

REFORMER OF THE WORLD

to reform ***the world***
is to reform
education



HENRYK GOLDSZMIT /
JANUSZ KORCZAK

Warsaw 1878 – Treblinka 1942

The life and work of Henryk Goldszmit – better known under the pen name of Janusz Korczak – was devoted to the life, fate, and rights of children.

- ▶ a multifaceted figure who experimented in theory and in practice, thereby dispelling stereotypes;
- ▶ a social activist who promoted the idea of children's self-governance in his one-of-a-kind orphanages;
- ▶ an intellectual who fought for children's rights in all of his spheres of activity: he presented his educational concepts in a total of 24 books;
- ▶ a writer who understood the specifics of communicating with children: his children's novels – some of which have been translated into 20 languages – demonstrate his linguistic sensitivity and his ability to adapt a literary genre to a particular content and readership;
- ▶ an effective promoter of ideas who made use of contemporary new media: he created a unique children's newspaper and his own radio program;
- ▶ a man consistent in thought and action: he was devoted to children till the very end, and, rejecting the opportunity to save himself, was murdered in a death camp together with his charges and colleagues from the Orphans' Home.

His achievements – revolutionary at the time – continue to inspire people all over the world.



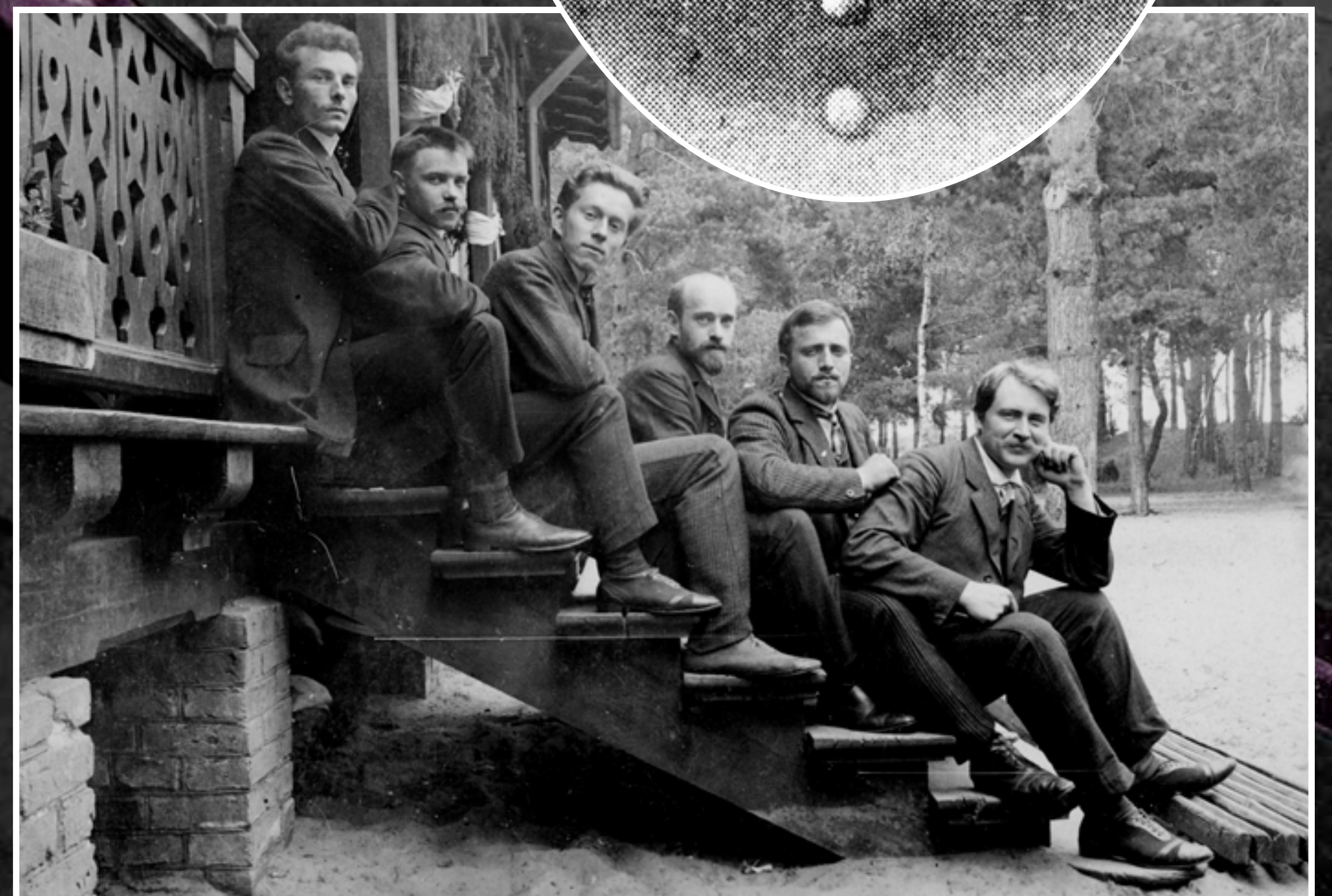
Even though many decades have elapsed since his death, Korczak remains ahead of his time.

