



CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE HEALTH CENTER OF THE STATE ARMAMENT FACTORY – WEAPONS FACTORY IN RADOM (1925–1942)

Przyczynek do dziejów Ośrodka Zdrowia Państwowej
Wytwórni Uzbrojenia – Fabryki Broni
w Radomiu (1925–1942)



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Abstract

A number of monographs and studies have been written so far about the Radom State Armament Factory – Weapons Factory, which was established in 1925, but none of these works has comprehensively addressed the subject of health support for the factory's employees. Also, no original source documentation has survived that would allow for the reconstruction of the staff composition, the location of the Center within the factory premises or the structure of injuries and illnesses. To address this gap, research was conducted in the Radom State Archives. The requested information, however, is not contained in the factory's files. Isolated details can only be found by reviewing thematically related folders on professional medical personnel, other medical institutions or in the order books of the Director of the Radom Social Insurance Company from the World War II period. The causal nature of the work is evident from the premises outlined above. This study, which takes a closer look at the history of the Armament Factory Health Center, which should be considered a local community, contributes to a deeper understanding of one of the aspects of military health care.

Streszczenie

Na temat powstałej w 1925 roku w Radomiu Państwowej Wytwórni Uzbrojenia – Fabryki Broni napisano dotychczas wiele monografii i opracowań, jednak żadna z tych prac nie podjęła tematu zabezpieczenia zdrowotnego pracowników zakładu w sposób kompleksowy. Nie zachowała się również żadna oryginalna dokumentacja źródłowa, która pozwoliłaby odtworzyć skład personelu, lokalizację Ośrodka na terenie fabryki czy strukturę urazów i zachorowań. Aby wypełnić tę lukę, przeprowadzono kwerendę w Archiwum Państwowym w Radomiu. Poszukiwanych informacji nie odnaleziono jednak w aktach dotyczących samej fabryki. Pojedyncze dane można znaleźć dopiero przeglądając teczkę tematycznie zbieżną, dotyczące fachowego personelu medycznego, innych placówek medycznych czy też księgi Zarządzeń Dyrektora Ubezpieczalni Społecznej w Radomiu z okresu II wojny światowej. Z powyższych przesłanek wynika przyczynkowski charakter pracy. Opracowanie niniejsze, przybliżając dzieje lokalnej społeczności, jaką był Ośrodek Zdrowia Fabryki Broni, staje się przyczynek do lepszego poznania jednego z aspektów wojskowej służby zdrowia.

Keywords: World War II; Radom; health center; weapons factory

Słowa kluczowe: II wojna światowa; Radom; ośrodek zdrowia; fabryka broni

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Introduction

Little information has survived regarding the organization of premises and staffing of health care at the State Armament Factory – Arms Factory in Radom (PWU-FB) during the operation of its Health Center between 1925 and 1942. A brochure published in 1975 mentioned only briefly that a *small outpatient clinic was located in the administration building*, without specifying the number of rooms or staff. The brochure further states: *It was not until 1935 when funds from employee contributions (5%) to the Health Fund were used to adapt the building at 10 Słoneczna Street (now 1905 Street) for healthcare purposes, with Dr. Franciszek Waga appointed as its head. These funds were also used for the construction of a hospital on Narutowicza Street, opened in 1937 as the central facility for related institutions in Radom, Pionki, and Skarżysko. The hospital comprised three departments—internal medicine, surgery, and gynaecology—and four outpatient clinics: surgery, otolaryngology, ophthalmology, and gynaecology. At the time, it was the most modern and best-equipped hospital in Radom. The facility was taken over by the Polish Army in 1945, and it came under the authority of the municipal health service in 1950* [1]. However, the hospital on Narutowicza Street was not affiliated with the Armament Factory or related armaments plants. Its establishment, as the Garrison Hospital, was ordered on August 1, 1937, by directive of the General Command Department 3625 (Organizational, Secret) issued by the Minister of Military Affairs [2]. The hospital building, completed in 1937, was officially opened on Narutowicza Street on April 25, 1938 [3]. Similarly, limited data regarding the organization of health care at the facility are available in other sources [4].

