

Outstanding internists who rendered great service to school hygiene

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Abstract: During the period of Independent Poland (1918–1939), the role of school hygiene was appreciated. At that time in the city of Łódź, a circle of outstanding Łódź physicians worked as school physicians. The circle included among others: Włodzimierz Dylewski, Stanisław Gutentag, Rachela Kalecka, Zygmunt Ługowski, Bolestaw Mikłaszewski, Maria Rotenberg and Leonia Zeligsonówna. This article commemorates their names and retained pieces of their biographical entries for future generations. Some of those persons were Poles of Jewish origins, which was characteristic of the multiethnic city of Łódź before 1939.

Key words: history of medicine, Łódź, Polish medicine, school hygiene, school physicians

Deteriorated health situation of children and the youth in Poland after regaining independence by the country in 1918 drew attention of contemporary health care authorities to the issue of school hygiene. During the Second Republic of Poland, some physicians, mainly internists, worked as school hygienists. Also the Łódź Public Health Department attached to the Łódź Municipality employed numerous distinguished physicians as school hygienists. Detailed biographies of those persons did not survive. Literature sometimes mentions only names and surnames of physicians, some accompanied by photographs. This article presents fragmentary biographical entries or names of distinguished Łódź internists, who worked for so-called school hygiene in the interwar period.

Włodzimierz Leon Dylewski

Włodzimierz Leon Dylewski (Fig. 1) was born on December 19, 1873 in Łomża. There, he completed his secondary education in 1893. A year later he enrolled at the Medical Department of the Imperial Warsaw University. In his college days he was arrested for participation in an anti-czar demonstration and exiled deep into Russia. In 1895 he went to the Medical Department of the University of Dorpat (now Tartu in Estonia) and graduated with a medical diploma in 1899. In a hospital in Prussia he served his medical internship in internal medicine. Then, as a young trainee doctor, he practiced in the country in the Kalisz district. In the years 1903–1905 he

served as an assistant in the Chair of Physiology of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Afterwards, Dylewski worked in the Kalisz district again (1905–1909) and also in Pułtusk (1909–1914). After serving in the Russian army during the World War I (1914–1918), he returned to Pułtusk. In the years 1919–1920 he worked in a hospital ward in Zduńska Wola and as a school physician in one of girls' junior high schools in Pułtusk. Since 1921 he was a military physician, first in an epidemic hospital in the Czerniaków district in Warsaw, then in a military hospital in Żyrardów. In the years 1921–1923 he worked in a municipal hospital in Podgórze near Toruń. In 1923 he decided to move to Łódź, and lived at 4/7 Mielczarskiego St. On September 1, 1924 he took up a post of school physician in several Łódź state schools.

Dylewski had a good command of Russian, French and German.

He was married and had two children: a daughter Jadwiga and a son Dymitr. The date of his death is unknown. Available sources say that he was posthumously honored by the President of the Republic of Poland with the Medal of Independence for his activity for regaining independence [1].

Stanisław Gutentag

Stanisław Gutentag, one of outstanding physicians and social activists, was born on February 2, 1866 in Warsaw, into the family of Izidor and Helena, née Karlsbad, whose brother Izidor took an active part in the November Uprising (1830–1831). He completed his secondary education in Warsaw, where he also studied medicine at the Warsaw University. In 1893 he moved to Łódź. He began his career in the Baumann and Berson Families Hospital (1893–1895) and then worked in a hospital managed by the Poznańskis. He was interested in political life, "... his sympathies lay with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) as the only party fighting unwaveringly for in-

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Fig. 1. Włodzimierz Leon Dylewski (reproduced from: Akta osobiste Włodzimierza Dylewskiego, sygn. 5586, k.1, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi)

dependence of his homeland". Instructed by the PPS, he hid several (2 or 3) fighters carried away from the Pawiak prison in Warsaw by Col Jur Gorzechowski (initially in his own flat at 40 Cegielniana St. in Łódź and then in a mental hospital in Kochanówka) [2].

In October 1918, he started working as a school physician and since March 1919 he took the duties of the head school physician. In May 1922, on his initiative, a special outpatient clinic for children with trachoma was opened, and in November 1922, in Łódź, the first in Poland schools for children with trachoma were established. In 1923, Gutentag organized courses in anatomy, physiology and hygiene for school hygienists. Two years later (1925) he prepared and conducted a survey concerning alcohol consumption among children from common schools. The questionnaire to be filled in, titled *Questionnaire on alcohol experience of children from urban elementary schools*, was as follows [3]:

1. Have you ever drunk vodka, wine or beer?
2. When did you drink alcohol for the first time?
3. How often do you drink: every day, on holidays, during celebrations?
4. Who gives you vodka?
5. Have you ever been drunk?
6. How much do you drink at one time?
7. Do you buy vodka?

