

Czesław Jeśman, *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1918–1939 jako zagadnienie epidemiologiczne i profilaktyczno-lecznicze, część I-II* (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army in the years 1918–1939 as a prophylactic and therapeutic issue*). Wojskowa Akademia Medyczna, Łódź 1997, SS. 498.

and its re-editions:

- *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w wojnie sowiecko-polskiej w latach 1918–1921*, UM, Łódź 2009, SS. 239. (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army during the Polish-Soviet war in the years 1918–1921*), ISBN:978-83-6105-890-8
- *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1922–1939*, UM, Łódź 2009, SS. 268. (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army in the years 1922–1939*), ISBN:978-83-6105-894-6

The issues associated with the prevention and treatment of communicable diseases in the Polish Army during the interwar period (1918–1939) have not attracted much researchers' attention until now. However, there is no doubt that it requires a detailed study due to its great importance for millions of people who suffered from infectious diseases during the period of the Second Polish Republic. One should realize that due to the poor sanitary conditions and lack of hygiene, communicable diseases were considered one of the most serious threats to health and life of humans over this time. It was especially true in the case of densely populated areas where the risk of disease was particularly high. These words find their fullest application to the army, where communicable diseases were considered a serious problem particularly during the initial years following the re-creation of country's independence in 1918.

The reviewed book by PhD Czesław Jeśman should be recognized as one of the few books dealing with communicable diseases in the Polish Army during the interwar period. Apart from it, there are only a few publications of a general nature, which address the problems related to eradication of the communicable diseases across the whole country. As an example can serve a collective work edited by Jan Kostrzewski entitled *Choroby zakaźne w Polsce i ich zwalczanie w latach 1919–1962*¹ (Eng. *Communicable diseases in Poland and their eradication in the years of 1919–1962*). One can find also a few newspaper articles published in the specialist press such as: *Zwalczanie ostrych chorób zakaźnych w Polsce w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym (1918–1939)* (Eng. *Eradication of acute infectious diseases in Poland over the interwar period (1918–1939)*) by Jolanta Sadowska² or Wanda Szata's article entitled *Zimnica w Polsce* (Eng. *Malaria in Poland*).³ Both articles were published in "Przegląd Epidemiologiczny" in 1997.

Under such circumstances, the dissertation by Dr. Jeśman *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1918–1939 jako zagadnienie epidemiologiczne i profilaktyczno-lecznicze*⁴ (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army in the years 1918–1939 as a prophylactic and therapeutic issue*) should be considered a pioneering one. The author was the first scholar who decided to make a close study of the issues referred to eradication of communicable diseases in the Polish Army in the interwar period. Undoubtedly, as the head of Department of History of Science and Military

¹ KOSTRZEJEWSKI (1964).

² SADOWSKA (1997) 321-328.

³ SZATA (1997) 177-183.

⁴ JEŚMAN (1997).

Medicine and the university professor of Medical University of Lodz⁵ he should be recognized as an expert in the field of the epidemiology, prevention and treatment of contagious diseases. The dissertation was published in two volumes. The first one *Sytuacja epidemiologiczna w Wojsku Polskim na tle całego kraju w latach 1918–1921* (Eng. *The epidemiological situation in the Polish Army in comparison to the situation in the whole country in the years 1918–1921*) describes the epidemiological situation in the Polish Army during the first period, shortly after the independence of Poland was regained. The second volume entitled *Występowanie i zwalczanie chorób zakaźnych w Polsce i Wojsku Polskim po 1921 roku* (Eng. *The presence and eradication of communicable diseases in Poland and the Polish Army since 1921*) covers the period between 1921 and 1939.