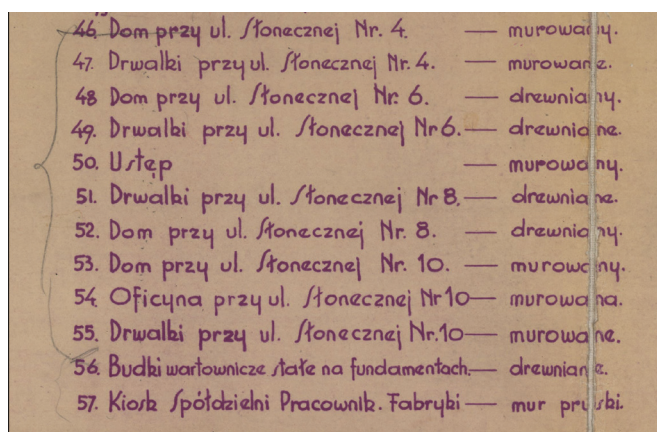
Let us now return to the PWU-FB Health Center. According to the authors of the 1975 study, a separate building of the facility was opened in 1935. In the same year, the local press reported: *‘Four major war industry plants, i.e. the gunpowder factory in Pionki, the weapons factory in Radom, and the weapon and rocket artillery factories in Skarżysko-Kamienna, will be excluded from the Social Insurance Fund as of April 1. These factories were to establish their own insurance system for illness and incapacity for work, and independently provide pension insurance for white- and blue-collar workers, accident insurance, and contributions to the Labor Fund. As a result, the Radom Social Insurance Institution lost*

one-third of its insured population and approximately 40% of its total revenue [5].

The building at 10 Słoneczna Street has not survived, and no archival photographs of Radom have been found showing it in its entirety. The only known image, discovered in a German soldier’s album and dated September 1939, shows merely a fragment of the structure [6].

This photograph, taken from the factory side along the arched internal road where cannons were displayed, shows four German soldiers. The wall of the Health Center outbuilding can be seen behind the second soldier from the right, appearing as if it had been added to the main Armament Factory building (marked as no. 54 on the attached plan). Above the head of the second soldier from the left, a fragment of a tall gable-roofed structure can be seen—this is the Health Center building at 10 Słoneczna Street (marked 53). Above the head of the first soldier on the left, a fragment of the building at 8 Słoneczna Street (marked 52) is visible (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). The Armament Factory plan is preserved in the collections of the State Archives in Radom (Fig. 3) [7]. Dr. Zygmunt Ehrlich (1885–1933) was the first head of the Center. He organized the outpatient clinic in the administration building and later earned the recognition of the facility’s employees for his conscientiousness and dedication to patients, serving at the Health Center from 1927 to 1933. In 1927, his activities at the Armament Factory were criticized in a paper entitled “Mr. Dr. Ehrlich at ‘Work’” published in *Życie Robotnicze* issued by the Radom Polish Socialist Party. The doctor’s response was published in the daily *Słowo* (No. 231, October 7, 1928). In 1927, Dr. Ehrlich was also engaged in social activities; his name appears among those helping poor children as part of “Ochrona III” at 17 Skaryszewska Street, organized by the Charitable Society.

In February 1933, Dr. Ehrlich donated an X-ray room to the Railway Technical School. The local press reported: *‘In these days, the State Railway Technical School received a generous gift from Dr. Zygmunt Ehrlich in the form of a complete X-ray room, worth several thousand PLN. The gift includes, among others, a mercury interrupter, induction coils, a marble switchboard, capacitors, a screen, and a number of vacuum tubes. The significance of this donation highlights the generosity of the donor* [8].



46.	Dom przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 4.	— murowany.
47.	Drwalki przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 4.	— murowane.
48.	Dom przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 6.	— drewniany.
49.	Drwalki przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 6.	— drewniane.
50.	Ustęp	— murowany.
51.	Drwalki przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 8.	— drewniane.
52.	Dom przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 8.	— drewniany.
53.	Dom przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 10.	— murowany.
54.	Oficina przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 10.	— murowana.
55.	Drwalki przy ul. Słonecznej Nr. 10.	— murowane.
56.	Budki warsztatowe stałe na fundamentach.	— drewniane.
57.	Kiosk Spółdzielni Pracowników Fabryki	— mur pruski.

Figure 1. Fragment of a legend from the 1938 Armament Factory plan



Figure 2. View of the buildings at 8 and 10 Słoneczna Street (in the background)

