

**Andrzej Zwoliński, *Krzywdzone dzieci (Abused Children)*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2012, pp. 359.**

The popularization of the idea of “children’s rights” that began in the twentieth century and their constant development increased the awareness of children’s special needs and their protection. These processes, however, did not eliminate threats lurking around the child whose rights, despite official declarations of their respect are not only are not implemented, but are even breached.

Andrzej Zwoliński in his monograph *Abused Children* writes about the most serious threats faced by the modern child. These are: risk of abortion, abandonment, loneliness, sale, neglect, violence, demoralization, hunger. The book consists of a preface and seventeen chapters: 1) “The unborn child” 2) “The unwanted child” 3) “Designer Children” 4) “Solitary children” 5) “Children for sale” 6) “Savage children” 7) “Agressive children” 8) “Juvenile criminals” 9) “Suicidal children” 10) “Street children” 11) “Shameless children” 12) “Sexually abused children” 13) “Child-soldiers” 14) “Hungry children” 15) “Children in sects” 16) “Children of the media” 17) “What is childhood?”. Each of the sixteen chapters is devoted to the presentation of a different risk of childhood. In the last seventeenth chapter, the author reflects on what “childhood” is and how one should interpret the term “child.”

Chapter one “The unborn child” refers to the abortion issue regarded as the most serious danger which undermines the primary right of every human being – the right to life. Zwoliński presents the history of abortion,<sup>1</sup> political background and legal solutions adopted with the aim of promoting abortion, statistics on abortions performed in selected countries and the effects of abortion. Finally, he refers to the teaching of Catholic Church on respect for nascent human life. “The unwanted child” is a chapter

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<sup>1</sup> He pays particular attention to the issue of abortion in Russia and China.

in which the author presents contemporary demographic problems of countries with domination of the anti-birth attitude negating the need for and happiness of having children. Zwoliński draws attention to the problem of the “sexualisation of life” separated from procreation and the growing contraceptive industry associated with it. He also writes about the rejection of children who are sick, disabled or unplanned. “Designer Children” are those who are not born out of unconditional love for the adoption of human life, but on the whim of adults who use medical intervention in the creation of human being by choosing the corresponding genetic traits or who agree to deprive of life of children who were not born such as were “expected.” The problem of designer children is also a problem of children conceived by in vitro fertilization, as well as children whose development is programmed not by their natural abilities and talents but according to the plans and expectations of their parents. In Chapter four “Solitary children” the author devotes himself to the problem of child’s loneliness that can take the threefold form – physical loneliness, resulting from the lack of parent/ parents or social marginalization; mental loneliness, resulting from child’s emotional isolation and moral loneliness being “a lack of connection with values, symbols and patterns.”<sup>2</sup> The widely recognized problem of child trafficking is described in the fifth chapter: “Children for sale.”

Zwoliński describes the dealings of the trade of embryos, sperm, stem cells of the unborn child, the problem of the adoptive and slave trade of children. In the next chapter “Savage children” the author discusses the problem of overprotection, lack of protection over children and education errors in relation to the child. On the effects of violence on the child and its consequences which affect the shaping of the child’s attitude towards themselves, others and the world, the author writes in chapters titled “Aggressive children” and “Juvenile criminals.” Murders of children committed by parents, child suicide and its prevention is presented in the chapter “Suicidal children.” The phenomenon of the so-called “street living children” who live and work in the streets is one of the most common threats faced by the modern child. The number of street children reaches 90 million.<sup>3</sup> Beside

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<sup>2</sup> A. Zwoliński, *Krzywdzone dzieci*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2012, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 197.

there are also “street working children” – “children working on the street but maintaining contact with families and usually returning home for nights,” and “children at risk” meant as “children who are working hard, who very often stay in prison, who are subjected to violence and harassment, who live in conditions which deny any rights of the child.”<sup>4</sup> In the tenth chapter “Street children” Zwoliński cites most common causes of the phenomenon of the so-called “street children,” statistical data reflecting the scale of the problem and ways of preventing it. The next two chapters entitled “Shameless children” and “Sexually abused children” refer to the risks associated with the sphere of children’s sexuality, such as the phenomenon of child pornography, child prostitution and child abuse crimes. The use of children as soldiers in hostilities and its effects on the future lives of children affected by the burden of participation in hostilities, is described by the author in the thirteenth chapter “Child-soldiers.” Famine, which every day victimize 35 thousand children,<sup>5</sup> the experience of illness and death of a child are presented in chapter fourteen “Hungry children.” Chapter fifteen “Children in sects” reveals the devastating impact of the sect on the family and the danger of the entanglement of a child in a sect in the school environment. The so-called “monitor upbringing of the child” in front of the TV or computer and their impact on child development has been described by the author in the sixteenth chapter “Children of the media.”

In the final eighteenth chapter “What is childhood?” Zwoliński presents the psychological, philosophical, sociological, cultural and legal concepts of “a child” and “childhood.” He looks at the phenomenon of “childishness” of contemporary adults. He ends his reflections with the statement:

It seems that the modern ideal of society has become a society without adults. So you can think while following the escape of contemporary culture in the world of children’s illusion, ease and lightness. But this is not the whole truth about the present while at the same time millions of children are condemned to take roles of adults. Children themselves talk about it. These are children working, wandering the streets as beggars, children who prostitute themselves, children who are abused, children crossing

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 196.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 284.

obstacles to get a piece of bread, little soldiers on the front lines of modern warfare, juvenile criminals performing crimes to save loved ones, children sold as slaves, children abducted by gangs searching for organs for transplantation, as well as juvenile suicides – who protest against the atrocities of the world not with their tears but with their lives. The dotage of the world of adults and the precocious growth of many children compose two strands of contemporary childhood. Will the future be bright for all the children one day and will they be fully deserving the name of “child?”<sup>6</sup>

The book *Abused Children* by Andrzej Zwoliński is an interesting reportage about the dangers of modern childhood. Reportage, as the author indicates in it the main threats to the rights and welfare of the child, without a very detailed analysis. Due to the high topicality of the issues and the “light penmanship” of the author, the book is highly recommended to be read by those who deal in their every day life with issues of children’s rights and their protection.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 356-357.