

Activities Aimed at Conservation of Animals in Interwar Poland

Marta Jarosz

*Institute of Animal Production, National Research Institute, Office of the Director of Science,
32-083 Balice by Krakow*

The increased awareness of the citizens of the Second Republic of Poland as well as the progress in the field of natural sciences resulted in increased activities and the beginning of organised protection of animals after the First World War. In 1920, the Animal Protection Society, which started its activities in the Russian partition in 1864 and since 1875 it also operated in Krakow, was reactivated. In 1925, the Polish League for Animal Protection was founded. The need for activities in the field of animal protection was an inspiration to found the Polish League of Animals' Friends in Warsaw in 1926, which carried its activities all over the country. The members of the League were very active. The League established a well-known animal healthcare centre at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street in Warsaw and published a monthly entitled *Świat Zwierząt*.

In 1927, a draft bill on the protection of animals was ordered. This project was created with the active participation of delegated members of the PLPZ board with the Codification Committee appointed to create it. A draft submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reforms and the Minister of the Internal Affairs constituted the basis for the Regulation of 22 March 1928 on the protection of animals (Journal of Laws of 1928, No. 36, item 332). The regulation introduced a total ban on tormenting animals, with the penalty of severe punishment: arrest for up to 6 weeks and/or fine of up to 2 thousand PLN. Which is important, the regulation set quite broad limits of the concept of "tormenting animals", and that is why it protected animals in a comprehensive manner. The following activities were asserted as tormenting, among others: using sick, wounded or lame animals for work, beating them on the head, stomach, lower limbs, beating them with hard or sharp objects, overloading of carrying animals, transporting animals in conditions causing their suffering, malicious scaring and teasing, use for experiments causing death, bodily injury or physical pain (with the exception of experiments that are necessary for important scientific research by persons with special permission) as well as all other forms of causing suffering to animals without correspondingly justified reasons. At the International Congress of the Animal Care Society, which took place in Vienna on May 12-17, 1929, the Polish Act on the "Protection of Animals" was considered the most humane of all the regulations passed in this field in other countries. At the end of the session, the Congress passed a resolution to send to Ignacy Mościcki, the President of the Republic of Poland, a letter of recognition for the issue of the law, and the Chairman of the Congress in his final speech expressed the hope that other nations would follow the "... beautiful and noble example that gives them a revived Poland and its noble representation - the Polish League of Animals' Friends in Warsaw."

The second legal act prepared with the active participation of the Society for the Care of Animals, was the Act of 17 April 1936 on slaughter of farm animals in slaughterhouses (Journal of Laws, 1936, No. 29, item 237). In this Act, Articles 1 and 2, respectively, stipulated that "When slaughtered in public and private slaughterhouses, horned cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, horses and other warm-blooded animals should be stunned or otherwise unconscious before the exsanguination" and "It is not allowed to take the animal to the place of slaughter before completing the preparations necessary for the immediate slaughter of the animal." In turn, Article 5 states: "The Minister of Agriculture and Agricultural

Reforms by regulation in the agreement with the Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Enlightenment and the Minister of Internal Affairs shall establish a different manner and conditions for slaughtering animals for the consumption purposes of those groups of people whose religion requires special slaughtering treatments. This regulation limited the amount of slaughter for the above purposes to the actual needs of the above-mentioned groups of the population, so that the whole amount of meat originating from such slaughter (front and rear parts) corresponded to the consumption needs of the relevant population groups and the export needs of that type of meat and its products". Article 6 states: "Whoever violates the provisions of this Act or regulations issued on its basis, is subject to a three-month arrest or a fine up to PLN 3,000 or both penalties applied jointly."

In 1928, the Polish League of Animals' Friends was incorporated into the International Society for the Care of Animals and Vivisection Abatement with the headquarters in Paris. The Polish League of Animals' Friends was also involved, following the model of Animal Protection Societies of other countries, in organising the Animal Protection Day. In Warsaw, on November 10, 1929, the celebrations began with a procession with animals. The owners of horses and carts invited for this day took part in the parade with decorated cabs and carts. Dog owners took part in the march with dogs on a leash, and children from schools and nurseries marched with flags. In cafes and restaurants, a collection was arranged for the needs of the League and the creation of a shelter for homeless animals.