8. Where do you get the money for vodka from?

9. Have you given up drinking?

10. When did you give up drinking?

In 1926, Gutentag participated in the 4th Convention of Polish Hygienists in Vilnius. He gave a lecture on trachoma, which aroused huge interest. He said among others: "To control trachoma effectively in urban state schools, we should: 1) make special trachoma outpatient clinic available for schoolchildren, where school physicians could refer suspected children to, 2) children with trachoma should be educated in special trachoma schools organized for the purpose, 3) only specialists from trachoma outpatient clinic can send children to trachoma schools, 4) to meet the requirements, trachoma schools should fulfill the following conditions: a) they should be located in different parts of the city, b) they should fulfill any hygienic requirements, c) each school should have its own ophthalmologist, d) children should take advantage of the school physician's care, e) during the school year, children with acute period trachoma should not be admitted, only after two weeks, f) each grade should not be composed of more than 30 students, g) the curriculum should be adapted to a child's health, 5) school hygienists should constantly pay attention to condition of children's eyes, the school physician should dedicate half an hour daily for eye examination, a Trachoma Control Section should be set up" [4].

A few years later (in 1930) Gutentag organized courses on tuberculosis for school physicians (lectures given by Seweryn Sterling). In the same year, having agreed it with the Kasa Chorych (health insurance fund), he opened 5 dental surgeries for state school students. In 1934, he carried out a course for all janitors to familiarize them with efficient cleaning methods, and in 1935, he organized a training course for school hygienists on lung diseases (tuberculosis).

Gutentag is an author of numerous publications, such as: *Four Cases of Scarlet Fever*, *Hygienic Description of Contagious Diseases*, *Schools and Contagious Diseases*, *Trachoma Control in Common Schools in Łódź*, *Scarlet Fever Immunization in Common Schools in Łódź*, *Feeding Children in Public Common Schools in Łódź*, *Report on Activity of Physicians from Public Elementary Schools of the City of Łódź, 1931-1932*, *Epidemic Typhus Control in Public Common Schools of the City of Łódź*, *Some Comments on Fighting Dirt and Contagious Diseases in Public Elementary Schools of the City of Łódź* and *Lecture on Tuberculosis for Children from Public Elementary Schools*.

He was married with two children: a daughter Maria (born 1899) and son Zygmunt (born 1900). He lived at 275 Piotrkowska St., Łódź. [5].

Rachela Kalecka

Rachela Kalecka (Fig. 2) was born on January 11, 1887 in Zawiercie, into the family of Józef and Regina Kalecki. She worked as a hygienist at Łódź schools from January 1, 1921 to October 25, 1939 [6]. Available documents reveal that she studied at the Moscow University, and a certificate dating back to the beginning of 1920, reads as follows: „It is to be certified



Fig. 2. Rachela Kalecka (reproduced from: Akta osobiste, Rachela Kalecka, sygn. 5593, k. 1, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi)

hereby that Mrs. Rachela Kalecka, born in Zawiercie, based on submitted documents, and in accordance with the directive of the Ministry of Faith and Public Enlightenment of July 2, 1919, in respect of final medical examinations for the degree of physician before the Medical Department Committee of the Warsaw University, received a satisfactory result. Therefore, Mrs. Rachela Kalecka is hereby awarded a physician's degree. A University diploma certifying the degree shall be issued to Mrs. Rachela Kalecka upon the issuance of promotion directives by competent authorities" [7].

She started her medical practice based on the medical diploma no 1561 issued by the Warsaw University on May 30, 1927.

Her annual income from working in the WOiK was as follows: in 1926 – 261,555 zloty, in 1927 – 316,195 zloty, in 1928 – 246,787 zloty, in 1929 – 433,800 zloty, in 1930 – 384,836 zloty, in 1931 – 298,639 zloty.

Kalecka was married and had one child: a son Aleksander. She lived in Łódź, first at 54 Narutowicza St., then at 17 Radwańska St., and in 1933 she moved to 3 Narutowicza St. [8].

Zygmunt Ługowski

Zygmunt Ługowski (Fig. 3) held a position of a hygienist at state schools from November 1, 1918 to September 1, 1931.



Fig. 3. Zygmunt Ługowski (reproduced from: Akta osobiste, Ługowski Zygmunt, sygn. 5577, k. 1, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi)

His weekly working hours, according to the work contract, amounted to 18 (his remuneration was an A level III group salary). On August 29, 1931, municipal authorities acceded to Łukowski's request for acceptance of his resignation and he was released from his duties on September 1, 1931 [9].

Bolesław Mikłaszewski

Among the extremely interesting figures of the world of Łódź physicians, we should mention Bolesław Mikłaszewski, a specialist in internal medicine and a social activist. Only some incomplete information about the life of that eminent physician survived. Available sources say that he was born in 1856 in Teleszówka, in the Kiev district. After reception of his medical degree, he worked abroad for a long time.

The year 1921 was a turning point in Mikłaszewski's life; then he returned to his homeland and decided to settle permanently in Łódź. In the same year, he was accepted for the post of a common school hygienist (September 1, 1921) in the Education and Culture Department of the City of Łódź. He was performing his duties for thirteen years (until April 13, 1934) [10].

