



REGARDING THE ARTICLE BY STANLEY W. RACZEK – REFLECTIONS OF A “TRAITOR”, PUBLISHED IN THE 2/2021 ISSUE OF VOL. 99



Dotyczy artykułu Stanley’ a W. Raczka
– Refleksje „zdrajcy”, opublikowa nego
w wydaniu 2/2021 vol . 99

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Streszczenie: Informacje uzupełniające do kariery zawodowej dr. Raczka

Abstract: Additional information about Dr. Stanley Raczek

Słowa kluczowe: dr Stanley Raczek, polonijno-polska współpraca psychiatryczna.

Key words: Dr Stanley Raczek, trans-Atlantic psychiatric collaboration.

DOI 10.53301/lw/144754

This paper was received by the Editorial Office:
01/12/2021

Accepted for Publication: 10/12/2021

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It is good that the article about the professional activity and success of Staszek Raczek MD was published while he is still alive. Also very valuable is his own perspective on his trials and tribulations, describing and complementing the achievements of just one Polish-born U.S. citizen, whose fate sent him to the other side of the Atlantic. The predominantly “uniform” aspect only adds the flavour of the “adventure at command” and his personal *companion article* has special significance for me as I was often an active participant in many of the activities of Staszek, who is my “colleague”.

Stanisław Raczek MD was (and despite his formal retirement still is) the initiator and social soul of all Polonia psychiatric meetings. He himself concentrates on the military aspect, because this was his everyday work. He describes establishing first contacts and official cooperation with Polish military psychiatrists since 1993. But it all originated in 1987, when at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in Chicago many of us attended a lecture held by prof. Andrzej Piotrowski on alcohol problems in Poland. When they heard Polish speech in the dark conference room, this group of participants spontaneously decided to invite prof. Piotrowski to meet privately over tea and coffee. At a large, round (!) table, it turned out that each of us knew several other Polish psychiatrists working in the USA or neighbouring Canada. At this meeting, the “initiative group” decided to formalise somehow at the next APA convention in Montreal, Canada, in 1988.

And so it happened. During the year, we drafted the statutes of our organization “Association of Polish Psychiatrists and Neurologists in America” and

established the membership fees. We elected the first authorities and the APP-NA Newsletter, initially published 3–4 times a year in the “samizdat” system, was now a fact. As an affiliated organisation, we operated under the umbrella of the APA, since most of us belonged to it and the annual meetings held in large cities always attracted thousands of psychiatrists from all over the world. Usually at these conventions you could always run into someone else who spoke Polish. We also agreed that during APA conventions, we would gather every Tuesday evening for a formal organisational meeting, always ending with a good dinner for all participants and their families.

Shortly thereafter, the long-awaited transformation of the political system in Poland, which was being forced on the communist authorities, began. It was natural for us to get involved in this process. In order to familiarise ourselves with the needs and expectations of our Polish colleagues-psychiatrists, we organised two trips to Poland with the support of the Upjohn pharmaceutical company, then having its headquarters in my home state of Michigan. In 1992, “Staszek & Staszek” were joined by paediatric psychiatrist, prof. Maria Paluszny (who lived in Michigan, but who worked in Toledo, Ohio) and we made a tour of large Polish psychiatric hospitals: Tworki, Kędzierzyn, Kochanówka and Abramowice. During our next trip, in 1993, we were joined by Elżbieta Wirkowska MD, a psychiatrist and neurologist from New York. We visited the academic centres of Polish psychiatry: Poznań, Krakow, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Lublin, Łódź, and Szczecin. At that time, I also conducted a formal survey among the participants of all of our meetings, in order to

gain a degree of objectivity and to establish a ranking of psychiatric needs, which at first were very numerous.

We also had a chance to meet at Congresses of the Medical Polonia from around the World, organised on average every three years, including the first, spontaneously organised one in Częstochowa on 19–23 June 1991 (Photo 1.). To date, there have been ten such Polonia Medical Congresses organised in large cities in Poland.

The contribution and personal chapter of Staszek Raczek MD in the “History of Medicine and Military Healthcare” is a good beginning. The period after World War II that Poland went through and aspirations of psychiatrists who somehow managed to escape the omnipotent control of the imposed system is certainly an underdeveloped topic, which is a pity! One of the first leaders of our organisation was Roman Orłowski MD, unfortunately, a deceased Polish military psychiatrist from Łódź, who left Poland with his wife after the memorable events of 1968. After having his medical degree recognised, Roman Orłowski MD worked in the Michigan State Penitentiary in Jackson until his retirement.

The imposition of martial law in Poland is yet another historical aspect that changed the fate of thousands of Poles (including mine) overnight. If you were a tourist outside of Poland before 13 December 1981, you woke up on that memorable Sunday to a completely different

and unplanned reality that few were prepared for. But this is a topic for a separate study, perhaps after my own retirement in a few years.

The history of collaboration among Polish, Polonia, and Native American psychiatrists, both military and civilian, is “still alive” and being recorded on an ongoing basis. New communication technologies, including virtual ones (necessitated by COVID), provide other, almost instantaneous opportunities to share experiences. But nothing can replace personal, socialising interactions, conference presentations during congresses and medical conventions of all kinds, as well as those less formal, backstage and social ones during evening dinners, banquets or sometimes around a campfire outdoors, later transforming into long “night Polish talks”. Modified military and medical (and psychiatric) cooperation is also possible, as the US military medical services still employ a large number of medical personnel with decidedly Polish roots.

Source materials

1. <http://poloniamed.org/i-y-kongres-polonii-medycznej/> and <http://poloniamed.org/zawadowicz/>
2. Archives of the Gazeta Lekarska journal:
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