The protection of animals was also propagated in press articles. Maszewska-Knappe (1929) in the article entitled "Bird protection and agriculture", published in the *Drób Polski* magazine, points out that "... the protection of birds all over the world is in a deplorable state, and cruel and thoughtless extermination, especially of certain species of birds, has led to their disappearance in some countries and, further, serious losses in agriculture." The author also attracts attention to the fact that in the fight against cruelty and thoughtlessness, which characterise the general attitude of people to animals, we can often encounter superstitions - "a special manifestation of mental obscurity". Doctor Stanisław Koźmian-Reicher (1928) in his article "Love for animals" states that the attitude of man to an animal is a measure of the culture of society in the same way as it is the relationship of an adult to a child - "Ethical attitude to animals must be taught from the earliest youth to children and only then can we be sure that they will become noble and moral citizens." "... Tormenting animals makes a man a heartless mannequin and making him insensitive, malicious and insolent, and finally, a madman, leads him to the scaffold." Therefore, it is necessary to care for the development of the children souls by teaching them the principle of love for animals.

Postal pigeons held a special position, which despite the invention of the telegraph in the mid-nineteenth century and radio at the beginning of the twentieth century, continued to function as a means of information passing. During World War I, the pigeon was one of the basic means of communication in all the armies. In Poland, due to requisition by the occupant and military order, according to which all postal pigeons were to be slaughtered within 48 hours, so that spying information could not be sent, pigeon breeding was abandoned and during the Bolshevik war in 1918-1920 they were not used by the Polish army. However, after the end of the war, systematic work was started to restore the breeding and development of pigeon training in the country. Postal Pigeon Breeders' Societies were founded. The rapid development of pigeon breeding took place after joining the Upper Silesia to Poland, where the breeders had excellent achievements in this area and excellent results in the training of these birds. In 1924, on the initiative of the Ministry of Military Affairs, a central institution was established to represent the postal pigeon breeding affairs under the name of the Central Society of Postal Pigeons Breeders in Poland with the headquarters in Katowice, then moved to Warsaw and renamed as the Union of Polish Associations of Homing Pigeon Breeders. At the same time, the Ministry of Military Affairs ensured the legal protection and the protection of other authorities by issuing a whole range of resolutions to protect pigeons from theft and export. In April 1925, a law regulating the conditions of breeding pigeons came into force, and in 1927 the Ordinance of the Ministers of Military Affairs, Internal Affairs and Justice was issued as of November 17 "On the implementation of the Act of 2 April 1925 On Postal Pigeons" (Journal of Laws No. 103, item 899). The Minister had the possibility to prohibit breeding or flights in certain areas. Pigeon trading was strictly regulated, sales

and purchase had to be reported to the relevant state administration bodies. The restrictions also concerned the export and import of birds. There was also a ban on the extermination of postal pigeons, including a ban on all the traps or other traps that are dangerous for the movement and flight of postal pigeons, and a ban on holding mobile cages on dovecotes.

The evidence of how much confidence the supreme military authorities entrusted to private pigeon breeders was the fact that Marshal Józef Piłsudski accepted the protectorate over the Union of Polish Associations of Homing Pigeon Breeders, and, thus, the entire breeding of postal pigeons in Poland.

Theoretical foundations for the legal protection of the species were elaborated by Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski. He pointed out that it was a matter of protection for non-economic reasons, discussed various ways of protection and intensity, underlined the importance of indirect methods in the protection of animal habitats of protected species and, finally, attracted attention to the fact that it was very important to properly regulate criminal sanctions, as low penalties would not scare away, and because the evaluation of the harm caused by the deeds by the judges was not high, they imposed milder penalties (Radecki, 1997).