As it has been said earlier, Dr. Jeśman should be considered a pioneer in his research to a certain extent. What is more, he managed to gain access to the vast collection of interesting records (reports, statements, orders, instructions etc.) deposited in the Polish archives, particularly in the Central Military Archives in Warsaw. Additionally, he employed a large volume of scientific literature relevant to the subject of the research (with a total of more than 440 referenced titles). Unfortunately, Dr Jeśman was not able to avoid making serious mistakes. Some of them cannot be even classified as substantive ones. In essence, these words refer to 2009 re-edition of Dr. Jeśman's PhD dissertation (in the form of two independent volumes: *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w wojnie sowiecko-polskiej w latach 1918–1921* (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army during the Polish-Soviet war in the years 1918–1921*)⁶ and *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1922–1937* (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army in the years 1922–1939*).⁷ Their publication was accompanied by a sort of scandal due to the accusations of self-plagiarism.⁸ According to M. Wroński after publishing this two-volume dissertation in 2009 (with minor drafting modifications) Dr. Jeśman made an attempt to present it as the post-doctoral work required to apply for the position of an University Professor. What is interesting, the person who took all the copies of the re-published book (printed out by the Publishing House of the Medical University of Lodz⁹) was the author himself. To make matters worse, M. Wroński claims that the publishing house has failed to comply with the obligation to send some copies of the new printed book to public libraries (including the home library of the Medical University of Lodz).¹⁰ Eventually, the Central Committee for Degrees and Titles refused to give Dr. Jeśman the title of the University Professor due to accusations of self-plagiarism. The case was then brought to the Province Administrative Court in Warsaw which by its judgment of 25 April 2013 dismissed the complaint of Dr Jeśman against the decision of the Central Committee for Degrees and Titles (in September 2012).¹¹

It should be emphasized that both the detailed analysis of the 1997 original PhD dissertation and its re-edition in the form of the two-volume book printed in 2009 has revealed no significant differences between them. As a matter of fact, the differences were limited only to changing the titles of the individual volumes of the original work¹² as well as to introducing some modifications in the names of some chapters and subchapters.¹³ Additionally, several chapters were also provided with

⁵ WRÓŃSKI: <https://forumakademickie.pl/fa/2013/05/podwojny-przewod-doktorski/>, (Accessed 15.04.2016).

⁶ JEŚMAN (2009).

⁷ JEŚMAN (2009).

⁸ WRÓŃSKI..., (Accessed 15.04.2016).

⁹ Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Łodzi.

¹⁰ Now both volumes are available in National Library in Warsaw, (signatures. 1.592.565; 1.592.561).

¹¹ WRÓŃSKI..., (Accessed 15.04.2016).

¹² The title of the first volume *Sytuacja epidemiologiczna w Wojsku Polskim na tle całego kraju w latach 1918–1921* has been changed into *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w wojnie sowiecko – polskiej 1918–1921* whereas the title of the second volume *Występowanie i zwalczanie chorób zakaźnych w Polsce i w Wojsku Polskim po 1921 roku* received a new title: *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1922–1939*.

¹³ For instance, all titles of the subchapters in the second volume starting with the words „the epidemiological overview and eradication...” („charakterystyka epidemiologiczna i zwalczanie...”) has been changed into “epidemiology and eradication...” („epidemiologia i zwalczanie...”). The manner of indicating the chapters has also been changed by replacing the letters with numbers.

a new structure. As it can be seen, the author decided to introduce only slight, cosmetic changes, compared to the original work. This is why, there is no question that the 2009 re-edition cannot be considered a new book or even an enhanced version of the original dissertation. As a consequence, due to the lack of significant changes the new edition could not be classified as a post-doctoral publication indeed.

More interestingly, the two-volume 2009 re-edition has been provided with a corrigendum (placed on a separate piece of paper pasted right behind the title page) where Dr Jeśman points out that the this re-edition should be recognized as “the second edition of the original dissertation” entitled *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1918–1939 jako zagadnienie epidemiologiczne i profilaktyczno-lecznicze, część I – II* (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army in the years 1918–1939 as a prophylactic and therapeutic issue*).¹⁴ As with other corrigendum, it was added after the two-volume book was printed. Unfortunately, it is difficult to say conclusively whether it had been added before the judgment of the Province Administrative Court in Warsaw on April 2013¹⁵ or after the date. After admitting that his two-volume 2009 work should be treated as a re-edition of the 1997 PhD dissertation, Dr Jeśman decided to reveal the main reasons for doing so. First and foremost, he pointed out that his decision was determined by the fact of running out the first edition. Secondly, he declared that his intention was to improve the “graphic design” of the book.¹⁶ Finally he emphasized that the persuasion of his colleagues such as - Prof. Danuta Dworniak and Prof. Ph.D. Jan Fijałek prompted him to re-edit his PhD dissertation. It is worth noting, that the new two-volume publications were provided with the reviews of the already mentioned Prof. Dworniak. The very fact of revealing the acquaintanceship with Prof. Dworniak may suggest the possibility of receiving a positive feedback. In fact, this was the case. It should be admitted, however, that the first volume *Choroby zakaźne w Wojsku Polskim w wojnie sowiecko – polskiej 1918–1921* (Eng. *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army during the Polish-Soviet war in the years 1918–1921*) has received more enthusiastic review than the second one. As regards the second volume the reviewer was well aware of some shortcomings but she was not able to give many reasons to support such opinion. Therefore the general attitude of the reviewer towards the second volume was also favourable.