Thomas Hammarberg,
Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights



Korczak had a rich personal history:

- ▶ graduate of the Faculty of Medicine at the Imperial Warsaw University;
- ▶ doctor active behind the front line of the Russo-Japanese war – he learnt Chinese from Manchurian children;
- ▶ in 1909 he was arrested by the Russian authorities for his activities in the Polish Cultural Association;
- ▶ during military service in World War I, Korczak worked in children's shelters in the Ukraine;
- ▶ member of the "Sea Star" Masonic Lodge and sympathizer of the Polish Theosophical Society;
- ▶ gave radio broadcasts during the siege of Warsaw in September 1939.



From his early youth on, Korczak combined the theory and the practice of education. He studied medicine and worked as a physician in a children's hospital; he broadened the scope of his knowledge in Switzerland, Berlin, Paris and London. He was also a community worker, a newspaper columnist, a tutor and – last but not least – the director of the Orphans' Home and the co-founder of Our Home.

In both institutions he implemented rules which respected fundamental children's rights – a radical novelty at the time:

- ▶ the elimination of violence;
- ▶ the implementation of transparent rules which applied to both the tutors and their charges;
- ▶ the rights and obligations of children stem from their co-responsibility in the education process

Rather than make over or mould, we want to understand a child and communicate with him or her.

Janusz Korczak



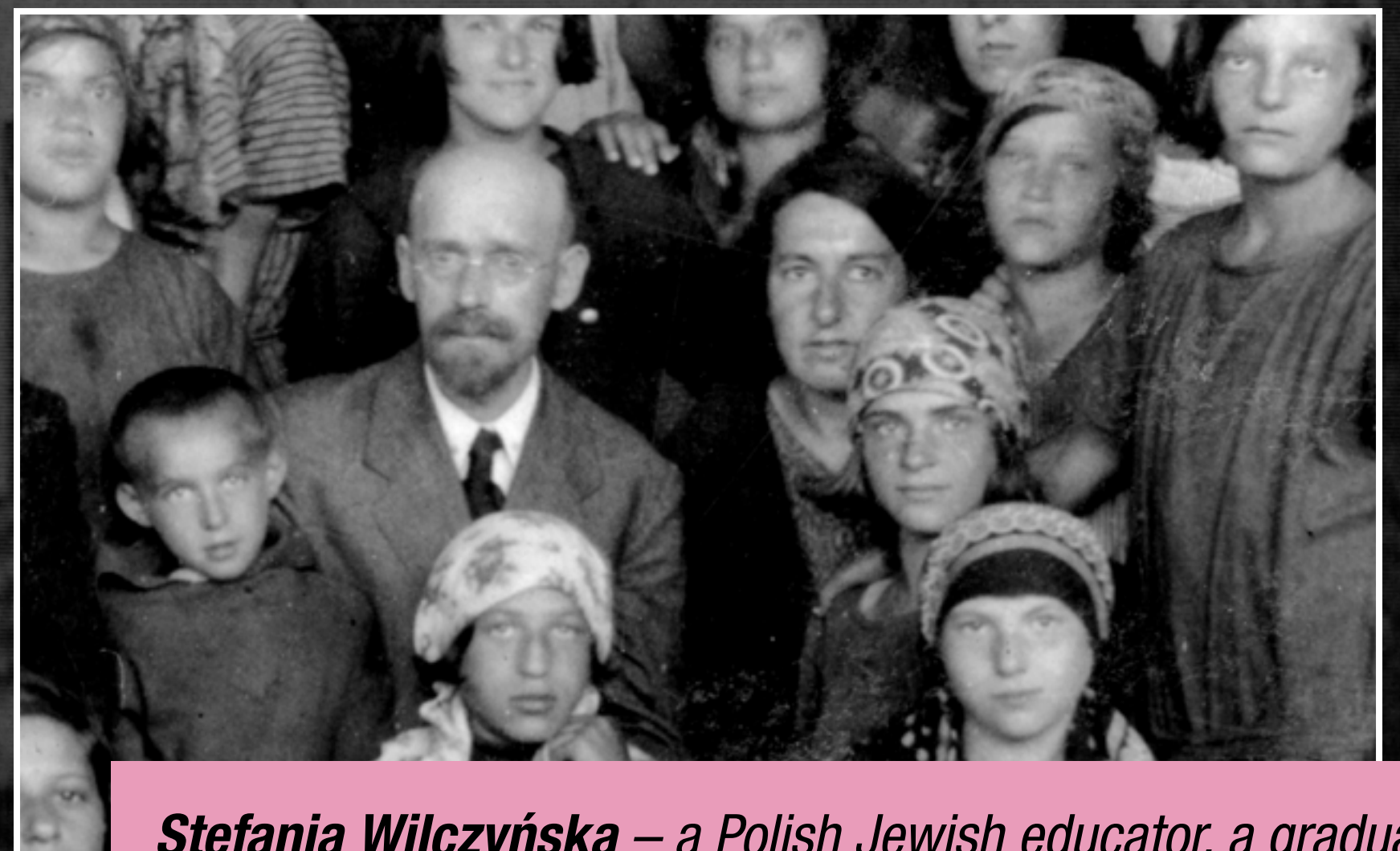
From 1912, Korczak led, with Stefania Wilczyńska, **the Jewish Orphans' Home in Warsaw.**

In 1919, he started what would become a long-term cooperation with Maria Falska and became involved in running **Our Home, an orphanage for Polish children.**

Both communities operated on the same principles of children's self-governance and their inclusion in the day-to-day operations of both institutions. This was a continuous educational experiment which proved that **children can be true partners for adults.**



Maria Falska – a Polish social and independence activist, a pedagogue, and the director of *Our Home*.