In the Interwar period, the first state institutions were established to deal with environmental protection in a planned manner based on scientific knowledge. The basis for the protection of individual animal species in Poland was created by the first Polish Act of March 10, 1934 on Natural Protection (Journal of Laws of 1934, No. 31, item 274), adopted by the chief nature protection authority at the time, the Minister of Religious Affairs Religious and Public Enlightenment as a result of the activities of the State Council for Nature Conservation. On the basis of this law, the following regulations were introduced: mud turtle protection in 1935 and bison protection in 1938.

The spiritual father of the nature protection movement, whose work *became* the basis of the above-mentioned law on nature conservation, was Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski. His words: *“The idea of nature protection begins where the protector does not do it either for material purposes or for the historical or other commemorative value, not related to the creation of nature as such, but for nature itself, for finding pleasure in it, for ideal values found in it...”* – were uttered almost 100 years ago and have lost nothing of their accuracy, provoking discussion and often bitter reflection (Pawlikowski, 2013).

Bibliography

- Koźmian-Reicher S. (1928). Miłość do zwierząt. Polski Drób, VII, 2: 29–30.
- Maszewska-Knappe J. (1929). Ochrona ptaków a rolnictwo. Drób Polski, 15: 217–219.
- Pawlikowski J.G. (2013). Kultura a natura. Stowarzyszenie Obywatele Obywatelom, 150 ss.
- Radecki W. (1997). Szczególne formy ochrony przyrody. Prawo ochrony przyrody. J. Sommer (komentarz, red.), Wrocław, 137 ss.
- Rozporządzenie Ministrów: Spraw Wojskowych, Spraw Wewnętrznych i Sprawiedliwości z dnia 17 listopada 1927, „W sprawie wykonania ustawy z dnia 2 kwietnia 1925. O gołębiach pocztowych” (Dz.U., 1927, Nr 103, poz. 899).
- Ustawa z dnia 10 marca 1934 r. o ochronie przyrody (Dz. U., 1934, Nr 31, poz. 274).
- Ustawa z dnia 17 kwietnia 1936 r. o uboju zwierząt gospodarskich w rzeźniach (Dz.U., 1936, Nr 29, poz. 237).

ACTIVITIES AIMED AT CONSERVATION OF ANIMALS IN INTERWAR POLAND

Summary

The growing social awareness in the Second Republic of Poland as well as the advances in natural sciences increased efforts aimed at organized conservation of animals after the First World War. During the interwar period, the first state institutions were established to pursue environmental protection in a methodical way based on scientific knowledge. The draft act on protection of animals, submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and to the Minister of the Interior, formed the basis of a decree of 22 March 1928 concerning animal protection (Journal of Laws 1928 No 36, item 332). The decree introduced a complete ban on abuse of animals, and those violating this prohibition faced the threat of strict penalties. The foundations for protecting individual species of animals in Poland were laid by the first Polish act of 10 March 1934 on environmental conservation (Journal of Laws 1934 No. 31, item 274), adopted by the supreme environmental conservation body, namely the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education as a result of the activities of the State Council for Environmental Conservation.

A special position was held by homing pigeons, which despite the invention of the telegraph in the mid-19th century and of the radio in the early 20th century continued to carry information. During the First World War, pigeons were one of the basic means of communication for all the armies in conflict. In Poland the breeding of homing pigeons was discontinued following the requisition by the occupiers and the military order according to which all the homing pigeons were to be killed in 48 hours to prevent them from carrying espionage information. As a result, homing pigeons were not used by the Polish army during the Bolshevik war of 1918-1920. However, after the war, systematic work was begun to restore the breeding and development of pigeon training in the country. The great confidence of the Supreme Military Authorities in private farms of homing pigeons is shown by the fact that Marshal Józef Piłsudski established a protectorate over the Union of Polish Associations of Homing Pigeon Breeders and thus over the entire breeding of homing pigeons in Poland.

Key words: interwar Poland, environmental protection, animal conservation, homing pigeons



Fot. www.fronda.pl, D. Dobrowolska