As Dr Jeśman eventually admitted in the erratum, both *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army during the Polish-Soviet war in the years 1918–1921* and *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army in the years 1922–1939* should be recognized as the re-edition of his two-volume 1997 PhD dissertation. Unfortunately, Prof. Dworniak did not mention about this fact in her review. Certainly, it may be assumed that she would not be aware of that. However, if it would be the case, this may provide evidence that the reviewer did not manage to perform her work properly. It seems highly unlikely that Prof. Dworniak would not realize that the reviewed two-volume re-edition was almost an exact copy of Dr Jeśman’s PhD dissertation. It was enough to look at the table of contents where the original title of Dr Jeśman’s first volume PhD work (*Sytuacja epidemiologiczna w Wojsku Polskim na tle całego kraju w latach 1918–1921*) continued to be present (indicated as the part I). Interestingly, the table of contents for the second volume of 2009 re-edition does not comprise any indication showing that it is part two. Such an inconsistency should attract the reviewer’s attention while examining all aspects of the reviewed book. As it has been said earlier, Prof. Dworniak did not mention about this fact at all. Concluding the review she writes as follows: “To sum up, I am convinced that the revised dissertation entitled *Communicable diseases in the Polish Army during the Polish-Soviet war in the years 1918–1921* should be considered an original and creative contribution to science”. As far as the second volume is concerned, the opinion was not as enthusiastic. Prof. Dworniak expressed some doubts concerning its value but the general overview was positive as well. It is difficult to agree with such a positive opinion mainly due to the fact of a very low value of volume 2.

Even without addressing the issues associated with a self-plagiarism, the work by Dr. Jeśman cannot be recognized as a fully reliable dissertation dedicated to eradication of communicable diseases

¹⁴ JEŚMAN (1997).

¹⁵ WRÓŃSKI..., (Accessed 15.04.2016).

¹⁶ The design of the two-volume book actually leaves much to be desired, indeed. The book has been printed in black and white, soft cover format with poor graphic design.

in interwar Poland. The decision to divide the book into two parts, where the first one covers only a 3-year period whereas the second one describes a further 17 years should raise serious concerns about the value of the second volume. Undoubtedly, this is one of the most serious objections against the two-volume book produced by Dr Jeśman. It is obvious, that the title of the dissertation published first in 1997 does not reflect its content in fact. The author deals with the interwar period indeed, but there is a problem of a glaring disparity between these two periods. The whole dissertation consists of more than 400 pages (with bibliography and appendix there is more than 450 pages), but it is not hard to see that the author's attention focuses on the formative years of the independent state (1918–1921). This period is described on 223 pages of the first volume of the work. Accordingly, as many as 177 pages have been used to describe the following 17 years. Such proportions show the great disparity mentioned above.