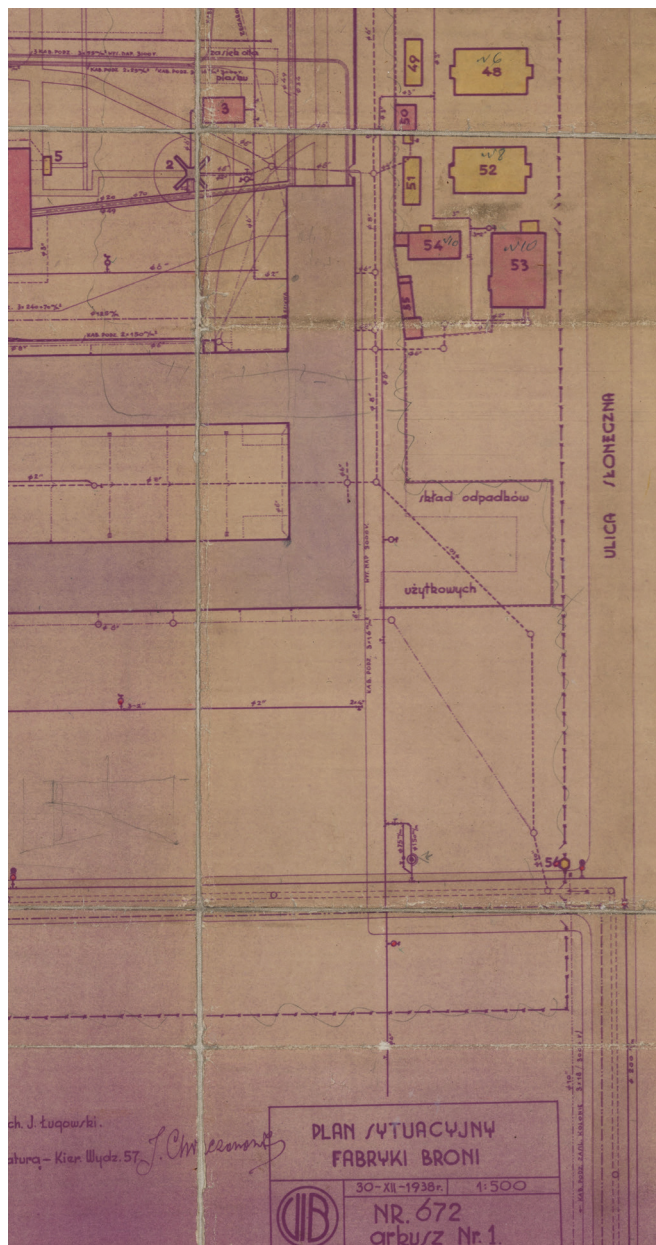


Figure 3. Location of the buildings at 6, 8, and 10 Słoneczna Street on the 1938 Armament Factory plan

Dr. Ehrlich died in 1933 in Krakow following a major surgery and was buried there. His posthumous memorial reads: *In every area of work, the Deceased was distinguished by his outstanding conscientiousness, which earned him the respect and affection of many employees of the State Armament Factory, where he served as doctor for many years. As a physician, he was an individual with a broad mind, profound knowledge, and work that continually advanced.*

He kept abreast of the latest achievements in medical science and practice, applying them energetically and skilfully—so much so that he was credited with ‘preventing death’ for many in our city through his adept care. This posthumous tribute also highlights another notable trait of Dr. Ehrlich: he was a steadfast advocate for truth. He consistently fought for truth in his actions and their adherence to ethical principles. This struggle was passionate and often uncomfortable for his opponents, yet always driven by ideological motives, im-

pacting him both physically and morally. Dr. Ehrlich spared no effort, which contributed significantly to his premature death. He was generally regarded as a ‘good man’, a quality increasingly rare in the post-war era, and a compassionate physician, always ready to help the sick, never motivated by personal gain, and exceptionally willing to support his unwell colleagues and their families [9].

Following Dr. Ehrlich’s death, Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Franciszek Waga (1887–1956), who relocated to the city from Warsaw, took over the Health Center. What is known about Dr. Waga? In 1926, as a major physician, he attended and graduated from the French School of Warfare (*École Supérieure de Guerre*) as one of 53 students [10]. From 1925, he collaborated with the editorial staff of the monthly *Military Physician*, published under the subtitle ‘Organ Oficerów Korpusu Sanitarnego Wyznany i Rezerwy’ (Office of Medical Corps Officers and Reserves) [11]. In 1932, as a lieutenant colonel, he wrote the foreword to the book *Psychotechnical Script* (According to Lectures at Officer Psychotechnical Courses), published by the Ministry of Military Affairs [12]. As an activist of the Polish Red Cross (PCK), he participated in the re-establishment of the Radom branch board in September 1939, alongside other physicians: Stefan Wroński, Feliks Nowakowski, and Zofia Tochtermann. The memoirs of Dr. Jerzy Borysowicz read: ‘I worked most closely with Dr. Stefania Perzanowska, Tadeusz Orzeszko, Konrad Vieth, Franciszek Waga, Mamert Cywiński, and Wacław Raczyński. We exchanged information about impending arrests, avoided staying at home overnight, sent individuals requiring medical certificates or sick leaves, and informed each other about patients suspected of collaborating with the Germans, etc.’ [13]. In 1940, Dr. Waga transitioned from working with the Polish Red Cross to the Board of the Municipal Welfare Council in Radom. Social Insurance documents contain numerous entries regarding the payment of remuneration for his work as a surgeon at the outpatient clinic at 10 Słoneczna Street (where the Armament Factory Health Center was located before the war). After the war, he became the first Head of the Emergency Medical Service in Radom [14–17]. He also practiced as a dermatologist.

