply engraved in my memory.

Korczak had been reprimanding a certain Szymek or another Jousek, using words full of poetry to express his disappointed hopes in the child. He spoke as one adult to another, and I expected that at any moment he would address the little one as *pan* (Sir). Not once did he raise his voice, and although there was no place for hate or anger in his words, I felt that the little boy who was going through this indescribable torture was being ground to dust. A little later,

the director was surrounded by a group of children who adored him as one could plainly see.

Source: Stanislaw Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto 1940-1943. An Account of a Witness*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 120-121.