Stefania Wilczyńska – a Polish Jewish educator, a graduate of the University of Liege, chief tutor of the *Orphans' Home*.



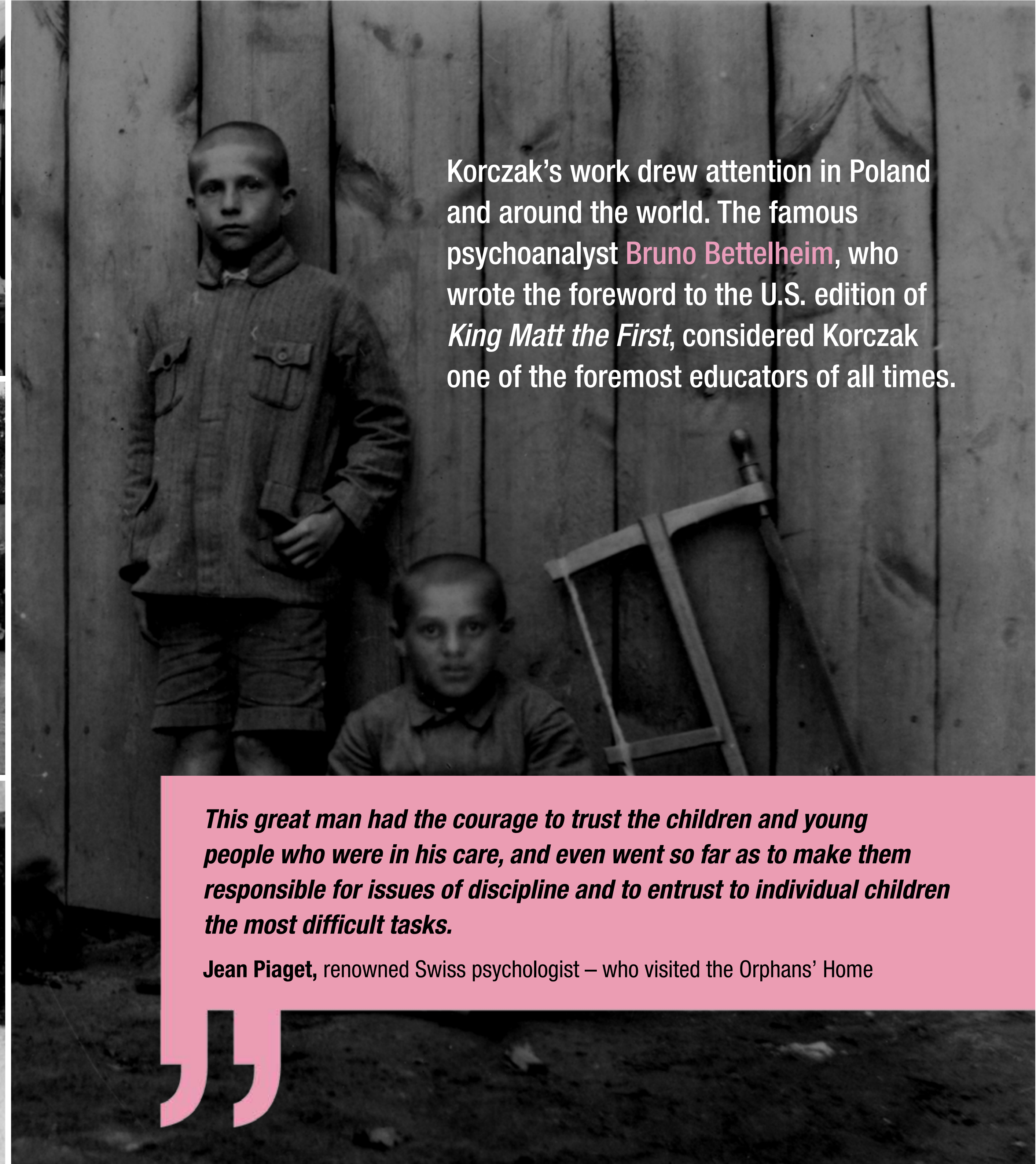
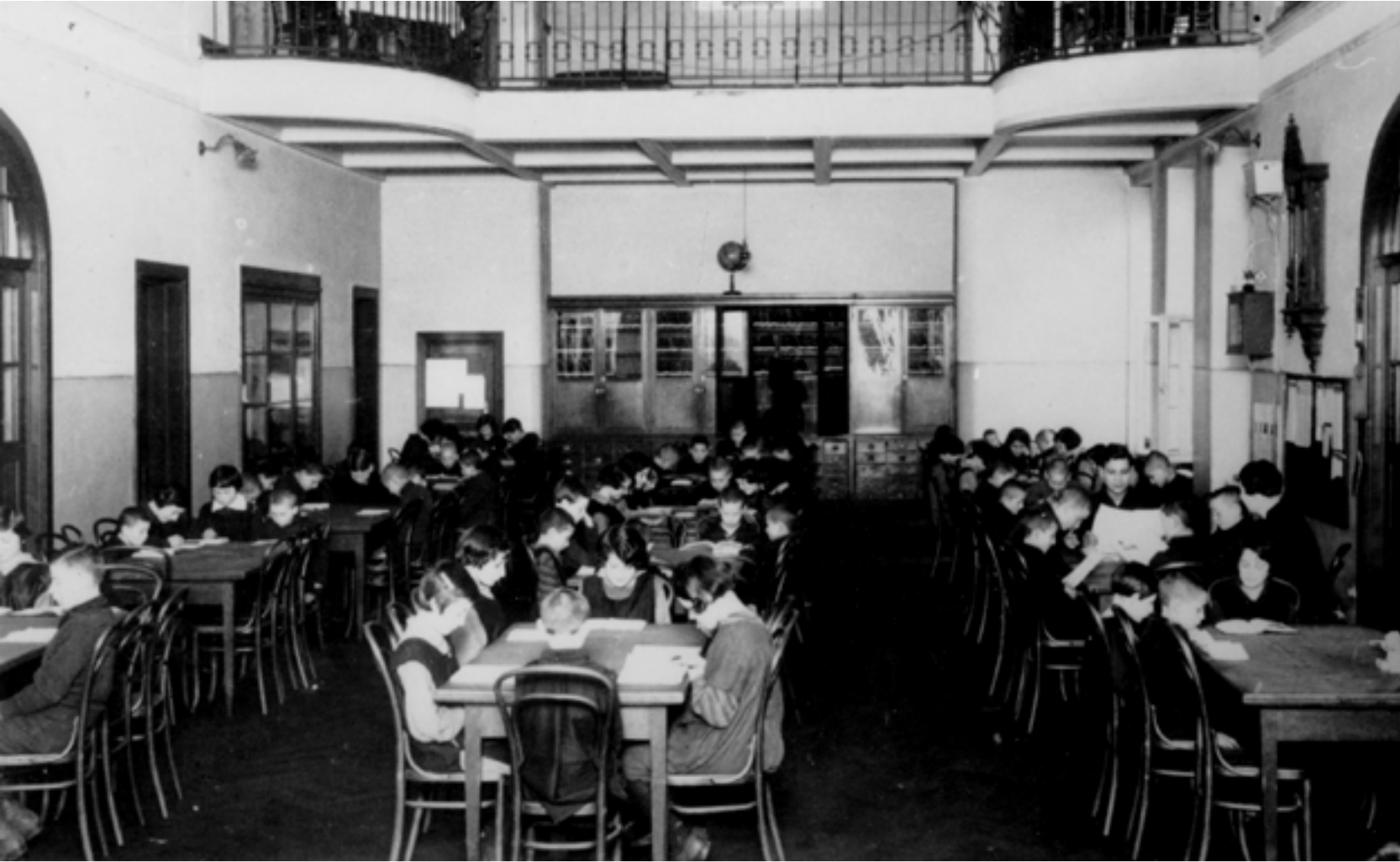
The Children's Court – one of the most important educational institutions introduced by Janusz Korczak. Korczak wrote a code of arbitration which foresaw 99 articles leading to acquittal and only 10 articles leading to sanctions.

