

Letter to the Editor. When and where was Ludwika Karpińska-Woczyńska born?

Edyta Dembińska, Krzysztof Rutkowski

Chair of Psychotherapy, Jagiellonian University Medical College

In our paper [1] which presented the profile of dr Ludwika Karpińska-Woczyńska we reported 25th August 1872 or 1875 as her date of birth and Warsaw as the city she was born in. That information was corroborated by the data collected by the University of Zurich [2] and Karpińska's curriculum vitae which she wrote herself and included as part of her doctoral thesis [3]. We deemed the sources the most reliable. We were encouraged to research further that information by the inconsistencies in documents which we previously came across along with the information reported in Jarosław Goth and Katarzyna Waszyńska's paper which argued that Karpińska was born on 30th August 1872 in Plock [4].

Having analyzed numerous historical records which constituted circumstantial evidence, it was established with high likelihood that that the birth certificate from Plock indeed belonged to Ludwika Karpińska-Woczyńska. The document gives the basis for the claim that Ludwika Karpińska was born in Plock as a daughter of Kazimierz Karpiński and Katarzyna Fery [5]. The same names of Karpińska's parents were recorded in the books of the buried persons at the Powązki Military Cemetery in Warsaw [6], a copy of the ID card [7] and death certificate [8] which were kept in the personal file of Ludwika Karpińska-Woczyńska when she was employed in the Municipal Psychological Lab in Lodz.

Despite the existence of the birth certificate, establishing Ludwika Karpińska-Woczyńska's date of birth still posed a challenge. The certificate was written in Russian with some surnames and first names being written in Polish. The person who drew up the certificate must have been familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet better as he or she frequently substituted Latin letters with Cyrillic ones and distorted surnames given in Polish e.g., Karpińska's mother's maiden name was recorded with errors in Polish and its direct translation from Russian demonstrated that her name was Fery rather than Fearzy. The certificate presented all dates written in full words. Ludwika Karpińska was baptized on 17th (Julian calendar)/29th (Gregorian calendar) April 1873 and according to the certificate she was born at 7 o'clock in the evening on 30th/25th August 1872.

The analysis of the document demonstrated that one of Karpińska's dates of birth, probably 30th August 1872, was written with an error. Official documents in the Russian partition under which Plock was at that time were annotated with two dates: a date from the Julian calendar and a date from the Georgian calendar. The Julian date (lower number) was given before the Gregorian date (higher number). In the discussed historical period those dates differed with 12 days as it was reported when Karpińska's baptism date was given (17th/29th April). The dates 30th and 25th August differ solely with five days. Therefore, it is not possible that erroneously the Gregorian date was first inserted and it was followed by the Julian one. If 25th August were a date in the Julian calendar, then Ludwika Karpińska should have been born on 6th September rather than 30th August according to the Gregorian calendar. On the other hand, if 25th August were accepted as the Gregorian date, then the birth date would fall on 13th August in the Julian calendar. In Russian the words 'the thirtieth' and 'the thirteenth' differ only with one syllable (тридцатого [tridcatogo] and тринадцатого [trinadcatogo]). All the arguments outlined above along with the fact that Karpińska always used 25th August in further documents suggest that 25th August 1872 was her accurate date of birth in the Gregorian calendar, which translates to 13th August 1872 in the Julian calendar.

Controversy around the Place of Birth: Karpińska caused the controversy as she reported Warsaw as her place of birth in foreign sources i.e., at the University of Berlin [9], the University of Zurich [2] and her doctoral thesis [3]. She might have wished to be identified with Warsaw where she lived at that time as it was the city recognized abroad as well. One can only speculate about her motives but she was not the only individual who did it. The motive that she wanted to be identified with a concrete city which was also recognized abroad is supported by the fact that she reported Plock as her place of birth in documents drawn up in Poland (e.g., registration card in Lodz [10] and ID card [7]).

Controversy around Year of Birth: In historical sources on Ludwika Karpińska created after 1910 different dates of birth are reported: 1872, 1875 or even 1876. For the first time Ludwika Karpińska reported 1875 as her date of birth in her resume which constituted part of her doctoral thesis (1910) [3]. It could therefore be assumed that it was not intentional and resulted from an error made when her doctoral thesis manuscript was being prepared to be printed. However, later the date 1875 was again recorded as her date of birth in the books of the buried persons at Powązki Military Cemetery [6], whereas the latest year of 1876 appeared as her date of birth in the ID card issued in Lodz on 1st July 1920 based on the Austrian passport [7]. Other official documents such as a medical certificate dated 21st June 1920 [11] and the death certificate of 22nd February 1937 [8] report Ludwika Karpińska-Woyczyńska's age in line with the date of birth in the year 1872. The gathered data does not allow for the unequivocal explanation for the inconsistencies regarding the year of birth.

To sum up, it should be accepted that Ludwika Karpińska-Woyczyńska was born on 25th August 1872 at seven o'clock in the evening in Plock as a daughter of Kazimierz Karpiński and Katarzyna Karpińska nee Fery.

References

1. Dembińska E, Rutkowski K. *Ludwika Karpińska, "Polish Lady Philosopher" – a forgotten forerunner of Polish psychoanalysis*. *Psychiatr. Pol.* 2015 [Epub ahead of print]; DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12740/PP/OnlineFirst/44946>.
2. Louise von Karpinska Matrikelnummer 17074. Matrikelbogen StAZH UU 24.20. Staatsarchiv des Kantons Zürich.
3. von Karpinska L. *Experimentelle Beiträge zur Analyse der Tiefenwahrnehmung*. Leipzig: Barth; 1910.
4. Groth J, Waszyńska K. *Na pograniczu psychologii i pedagogiki – czyli życie i działalność Ludwika Karpińskiej-Woyczyńskiej*. *Studia Edukacyjne* 2014; 33: 279–303.
5. Birth certificate of Ludwika Karpińska, certificate No 107/1873. Certificates of civil status of St. Bartholomew Roman Catholic parish in Plock 1826–1913. Plock State Archive.
6. Ludwika Woyczyńska. Register of people buried at Powązki Military Cemetery in Warsaw.
7. Copy of the ID card issued by National Police Headquarter in Lodz on 1st July 1920. Personal files of Ludwika Karpińska-Woyczyńska 1639. City Board of Lodz. Lodz State Archive.
8. Death certificate of Ludwika Karpińska-Woyczyńska, certificate No 12/1937. Personal files of Ludwika Karpińska-Woyczyńska 1639. City Board of Lodz. Lodz State Archive.
9. Luise von Karpinska. Verzeichnis der Gasthörerinnen. Universitätsarchiv Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
10. Registration card of Ludwika Wojczyńska No 265. Records of the General Registry Office of Lodz 1916–1921, 39/221/0/4.12/25206. City Board of Lodz. Lodz State Archive.
11. Medical certificate of Ludwika Karpińska-Woyczyńska issued on 21st June 1920. Personal files of Ludwika Karpińska-Woyczyńska 1639. City Board of Lodz. Lodz State Archive.

Address: Edyta Dembińska
Chair of Psychotherapy
Jagiellonian University Medical College
31-138 Kraków, Lenartowicza Street 14