

Letter to the Editor

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To the Editor:

I am pleased that Adam Świątek, a professor of history at the eminent Jagiellonian University in Kraków, reviewed my 346-page bilingual (English and Polish) biographic monograph, *Dr. Wladimir Sylwester Kindraczuk: Forgotten Chemist of Łańcut and Pioneer of Probiotics; Discoverer of the Probiotic Bacterium Bacillus carpathicus in Hutsul Huslanka / Dr. Włodzimierz Sylwester Kindraczuk: Zapomniany aptekarz miasta Łańcuta i naukowiec-pionier probiotyki; Odkrywca probiotycznej bakterii Bacillus carpathicus w huculskiej huślance*. Świątek correctly describes my book as “a biographic/genealogical study incorporating political context for the period” (Świątek 249). I am glad that he gives the biography a positive evaluation, calling it “a valuable study on a forgotten figure from the Polish-Ukrainian border region” and “an inspiring example of such a genealogical initiative,” and that he characterizes Włodzimierz Sylwester Kindraczuk as one of the “positive figures from the Polish-Ukrainian border region” (Świątek 252).

However, I am writing to correct some errors in the review—namely, with regard to chapter 5 (the memoir chapter [see Bahry 159–82, 323–38])—where Świątek confuses my father, Jarosław Bahrij, with my maternal grandfather, Włodzimierz (Wladimir) Sylwester Kindraczuk. Świątek remarks, “Furthermore, Bahry does not explain her speculation that the alleged Soviet attempt to send Kindraczuk to Katyń in order to murder him (which did not happen) was related to his arrest by the Gestapo” (Świątek 251). I would like to point out that on page 169 of my book, I do *not* write “my grandfather” (that is, Kindraczuk), but rather “my father” (that is, Bahrij). I write,

My *father* [i.e., Bahrij] always talked about the three times he narrowly escaped being killed. On one occasion he was arrested by the Gestapo. . . .
My *father* [i.e., Bahrij], who as a citizen of Poland served in the Polish army,

described an incident when he was arrested. . . . My *father* [i.e., Bahrij] often told the story of the Katyn massacre and how lucky he was to have escaped Katyn. (Bahry 169; my emphases)

Similarly, in the Polish translation of chapter 5, I write,

Mój *tato* [i.e., Bahrij] opowiadał o trzech sytuacjach, kiedy on mało nie został zabity. Pewnego razu aresztowało go gestapo. . . . *Tato*, [i.e., Bahrij] będąc obywatelem Polski, służył w polskiej armii. . . . *Tato* [i.e., Bahrij] często opowiadał o masakrze katyńskiej i jak jemu poszczęściło się, że Katyń go ominął. (Bahry 330; my emphases)

In retrospect, for greater clarity I could have added the names of my father, grandfather, grandmother, mother, and uncle each time I referred to them and their wartime experiences in this last, memoir chapter.

I am surprised that Świątek writes that my work was “largely inspired by family sentiment. This undoubtedly contributed to an uncritical approach toward the history of her family . . .” (Świątek 249). All of the chapters in the book, with the exception of chapter 5 (the memoir chapter), have extensive notes and bibliographic references. In total, there are forty-four pages of meticulously researched notes and archival references—and including a bibliography—in this monograph, as well as over one hundred photographs of original historical documents and photo illustrations. The book also contains a copy of Kindraczuk’s original, 1912 German-language publication on *huslanka*, along with English- and Polish-language translations of it (see Bahry 17–19, 183–88, 339–44). The final chapter of the biography (chapter 5), which is titled “A Granddaughter’s Memories of Dr. W. S. Kindraczuk in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada” / “Wspomnienia wnuczki o życiu doktora Kindraczuk w Hamilton w Kanadzie,” is the only chapter that does not have references, as it is a memoir. Moreover, it is the memoir of a child of World War II refugees who herself was born at a time when her parents and grandparents were living in a displaced persons (DP) camp in Austria and immigrated with them to Canada as an infant. In fact, I hesitated about including chapter 5 (the childhood memoir chapter) in the monograph. I write,

It is difficult for me to isolate the traumatic stories related just by my grandfather as all the stories of the individual members of my family (my grandfather, my grandmother, mother, father, uncle . . .) all merged into one giant picture. In my childhood memories this picture is a cubist painting and the image is one of horror and death. These stories were narrated to me over a period of many years. They affected my psyche as well and this chapter has been the most difficult for me to write. . . . (Bahry 167 [corresponding with the Polish-language 329])

I nevertheless decided to include the chapter because I thought that it was important to document Kindraczuk's life in Canada.

In addition, I wish to address Świątek's criticism where he comments, "And unfortunately, the topic of Kindraczuk's service in the Polish army is not addressed at all" (Świątek 251). In response, I would say that I think that my biography of Kindraczuk, who was born in 1882 in Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, makes it clear that he did not serve in the Polish army, as prior to World War I, Galicia was part of Austria, not Poland. Kindraczuk was a scientist with a PhD in chemistry, which he obtained in 1910 at the university in Lemberg (Lviv, Lwów), where he conducted research in the chemistry laboratory of Bronisław Radziszewski. He continued his research before World War I in the chemistry laboratory of Willibald Winkler at the university in Vienna and then at the university in Kiel. With the onset of World War I, Kindraczuk was forced to abandon his scientific research, and he dedicated himself exclusively to service as a medical and health-care professional—he was a pharmacist and pharmacy owner in Łańcut who worked tirelessly to provide much needed medical care during World War I, the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918–20, the interwar years, and World War II in Łańcut.

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