The members of the Court were selected by sortition. Children examined the individual cases and had the right to bring charges against their tutors.

The Court may become the nucleus of emancipation, pave the way to a constitution, make unavoidable the proclamation of the Declaration of Children's Rights.

Janusz Korczak






Korczak's work drew attention in Poland and around the world. The famous psychoanalyst **Bruno Bettelheim**, who wrote the foreword to the U.S. edition of *King Matt the First*, considered Korczak one of the foremost educators of all times.

This great man had the courage to trust the children and young people who were in his care, and even went so far as to make them responsible for issues of discipline and to entrust to individual children the most difficult tasks.

Jean Piaget, renowned Swiss psychologist – who visited the Orphans' Home





The innovative principles governing the Orphans' Home and Our Home were the result of Janusz Korczak's revolutionary ideas in the fields of education and psychology. Korczak's pioneering work in Poland fits into the turn-of-the-century "New Education" movement represented by such figures as John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, and Ellen Key – the author of the treatise entitled *The Century of the Child* (1900).

Like all of these figures, Korczak emphasized the need for a dialogue with the child and for treating children as equals.

The child is a rational being. He is well aware of the needs, difficulties, and impediments in his life. Not despotic order, imposed rigor and distrustful control, but tactful understanding, faith in experience, collaboration, and coexistence.

Janusz Korczak



Key concepts of Korczak's theory of education:

- ▶ the rejection of violence – physical, verbal, age-related, or related to hierarchy
- ▶ the educational interaction between adults and children which broadens the definition of classical pedagogy
- ▶ the conviction that a child is a human being to the same degree as an adult
- ▶ the rule whereby the education process must take into account the individual characteristics of each child
- ▶ the belief in the fact that children are best aware of their own needs, aspirations, and emotions – and thus should have the right to have their opinion respected by adults
- ▶ granting the child rights, including the right to respect, the right not to know something, the right to failure, the right to privacy, the right to personal opinion, and the right to property
- ▶ recognizing the process of child development as hard work.