"Despite his advanced years, with youthful energy and enthusiasm, he dedicates his strength to career and community work in general and comes to the fore among our local social activists". In his memoirs, Stanisław Gutentag wrote



Fig. 4. Maria Rotenberg (reproduced from: Akta osobiste, dr Maria Rotenbergerowa, sygn. 5594: nlb, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi)

about Mikłaszewski: "...he was endowed with great virtues of mind and spirit, was exceptionally intelligent, quick-witted, with deep knowledge, extraordinary diligence, a sense of responsibility and admirable youthful enthusiasm for work. Beginning from 1921, for thirteen years, the late Mikłaszewski acted as a school physician, and it was, where all the virtues of that uncommon and harmoniously beautiful personality were apparent; no wonder he was our pride and an example for all school physicians, and he gained respect and wide recognition among all physicians and teachers, and liking and love among children, because there was no one, who had such an attitude towards children and no one attended them with more care..." [11]. Mikłaszewski is the author of treasured monographs, like: "Alcohol Consumption among Children of Łódź Common Schools" and "Scarlet Fever Immunization". Furthermore, as a state school physician, he was giving numerous lectures on alcoholism and hygiene.

After Mikłaszewski's death, the Association of Polish Physicians and the Polish Red Cross granted him honorary membership, and the School Hygiene Section at a special meeting on March 8, 1934 passed the debt of gratitude to Mikłaszewski for his entire work as a school physician. Mikłaszewski died on April 30, 1936, at the age of 80.

During the funeral, held on May 2, in the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw, H. Wyszynski and S. Gutentag bid farewell

to Mikłaszewski on behalf of municipal authorities, saying: "With deep sorrow and heavy heart we think of the fact that one of revived Poland's best sons has left us for good" [12].

Maria Rotenbergowa

Maria Rotenberg (Fig. 4) was born on December 9, 1891, in Kalisz, into the Jewish family of Herman Fajl and Judyta Halter. She completed her secondary education in Łódź. She began her medical studies in Grenoble, and completed them in Kharkiv in 1916 [13].

In surviving archives, a copy of the document, certifying that Rotenbergowa had been awarded a medical diploma, was found. The document was a Polish translation of a Russian original and read as follows: "The bearer of this document, i.e. Fajl Maria, a daughter of Herman, was granted her medical degree upon examination by the Medical Examination Committee in the City of Kharkiv in the current year, i.e. 1916. The diploma shall be issued upon being drawn up in the Office of the Head of Kharkiv Scientific District. In witness whereof, Ms Fajl was handed this certificate bearing due signatures and the stamp of the Women's Medical Institute" [14].

In November 1918, she started working in the field of school hygiene in the Education and Culture Department of the City of Łódź and in a private junior high school. A year later, she took a post of a hygienist physician for state schools in Tomaszów Mazowiecki. For the following 19 years, Rotenberg was involved in the educational system in Łódź. On December 6, 1920, she was employed as a physician of state schools of the City of Łódź and fulfilled her duties until September 1, 1939.

In 1933, she turned to the Education and Culture Department with a request for an increase in her working hours. The references show that the reason was her husband's death (1933). "On account of unforeseeable blow", as she wrote in justification, she became a sole breadwinner for her two children. The request was accepted, all the more so because Józef M. Weyland resigned from his post of a hygienist physician. Furthermore, she was assigned care for the whole city district, which influenced a pay raise (from October 1, 1933, her remuneration grew to the amount of 2/3 of group III, level A salary, except for a living bonus, for 12 working hours a week).

Maria Rotenberg was married and had two children: a daughter Jadwiga (born 1925) and a son Jerzy (born 1920) [15].

Leonía Zeligsonówna

Leonía Zeligson (Fig. 5) was born on August 7, 1878. There is no detailed information concerning her secondary education. Archives say that she received her medical degree at the Geneva University, in 1909. Which was acknowledged in Poland in accordance with the directive of the Ministry of Faith and Public Enlightenment and the Ministry of Public Health of June 20, 1919. From September 1, 1919, she took a post of a hygienist physician for Łódź state schools. In the



Fig. 5. Leonia Zeligson (reproduced from: Akta osobiste dr Leonia Zeligsonówny, sygn. 5600, k. 1, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi)

same year she was appointed a head and internist in the 3rd City Clinic in Łódź, with a salary of 150 zloty [16].

In the years 1935–1936, her health deteriorated and she took an unpaid 6-month sick leave. On March 1, 1936, she requested the Public Health Department in Łódź for another 6-month unpaid leave, justifying it with general exhaustion. A health certificate issued by D. Lewy reads as follows: “That is to certify that Mrs. Leonia Zeligsonówna suffers from persistent headaches and general exhaustion, thus it is advisable to limit her working hours”. Contemporary Head of the Department, Stanisław Kempner, refused to grant a leave to Zeligsonówna. On March 6, 1936, with a letter addressed to the Administration of the City of Łódź, she proposed her resignation from the posts she held. On September 1, 1938, she returned to her job, acting as a school hygienist physician. L. Zeligsonówna lived at 63 Północna St., Łódź [17]. Her later fate is unknown.

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