It should be admitted that the first volume entitled *Sytuacja epidemiologiczna w Wojsku Polskim na tle całego kraju w latach 1918–1921*¹⁷ has been prepared with great care. Dr. Jeśman recalls and juxtapose a wide range of information derived from multiple sources. As the scholar admitted himself he should be recognized as the first researcher who was provided with an opportunity to examine the vast collection of interesting records deposited in the Central Military Archives in Warsaw.¹⁸ This knowledge is complemented by a vast collection of information derived from the vast collection of scientific literature of the interwar period. Such a combination contributes to increase the scientific value of the first volume. Unfortunately, the second volume presents much lower scientific level compared to the first one. Accordingly, neither the 1997 dissertation nor its almost exact copy published in 2009 can be described as an “original” or “creative” works. Reading the text it is hard to avoid the impression that almost all this section was based on one crucial document: *Sprawozdanie statystyczne o stanie zdrowotnym armii w okresie dziesięciolecia 1921–1931* (Eng. *The Statistical report on the health status of the army over the decade 1921–1931*)¹⁹ This report was published by the Department of Health of the Ministry of Military Affairs in 1932. The detailed comparison between this report and the second volume has revealed many similarities between these two works. As an outstanding example can serve charts and tables which seem to be accurately reproduced (or modernized) by Dr Jeśman. Just to mention that tables and charts covers as many as 67 pages from among the total number of 177 pages of the second volume. It means that there was not too much space (approximately 110 pages) for presenting their analysis and the author's own observations based on another available sources. By comparison, the first volume dedicated to the period between 1918–1921 is 223 pages long and there is no charts at all.

It has also to be noted that the tables and charts referring to the period between 1922–1931 are provided with full bibliographic descriptions. However, having reviewed these descriptions, it was found that all of them are drawn from the same source, namely: *The Statistical report on the health status of the army over the decade 1921–1931*.²⁰ This fact simply confirms the view that this part of the dissertation was based on this report to a large extent. To make matter worse, there is no information about sources of the data that have been used to produce charts and tables referring to the period between 1932–1939. Even if the charts and tables have been produced on the basis of the author's own elaborations, this fact should be declared and the sources still should be pointed out

¹⁷ Regardless of the fact the first volume of the second edition was published under the different title, the previous title was not removed from the table of contents just due to (as it can be assumed) a routine oversight. As regards the second volume there is a lack of any indication showing that it is a re-edition of the second volume. What is more it is deprived of its previous title (*Występowanie i zwalczanie chorób zakaźnych w Polsce i w Wojsku Polskim po 1921 roku*) although chapter I remained unchanged.

¹⁸ JEŚMAN (2009) 1.

¹⁹ Departament Zdrowia MSWojsk (Eng. Department of Health of the Ministry of Military Affairs), *Sprawozdanie statystyczne o stanie zdrowotnym armii w okresie dziesięciolecia 1921–1931* (Eng. *The Statistical report on the health status of the army over the decade 1921–1931*), Warszawa 1933, CAW I. 300.62, t. 34 (this report is also available in another CAW collection: CAW - GISZ 302.4.2153.

²⁰ Ibidem.

by the author. Failure to present such bibliographical descriptions may provoke accusations of applying an unscientific approach to the examined problem.

To sum up, the above information show that it is hard to consider the work by Dr Jeśman to be a complete, creative and reliable dissertation dealing with the issues related to the prevention and eradication of communicable diseases in the Polish army in the years 1918–1939. The fundamental objection against the work is that its title inaccurately reflects its actual contents. This is especially true in the context of the second volume which poor scientific value determines such a negative assessment. Accordingly, the timeframe of the works should be tightened to the formative years of the reborn Polish state (1918–1921) and the Polish-Bolshevik war (1919–1921). On the one hand, the first volume of the dissertation meets the requirements necessary for classifying a publication as a scientific work. On the second hand, the second volume dedicated to the years 1922–1939 cannot be described in such a way. It is evident that Dr Jeśman confined himself to conducting the broad research of archival resources referred to the first period of the Second Polish Republic. It could therefore be assumed that he had simply run out of time to examine and describe in details the following 17 years. Paradoxically, this failure could have been corrected along with 2009 re-edition of the dissertation. On that occasion, the author was provided with an unique opportunity to deep and extend his research. Unfortunately, it was not an intention of the author. Dr Jeśman just wanted to introduce slight, cosmetic changes in order to present the two-volume re-edition as the post-doctoral work required to apply for the position of an University Professor. As a result, the chance was eventually lost and readers were given almost an exact copy of Dr. Jeśman's PhD dissertation enriched with minor editorial changes and enthusiastic reviews produced by Prof. Danuta Dworniak.

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