Korczak was **part of an important group of activists** – consisting in particular of pedagogues, physicians, and lawyers – **who saw an urgent need for social change**. They fought for the political and social rights of the groups excluded at the time: workers, women, children, and national minorities (including Jews).

As a social activist, writer, columnist, who worked as a doctor in a Jewish children's and military hospitals, Korczak was **acutely sensitive to the maltreatment of children** – especially those orphaned and impoverished, as well as the ones suffering as a result of problematic family relations.

Were humanity to be divided into adults and children, and life into childhood and adulthood, we would discover that the child occupies a very large part of the world and of life. But preoccupied with our own struggle and our cares, we are incapable of seeing the child, just as we earlier could not see women, peasants, oppressed social groups, and nations.

Janusz Korczak





Korczak advocated children's rights also as a writer and author of pedagogical treatises. Thanks to his literary skill, the difficult truths he conveyed reached a wide audience. His ideas, still applicable today, were expressed mainly in *How to Love a Child* and *The Child's Right to Respect*, and became an integral part of the post-war legislative effort to benefit children.

Poland played a large part in these endeavours – both in drafting the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* in 1959 and in initiating the creation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989.

The importance of respecting children and their opinions was the main message of the Polish writer, doctor and educationalist, Janusz Korczak, whose teachings came to inspire the drafting of the Convention.

Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights



Korczak's best known novel, *King Matt the First*, shows to what extent children's sensitivity, spontaneity, and ingeniousness can change the world – but also how effectively the adult world fights such change.

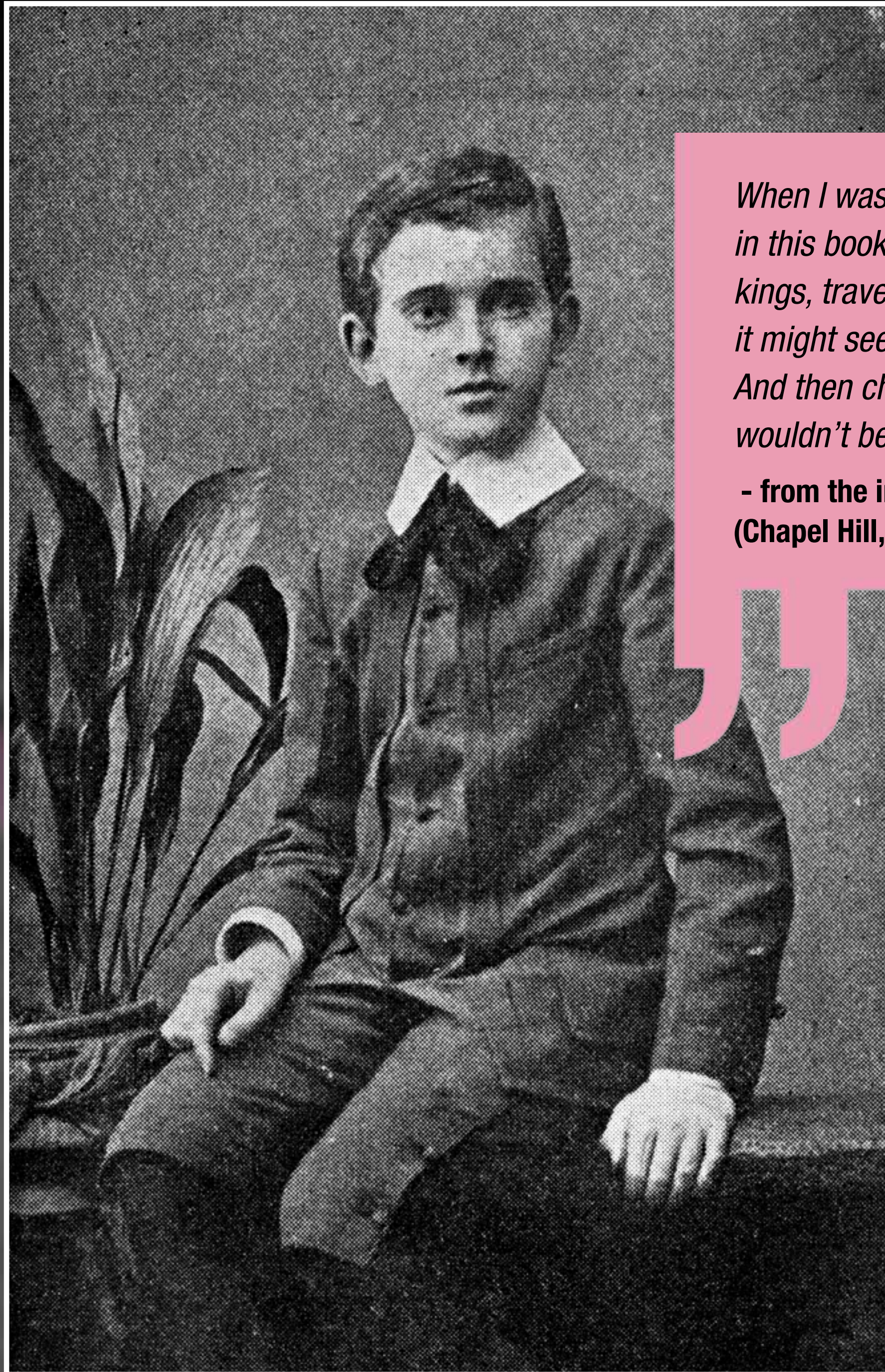
The story of a little boy who, as the ruler - reformer of the world, *attempts to make children and adults equal in their rights* is to a great extent a literary portrayal of Korczak himself.