Over the years, the Health Center expanded its operations, offering services to an increasing number of insured persons, their families, and personnel. However, it is currently impossible to reconstruct the employment periods of individual doctors, paramedics, or nurses. Wartime censuses of the city’s inhabitants contain information on only some physicians, along with notes regarding their work at the Armament Factory Health Center. Records mention Dr. Helena Popławska, born on September 13, 1899, who in 1940 lived at 18 Sienkiewicza Street and reported a monthly salary of 300 PLN; Dr. Wiktor Ogórkowski, who in 1940 resided at 21 Kelles-Krauzs Street; and Dr. Józef Wiłkomirski, who in February 1942 lived at 14 Waryńskiego Street and received a salary of 300 PLN at the Health Center [18–20]. According to these records, a paramedic named Leon Stamirowski, born on April 7, 1888, also worked at the Health Center. In 1942, he earned 350 PLN per month and resided at 88 Bławatna Street [21].

On December 15, 1941, a conference was held regarding the takeover of the PWU-FB Health Center by the Social

Insurance Institution. Dr. Teofil Jórğa (1893–1950) attended on its behalf. The Head of the institution in Radom ordered that *Dr. Jórğa be reimbursed 20 PLN for travel expenses incurred while attending the conference at the Armament Factory Health Center concerning the takeover of the Health Center by the local Social Insurance Institution* [22, 23].

As of 1 January 1942, in accordance with Order No. II of 17 March 1941, which dissolved the health centres operating at Radom factories and workplaces, and following the arrangements adopted at the 15 December 1941 conference, the obligations toward employees arising from social insurance were assumed by the Social Insurance Institution in Radom. The formal date for the takeover of the buildings and personnel was 1 January 1942. In the case of the PWU-FB Health Center, the Social Insurance Institution assumed responsibility for the following personnel (monthly earnings in PLN are shown in brackets):

- **Doctors:** Dr. Władysław Cimiengo, physician (400 PLN); Dr. Helena Popławska, paediatrician (400 PLN); Dr. Eugeniusz Szyling, gynaecologist (550 PLN); Dr. Józef Wiłkomirski, otolaryngologist (300 PLN); Dr. Stefan Gajdziński, internist (550 PLN); Dr. Jerzy Borysowicz, neurologist (300 PLN); Dr. Mamert Cywiński, internist (300 PLN); Dr. Bronisław Masłowski, surgeon (330 PLN); Dr. Bronisława Skorko, paediatrician (350 PLN); Dr. Zofia Olszewska, dentist (560 PLN); Dr. Helena Jarczyńska, dentist (400 PLN); and Dr. Wiktor Ogórkowski, dentist (200 PLN).
- **Feldshers:** Walenty Staniewski (450 PLN) and Leon Sławomirski (350 PLN).
- **Nurses:** Jadwiga Żardecka (270 PLN); Janina Dydyńska (180) and Anna Orłowska (280) and Anna Brzozowska, hygienist (250) and Julianna Bilska, sanitary assistant (190)
- **Pharmacy employees:** Tadeusz Teski, MA, manager (600); Marian Sztencel (500); Halina Fijałkowska (300); Czesława Żebrowska, MA (420) and Leokadia Wach, bag maker (200).
- **Administrative staff:** Stanisław Piotrowski, book-keeper (450); Stefan Zakrzewski, secretary (500); Tadeusz Piotrowski, clerk (200) and Stanisław Goździkowski, mechanic (300).
- **Support staff:** Stanisław Kurys, janitor (200); Władysław Siurek, janitor (170); Zofia Giza, cleaner (170); Władysława Krawczyk, cleaner (150) and Janina Pękala, cleaner (150).
- This marked the end of the period of operation of the PWU-FB Health Centre as an independent facility [24].

Conclusions

In addition to the history written in battlefields, military headquarters, and politicians' offices, local history remains of crucial importance, as it is with local history that communities most strongly identify. This history is shaped by the people and events in their immediate surroundings, influencing towns, workplaces, associations, health centres, and interpersonal relationships. Reconstructing this history is therefore of great importance, as it connects us closely to the past and helps prevent future

mistakes. It is hoped that further archival materials related to this facility will be obtained, enabling continued research on the topic.

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