

## Professor Wiesław Łasiński (1915–2010)

Wiesław Łasiński, the editor-in-chief of *Folia Morphologica* quarterly in 1964–1983, passed away on 23 July 2010 in Łódź.

He was an eminent Polish physician and anatomist. He was awarded an *honoris causa* doctorate by the Military Medical Academy. His scientific and editorial achievements had a significant influence on many generations of Polish medical students and physicians.

He was born on 25 December 1915 in Stary Sącz. In 1933 he enrolled at the Medical Faculty of Warsaw University and at the Sanitary School of Officer Cadets in Warsaw. He was awarded a physician diploma and the military degree of second lieutenant in 1939. In the same year, at the beginning of the World War II, he was taken prisoner by German soldiers during the battle of the Bzura River whilst fighting against the German army. He stayed in several POW camps for officers within the territory of Germany, where he worked as a physician in POW hospitals in Koblenz and Trevir. During his attempted escape to France, he was caught and put in the fortress in Chalons-sur-Marne. Following his release by the American army he worked in the UNRRA hospital in Germany as a physician among former Polish, French, Italian, and Russian prisoners-of-war.

During his stay in the POW camp in Mannheim he conducted research on the arrangement of cutaneous listels on the palms of Polish people with the assistance of the eminent Polish anatomist, Professor Edward Loth. He completed his research after the war when he returned to Poland and was awarded the scientific degree of doctor of medical sciences.

In Poland the wide range of activities conducted by Professor Wiesław Łasiński was related to medical academic education. Having enlisted for profes-



sional military service, he initially worked as a surgeon in the Navy Hospital in Gdańsk; he then became the commander of the hospital for ten years. At the same time, he was awarded the title of Assistant Professor in the Medical Academy in Gdańsk and became the chairman of the Department of Normal Anatomy. He worked in the Academy for many years. He was also

the Vice Dean of the Medical Faculty, the Vice Rector for Students' Affairs, and the Rector of the Academy (1982–1983).

In 1965–1972 he was the Rector of Bolesław Szarecki Military Medical Academy in Łódź. In 1968 he was awarded the degree of rear admiral, and in 1970 he received the scientific title of full professor. He created the Department of Topographic Anatomy, of which he was the chairman until his retirement in 1984. At the same time, he was the Director of the Biomorphological Institute.

Wiesław Łasiński was a member of many scientific associations. For many years he worked in the main board of the Polish Anatomical Society. Furthermore, he was a member of the Polish Medical Society and Polish Surgical Society. For many years he worked in the Committee on Anthropology, the Committee on Zoology, and the Committee on Basic Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He was on the board of the International Council of Dermatoglyphic Research in Madrid and a member of L'Association des Anatomistes (he worked in the editorial committee of this association). He became an honorary member of the Polish Anatomical Society, the Polish Anthropological Society, and the Russian Society of Anatomists, Histologists, and Embryologists.

Apart from anatomical and surgical works, Professor Wiesław Łasiński's achievements included

editorial works. Dermatoglyphic research is very valuable because it is used in forensic expert opinions as well as in clinical theory and practice. The professor's publications on anatomical terminology are significant not only for anatomy but also for other medical disciplines. His research on the history of anatomy conducted in Gdańsk and his works on relationships between anatomy and fine arts cannot be overestimated. His publications in the area of surgery concerning medical security during military service in the navy are related to military medicine.

The crowning glory of his work as an eminent surgical theoretician and practitioner is the work which does not have its equivalent in Polish medical literature, namely the three-volume atlas titled "Anatomia Topograficzna i Stosowana" ["Topographic and Applied Anatomy"] of which he was the only author. It is a very modern and beautifully illustrated textbook, valued by students and physicians of many disciplines as an excellent guide to surgical anatomy. His work titled "Anatomy of the Head and Neck for Dentists" has been published in six editions. This textbook is a basic source of knowledge for students and dentists; thousands of copies of this book quickly vanish from bookshops after each publication. He was the author of anatomic entries in "Po-

lish Medical Dictionary" of which he was a co-author. From 1965 he was also the editor and co-author of many editions of the monumental textbook titled "Human Anatomy" by Bochenek and Reicher; he recognised this work of everlasting value as his *opus maximum*.

He worked and served in the army after the World War II during the difficult and dark times of communism, to which he did not surrender. He never became a member of the Communist Party, which was very uncommon among generals of the Polish Army at that time. During the student strikes of March 1968, despite the pressure applied by the communist authorities, he issued the order which prevented cadets of the Military Medical Academy (of which he was the Rector and Commanding Officer with the general degree) from suppressing the strike.

The life of Professor Łasiński may not be measured only by his scientific achievements and performed functions. He was also a humanist and a colourful person with a great talent for speaking. He had a strong character; he was strict and demanding as well as friendly and just. He shaped the characters, minds, and attitudes of students and his collaborators.

May he rest in peace.

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