It has been translated into *more than twenty languages*.

A child learns to live in the world in the same way as he or she learns to read, write, and count at school.

Janusz Korczak





When I was the little boy you see in the photograph, I wanted to do all the things that are in this book. But I forgot to, and now I'm old. (...) I think it's better to show pictures of what kings, travelers, and writers looked like before they grew up and grew old because otherwise it might seem that they knew everything from the start and were never young themselves. And then children will think that they can't be statesmen, travelers, and writers, which wouldn't be true.

**- from the introduction to *King Matt the First*, tr. by Richard Lourie
(Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2004)**



Korczak's innovative methods also involved the use of new media in order to make his ideas popular and to engage children in the life of society. In 1926, he founded *Mały Przegląd* ("The Little Review"), a weekly supplement to a journal for adults. This one-of-a-kind magazine was created by and for children. It covered a variety of subjects ranging from the correspondents' private successes and failures to Poland's and the world's current problems.

A sort of social movement was formed around the review which attracted thousands of readers and many collaborators. *Mały Przegląd* conclusively proved that it is possible, even imperative to collaborate with children and that such collaboration can bring excellent results; that children are full-fledged partners in a dialogue.

There are many adults who write because they have no sense of shame; there are children who have lots of ideas, comments, and observations, but fail to write for lack of courage or motivation. Our journal will encourage young people to write. It will encourage and embolden them.

Janusz Korczak



Korczak understood the importance of the media and used them successfully to popularize his own ideas. In a series of radio programs delivered under the alias “Stary Doktor” (“Old Doctor”), Korczak created his own particular style of addressing the youngest listeners.


He spoke about difficult matters in simple terms. Thanks to his sense of the language and his ability to adjust his register to that of his listeners, his programs enjoyed immense popularity among children as well as adults.



Those short radio chats are a minor hit of the Polish radio. The originality of the approach to the subject is organically combined with the originality of the language, creating a unique program.

