

The ‘Nash Dom’ summer camp

History

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The work in holiday camps is difficult but rewarding....

A conscientious but inexperienced educator gets the opportunity here to put one's strength to the test as painless as possible; during the practice work he rapidly learns the pedagogical problems... and as he is not responsible for the further future he can give an objective judgment about his own shortcomings.

(Janusz Korczak)

Since 1993 the Janusz Korczak Association in Russia has organized more than 12 summer camps in different places in Russia and Ukraine Every year about 100 children with educators participate in the camp.

The educators are young adults with different backgrounds from Russia , Ukraine, the Netherlands and Germany. Since 1996 the Dutch Janusz Korczak Association is partner in this project. The realization of the camps was possible with the help of The committee for Family an Youth of the Moscow Government, Stichting Kinderpostzegels and other organizations.

It even might be arranged in such a way that man would be alternatively adult and a child comparable to winter and summer, day and night, sleeping and being awake. Than nobody would be surprised and they would better understand one another. The adults and the children.

(Janusz Korczak)

Janusz Korczak (1878-1942) was a Polish-Jewish doctor, pedagogue and writer. From 1912 until his death he headed an orphanage in Warsaw, to which he introduced revolutionary ideas (a children's court, a children's parliament, a tutor system, a young people's newspaper etc.)

'How to love a child' is at the centre of Korczak's writings. He describes his observations in the families an orphanage. It results in brilliant observations and analyses of children and adults. 'The child's right to respect' revolves around the child as a man. Not the child as a potential someone, but the child as he is.

Together with his 200 children from the 'Dom Sierot orphanage, he was transported from Warsaw-ghetto to a concentration camp in Treblinka n August 1942.

'It is very annoying to be small. Respect and admiration are always going to what is big. This feeling of powerlessness which is implanted in the child education towards the belief in physical power. Not only the adult but anybody who is older and stronger can express his discontent in a brutal way.

(Janusz Korczak)

The "Nash Dom" summer camp

In the concept of the "Nash Dom" (Our home) camp the humanistic ideas of Janusz Korczak are used. The most significant idea is respect for a child. The principle of forgiving and the partnership relation between children and adults are also important in this camp.

The aim of this project is development, social adaptation and the integration of disabled children (blind or physical defects), orphans, children with tragic experiences in their life, children from families with a single parent and from families with social problems.

For "Nash Dom" camps the international aspect is also important. The acquaintance with culture and traditions of different countries broadens children's horizon, learns them to be tolerant to people of other nationalities. All these children live together in mixed groups with two or three educators.

A great attention is paid to the general development of children. Every day a lot of different workshops are organised. Children participate in the life of the camp; they

express their opinions in the children's parliament, wall newspaper, when and where they want. They also take active part in all festive occasions, performances and concerts.

The success of the camps depends to a high degree on the work of all the volunteer educators.

The Janusz Korczak Association in the Netherlands (founded in 1982)

The Association is focusing its further activities on giving specific substance to Korczak's ideas about the education and rights of the child.

- advices for workers in day-care centres
- projects in primary schools
- workshop in teacher-training college's and schools for social workers
- round-tables with parents and educators
- publications, films and exhibitions.

The Janusz Korczak Association in Russia (founded in 1991)

The aim of this organisation is to spread the humanistic ideas of Janusz Korczak and to use them for the present work with children. The association has different projects in Moscow, St Petersburg, Kazan, Kursk and other cities: for handicapped children, for orphans, for homeless children and for chronically ill children.

The 'Nash Dom' camp is a Korczak camp, as the ideas are based on his principles and ideas of the Humanistic Pedagogy of Janusz Korczak. He had special ideas about particular values about childhood and the rights of children, the dialogue between adult and child as modifying factor in their mutual relationship, forgiveness as most important pedagogical principle and not to see the approach of the child as an abstract object but as a concrete person with its own real life.

The rights of the child described by Korczak reflected in the objectives and the daily reality of the camp: the right to make mistakes, the right to have secrets, the right of today's day, the right of showing positive qualities and concealing weaknesses, freedom of action, of play, of property. All these rights are summarized by Korczak in the most important rights of a child: the right of respect.

The aim of the 'Nash Dom' is integration.

Since 1993 'Nash Dom' accommodates for about a hundred children and adults from different nationalities, ethnic differences, healthy and invalid people and children from ordinary and social deprived families.

The first camp in the Netherlands started in 1993 more than 10 years ago.

Not only summer camps but also several 5 day small winter camps with maximal 60 children.

The first camp was organised in Taganrog with healthy children and children with a visual impairment, hearing impairment and spastic children.

At this camp the name 'Nash Dom' came about and the Korczak flag was designed and made, a golden four-leaf-clover in a green field.

The integration between adults and children was promoted and made more homely by making groups of 10 to 12 children with two adults as the parents of the 'family'. In the family the older children would help the younger and the healthy the children who needed help and the adults the children and the children the educators.

The plan for the day was flexible and the children also visited other 'families' Workshops were held organised by adults and it was the start of certain traditions such as a get together after dinner which was called 'sbor' meaning a get-together.

Since 1995 the Netherlands Janis Korczak Foundation has been an active partner in organizing the camp in example finding sponsors, helping in preparing the accompanying people and students and inviting the Dutch educationalists and children including visual impaired. Since then we could rightly say that the camp has become an Russian-Dutch house.

In 1994 the camp was held at the Black Sea in Jevpatoria.

At this camp there were children without an impairment and children with a visual impairment.

A new development started with the integration of the accompanying people from different countries. For the first time there were people from Russia, Ukraine, Germany and the Netherlands together. During the camp there where problems to be solved due to different views on the task of the accompanying people, different languages, different types of food etc.

At the same time it became clear that the international character of the camp brought along many new possibilities such as organising a Ukraine day or a German day or Dutch day.

It has now become a tradition to have the 'nationality' days.

All the people at the camps became motivated to learn to speak English in order to ease the communication with one another.

A children's parliament was chosen and later on a written constitution was initiated. Over the years more energy was put into activating blind children to join the camps. This made the accompanying people more aware of the need for more knowledge as to the specific background of these children. This knowledge meant a great deal in finding solutions for integration problems.

The older children became assistants and later on accompanists as they grew older.

In 1998 the Russian children made their first journey to a foreign country, to The Netherlands. Several problems occurred, the older teenagers had a passive role they wanted to have tasks to do, the accompanying people of the different countries had different views on several tasks.

On the other hand the integration of the visual impaired was beyond expectation. Over the years each camp came across problems that needed to be solved. Workshops were organised for the accompanying and younger people by educators and psychologists from outside on the issue of acceptance and integration of people with an impairment in society.

In 2000 the 'Korsack Camp School' was initiated for seminars to make preparations together with the accompanying people of the camps.

The fact that the camps are still existing is due to the efforts made by many people who run the camps and find support and money names I would like to mention are Marina Zjidakova, Tanja Meitina, Irina Demakova, Theo Cappon, Julia Tchikhatcheva, Andrej Pravdivy, Vera Koetsenko, Sveta Kotova and Mariane Lemzakova.