

## COMMENT ON PERIODIC VEGETARIANISM AND THE FIRST MENTIONS OF A PLANT DIET IN POLAND (ROCZ PANSTW ZAKL HIG 2019;70:217-223)

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In 1880 *Alfred von Seefeld* (25.08.1825–12.08.1893) published in Hannover a book devoted to vegetarianism [1], which four years later was translated into Polish, with the subtitle “wegeteryjanizm” and a commentary on plant-only diet (“pożywienie wyłącznie roślinne”) by *Konstanty Moes-Oskragiello* (6.01.1850–27.01.1910) [2]. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Moes-Oskragiello*’s own literary output on a plant-based diet [3, 4] initiated an emotional discussion among Polish medical practitioners [5, 6] and, once translated into Russian, went on to have a big impact on Russian vegetarians, including *Lev Tolstoy* [7]. In 1883, *Moes-Oskragiello* founded a natural medicine clinic (“Lecznicy Zakład Termopacyjny”) offering vegan dishes in Otwock near Warsaw [6]. In this respect, *Skorek et al.*’s [8] claim that the first mention of a plant diet in Polish society and its scientific literature appeared as late as 1912 must be corrected.

Moreover, in discussing the history of vegetarianism in Poland, it is worth mentioning that a large part of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth’s population adhered closely to the dietary recommendations of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which advocated so called periodic vegetarianism [9] and from which we can discern the origins of contemporary so-called fast dishes in Polish cuisine [10, 11]. It is also worth noting that *Moes-Oskragiello*, born in a family with Dutch roots, grew up in an area inhabited by numerous Eastern Orthodox Christians [6]. Reduced intake or complete abstinence from food of animal origin is practised by Orthodox Christians for a total of 180–200 days annually [12]. The duration of fasting periods can range from seven weeks, in the case of the Great Lent (meat, dairy products and eggs are not allowed, but fish can be consumed on Lady Day and Palm Sunday, and caviar on Lazarus Saturday) and 40 days, in the case of the Christmas fast, to a single day (e.g. Wednesdays, Fridays, the eve of the Epiphany [18 January in the Gregorian calendar], the Beheading of St John the Baptist [11 September] and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross [27 September]).

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2. *von Seefeld A.*: Jarosz i Jarstwo (wegeteryjanizm). Przyczynki do nauki o pożywieniu wyłącznie roślinnym, jako jedynym środkiem wyzwolenia się od chorób fizycznych, moralnych i społecznych, słowem odrodzenia się rodzaju ludzkiego. Przełożył z niemieckiego i wstępem opatrzył *K. Moes-Oskragiello*. Warszawa, Druk: *Józef Unger*, 1884
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