m. waga, radio critic



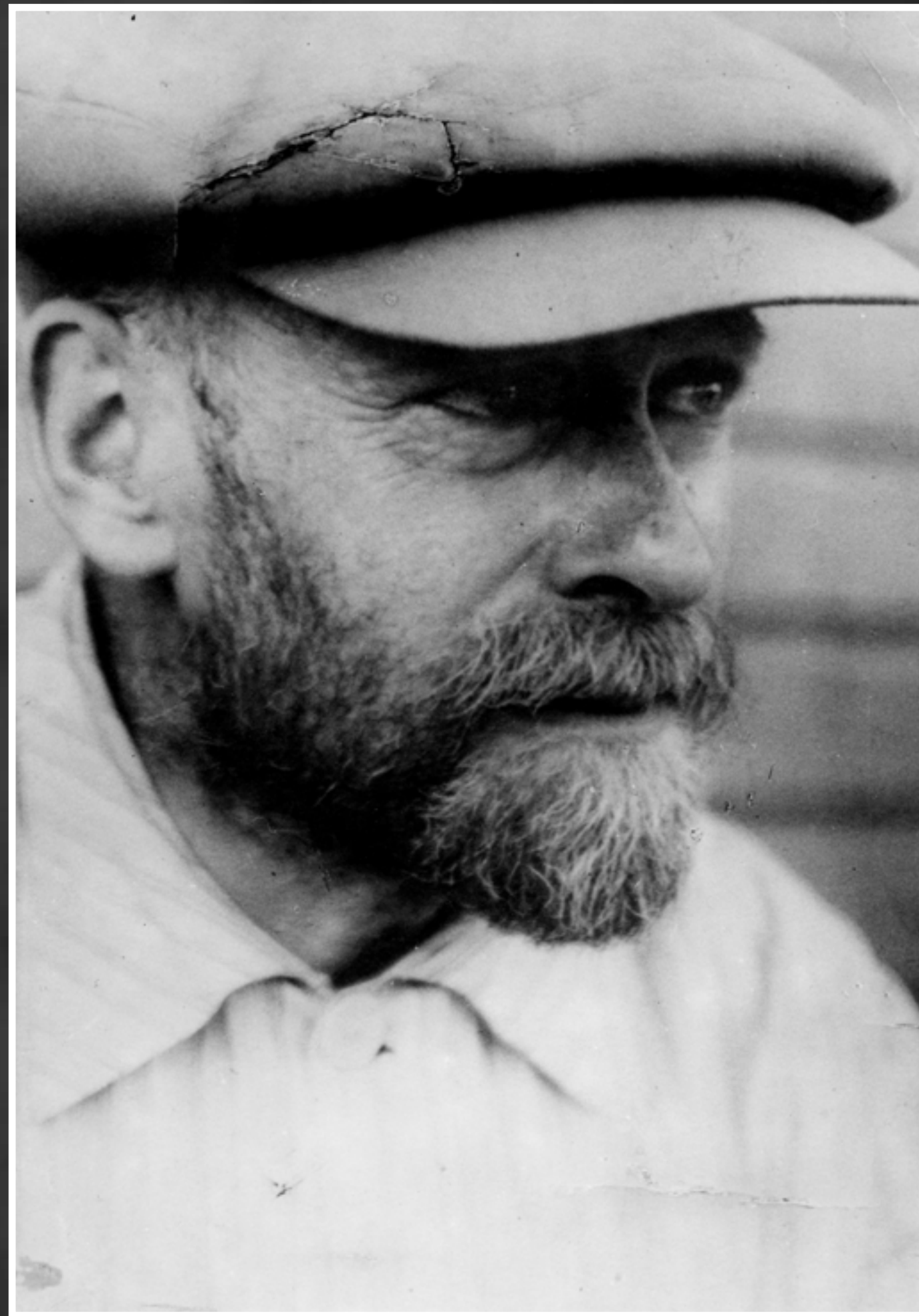


Janusz Korczak lived as he preached. He valued the cohesion of his professional and his private life; the daily adherence to the ideas presented in public was very important to him. Willing to devote his life to serving children, he decided not to have a family of his own. He worked in the Orphans' Home for free, earning his life by writing. He treated children with respect as a medical doctor, educator, and writer.

He wrote, *There are no children – there are people.*

Modest in his views about the universe, deeply devoted to the idea of ethics without sanctions, he reveals to us the mystery of the truly superhuman power of love.

Czesław Miłosz, a Polish poet, the laureate of the Nobel Prize for Literature



Korczak was also cohesive in **his multifaceted sense of national identity.**

He considered himself a Jewish Pole but regarded humanity's universal dimension to be of the greatest importance. That is why he not only lived in the Jewish and the Polish communities, but also combined them in his social and literary oeuvre, writing, working and being active simultaneously in both communities.

In the 1930s, he wanted to move to Palestine, which he had visited twice, but he could not force himself to leave Poland.

He was an officer in the Polish Army. When World War II broke out, Korczak volunteered for active duty but was turned down because of his age.

*The problem of Man somewhat overshadows
the problem of the Jew for me.*

Janusz Korczak



Korczak rejected all offers to leave the closed-off district and to hide outside its borders.

Fragebogen zur erstmaligen Meldung der Heilberufe.

Kwestionariusz dla pierwszego zgłoszenia zawodów leczniczych.

Heilberufe im Sinne dieser Meldung sind: Ärzte, Apotheker, Zahnärzte, Dentisten mit Berechtigung die selbständige
Krankheiten abzugeben; sonstige ärztliche Berufe: Lektoren, Epileptiker, Dermatologen, Nervenärzte, Zahnärztinnen, Hebammen,
Praxis ausüben, Zahntechniker ohne Berechtigung die selbständige Praxis auszuüben, Feldscherer, Hebammen,
Masseur, polsterer, poliermeister, poliermeister, massagisten, massagisten, poliermeister, poliermeister, poliermeister, poliermeister.
Krankenpfleger, Krankenpflegerinnen, Krankenschwestern, Masseure und Massseusen, Sprechstundenhilfen, Labo-
ratorien, Desinfektoren.

Die Fragebogen müssen gewissenhaft und sorgfältig ausgefüllt und deutlich geschrieben werden. Vor der Aus-
füllung sind zunächst sämtliche Fragen zu lesen.

Gesundheitskammer des Distrikts: Warschau

Ihre Adresse (Druckbuch):

Kreishauptmannschaft: Warschau

Merkmal (Druckbuch):

Kreis: Lecan

Art des Heilberufes:

Nachstehende Angaben:

1. Familienname (bei Frauen auch Geburtsname): Goldsmid

2. Vorname (Rufnamen unterstreichen): Henryk

3. Tag (Monat) Tag (Geburtsdatum): 27. 8. 04

4. Praxistelle bzw. Arbeitsstätte:
a) bei selbständigen Heilberufen Praxistätte:
b) bei angestellten Heilberufen Arbeitsstätte (Arbeitgeber, Krankenhaus, Klinik usw.):

5. Heimatanschrift: Krochmalna 92. Dornierstr.

6. Tag, Monat und Jahr der Geburt: 22 VII 1928 (1929?)

7. Sind Sie ledig, verh., verwitwet, geschieden?

Der Ehefrau a) Mädchenname: Wojtyła

b) Geburtsdatum:

8. Zahl und Geburtsjahr der Kinder (die Verstorbenen in Klammern):

1. — 2. — 3. —

9. Religiöses Bekenntnis: Moizessow

10. Staatsangehörigkeit am 1. 9. 1939: Polska.

In early August of 1942, during the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, the children and the staff of the Orphans' Home were murdered in the Nazi German extermination camp in Treblinka.

The Orphans' Home before World War II

The life and work of the Old Doctor continue to inspire many groups all over the world: teachers and students, artists and children's rights activists, as well as the organizations brought together by the **International Janusz Korczak Association** based in Warsaw.

Janusz Korczak's death has become one of the most recognized symbols associated with the annihilation of Polish Jews. Korczak's life and death inspired many films of which the most important is **Korczak** – a 1990 Polish-German production. Agnieszka Holland wrote the screenplay and the film was directed by Andrzej Wajda.

Korczak's archives are kept in the **KORCZAKIANUM** Centre for Documentation and Research – a branch of the Historical Museum of Warsaw – which also carries out research. Parts of the archives can also be found in the **Ghetto Fighters' House Museum** in Israel.



The Orphans' Home nowadays

Mahatma Gandhi

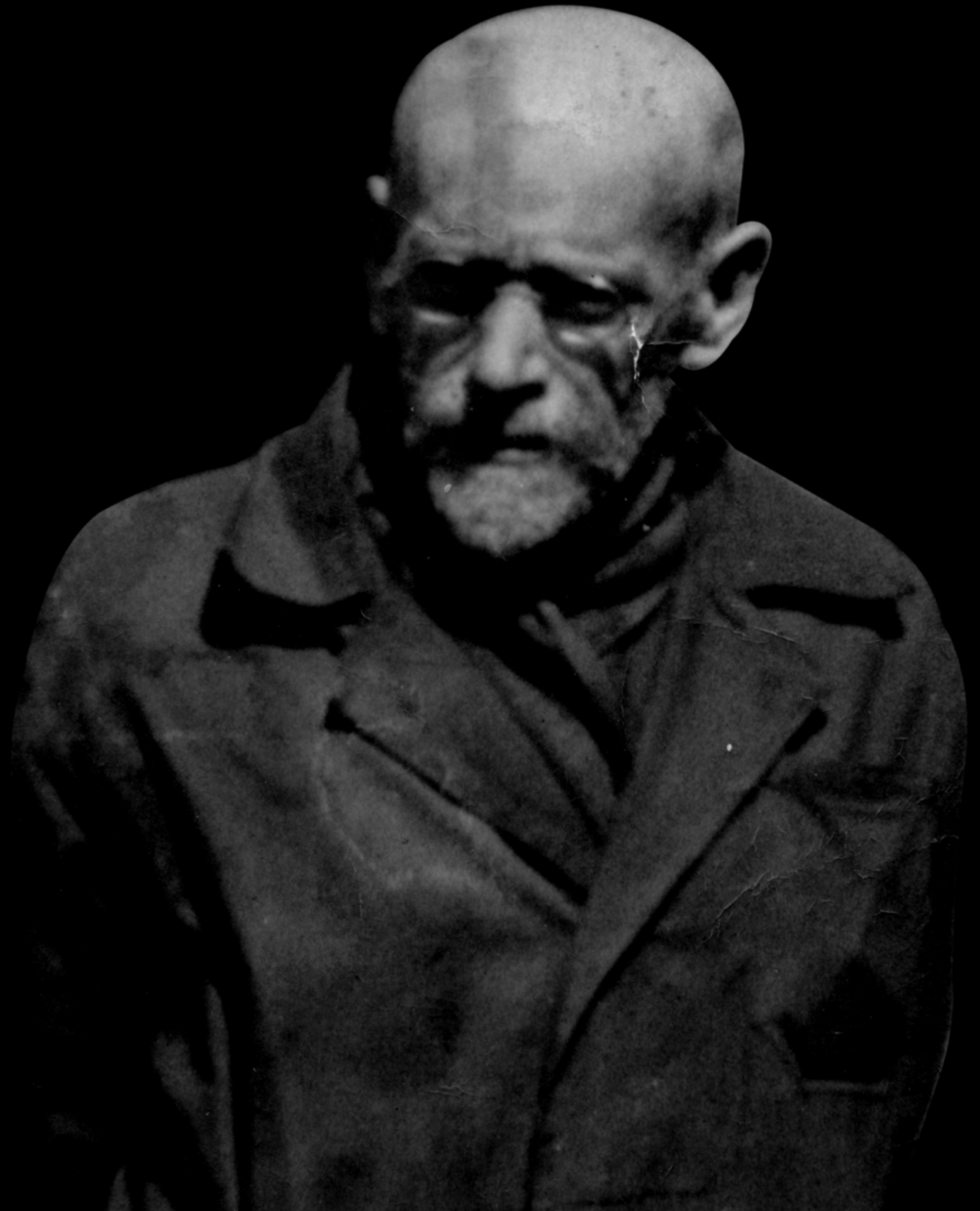
*There are many causes I would die for.
There is not a single cause I would kill for.*

Albert Schweitzer

*A man is ethical only when life,
as such, is sacred to him.*

Janusz Korczak

*I bear no malice toward anyone.
I am unable to do so. I do not know how.*



the world cannot be left as it is



**Presentation commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Poland**

Script idea:

Fundacja Korczakowska

Editors:

Anna Domańska, Elżbieta Frister, Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy MFA

Cooperation:

Polskie Stowarzyszenie im. Janusza Korczaka (Janusz Korczak Polish Association)

Consultation:

Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Badań KORCZAKIANUM – Oddział Muzeum
Historycznego m.st. Warszawy (the KORCZAKIANUM Centre for Documentation
and Research – a branch of the Historical Museum of Warsaw)

Photos made available by Muzeum Historyczne m.st. Warszawy (the Historical
Museum of Warsaw) from the KORCZAKIANUM collection.

The original of the photo in Slide 17 is found in the Ghetto Fighters' House
Museum in Israel.

Janusz Korczak



MUZEUM
HISTORYCZNE
M.ST. WARSZAWY

