

## ***Pro Memoria. Professor Bolesław Jałowcy (1906–1943): Mortui viventes obligant – the livings are obligated to the dead***

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### **Abstract**

Professor Bolesław Jałowcy (1906–1943) was a chairman of Department of Histology and Embryology at Faculty of Medicine of King John Casimir University (Polish: *Uniwersytet Jana Kazimierza: UJK*) in Lvov. He succeeded Professor Władysław Szymonowicz (1869–1939) who held this position for decades. As the most skillful followers of his tutor, Bolesław Jałowcy was a great investigator of physiology of human tissue, embryogenesis, histological consequences of female sex hormones on blood clotting action as well as regeneration of nerves in addition to description of silver staining technique for reticulin fibers of skin. He was a hard working person with gentle attitude to such a subtle matter as microscopic structure of human body. However, he happened to live in brutal conditions of nationalistic struggles. His example shows how much a dedicated scientist could do in a very short time as his life was tragically ended with murdering him during World War Two. His story is a great lesson for generations of academic workers how to meet high moral standards with efficient and creative scientific work in evil and destructive, nationalistic climate that occurs usually in wartime.

**Keywords:** silver staining of tissues, histology, John Casimir University, Lvov, World War Two, extermination of intellectual elite.

### **☞ Introduction**

Professor Bolesław Jałowcy was an eminent histologist at Faculty of Medicine of King John Casimir University (Polish: *Uniwersytet Jana Kazimierza: UJK*) in Lvov, which was founded on 20 January 1661 by Royal Act [1]. This University of truly western nature in the East had long tradition of microscopic studies of human tissues since Professor Joseph Berres Edler von Perez (1796–1844), a head of Anatomy Department (1820–1832) introduced microscope as tool of exploration of human histology to include his findings in his fine handbook entitled “Anatomy of microscopic framework of the human body (*Anatomie der mikroskopischen Gebilde des menschlichen Körpers*)” that was enriched in multiple fine illustrations. Professor Berres was followed by such great scientists as Professors Christian August Voigt (1808–1890) (working in Lvov between 1850 and 1854), Julius Planer (*vel* Julius Planner) (1827–1881) (working in Lvov 1855–1863), an outstanding discoverer of liquid crystals (1861), and Ernst Rektorzyk (1834–after 1875) (head of Anatomy Department in Lvov, 1863–1874). Next Lvovian histology developed in Laboratory of Histology since 1895, which was turned into separate Department of Histology and Embryology thanks to Professor Henryk Kadyi (1851–1912) [1–3]. From 1897, it was supervised by Professor Władysław Szymonowicz (1869–1939) for four decades, who was famous for his excellent handbook titled “Histology and microscopic anatomy with particular regard to the human body structure and microscopic technique (*Lehrbuch der Histologie und der mikroskopischen Anatomie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des menschlichen Körpers einschliesslich der mikroskopischen*

*Technik*)” to be published in 1901 and to have English, German, Spanish, Italian, and Polish edition [4]. Such predecessors were a great obligation for Professor Bolesław Jałowcy, who succeeded his great tutor in the position of chairman of Department of Histology [5]. Bolesław Jałowcy deserves commemorative note not only because of his scientific output, high moral standards but also for the aspect of his life final which is a sad and warning story of how incredibly talented and skilled individual could end his fruitful life being murdered with no guilt in revenge of murder of an academic of different nationality [6].



*Professor Bolesław Roman Jałowcy (1906–1943).*

### **☞ Biographical note**

Bolesław Roman Jałowcy was born on September 11, 1906 in a family of craftsmen in Przemyśl, in Austro-Hungary, at the time now in Poland. Bolesław Jałowcy managed his medical practice as dermatologist, while at university he was devoted to Histology Department. [7].

He graduated IX<sup>th</sup> Jan Kochanowski Comprehensive School in Lvov (1925). From 1925 to 1931, he studied medicine at the Medical Faculty of the University of Lwów. He belonged to the “Aquitania” Polish Academic Corporation, of which he was president in the academic year 1929–1930. Then, he worked as the demonstrator and assistant of Professor Władysław Szymonowicz. In 1931, he defended his doctorate thesis. In 1935, as a Fellow of the Foundation of National Culture, he studied in Utrecht and Amsterdam. In 1936, he obtained a title of Associate Professor at the UJK in the field of histology at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Lvov [8]. In 1937, he became head of the Department of Histology and Embryology, UJK. From 1939, he was employed in position of Professor at UJK [5]. During the Soviet occupation of Lvov (1939–1941), he was Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Lviv State Medical Institute, dedicated to the University as a separate institution. During the German occupation, he worked in the medical professional courses, was also lice feeder at the Institute for the Study of typhus fever and Viruses that was directed by Professor Rudolf Weigl (1883–1957). He was arrested by the Gestapo as a hostage on October 11, 1942 and was kept imprisoned for three weeks. On October 1, 1943, in the street in Lvov, he was shot by student Pańczyszyn, an activist of the Ukrainian underground in revenge of the shooting by Kedyw (Directorate for Subversion of the Home Army: *Polish Armia Krajowa*) Ukrainian Professor Andrij Lastoweckyj [1, 3, 6]. This victim was a promising Lecturer of Physics, who was falsely accused that he denied Polish students access to university medical studies during World War Two [6]. Thus, in this sequence of tragic events, an obvious slander was a pretext for execution of Andrij Lastoweckyj by Polish underground, which was followed by murder of Bolesław Jałowy by an activist of Ukrainian resistance movement. Professor Jałowy was buried on Lychakiv Cemetery [6]. A fruitful and scientific life of Professor Jałowy ended abruptly too early at the age of 37, so unfortunately the following story of his scientific life would have been naturally much longer, if he had not been murdered.

### ☞ Scientific work

Bolesław Jałowy was deeply engaged in development of methods of tissue staining [9]. Professor Bolesław Jałowy described profoundly silver staining technique for reticulin fibers of skin [10]. Moreover, he experimentally induced argyria (accumulation of silver salts) in animal species to investigate distribution of pathological overload with silver in the living organisms [11]. Bolesław Jałowy also investigated degeneration and regeneration of peripheral motor neuron in the morphological and functional aspect [12]. He paid special attention to morphology of nerve endings and their functional properties particularly in context of dermatological disorders like nodular eczema [13]. He investigated a heterogenic regeneration of nervous endings in perspective of sensory impairment, as well [14]. He also studied innervations of salivary glands trying to confront anatomical findings with microscopic evaluation [15]. Being a dermatologist using a microscope as its tool for everyday work, he provided an update description of “The cysts of hair follicles in the form of so-

called sebaceous cystadenomas (multiple steatocystomas) and milia” [16]. Bolesław Jałowy remained a great investigator of physiology of human tissue. He was concerned with histological consequences of deregulation of female hormonal system and its impact on blood clotting after ovariectomy [17]. His interest in hematology resulted in publication of report on a leukocyte Gouin reaction in the blood of syphilis-infected patients [18]. He was completely aware that is only one of numerous scientists in the magnificent history of his University in Lvov. Thus, with proper respect he cared for commemoration of his predecessor, Prof. Władysław Szymonowicz with publication of his obituary [4]. Variety of his publications made him the most promising disciple of Władysław Szymonowicz’s scientific team. His scientific output was better accessible due to publications in German and French, so his academic position was better recognized in Western Europe. He maintained scientific contacts with German-speaking centers particularly with Berlin, where his predecessor Władysław Szymonowicz completed fellowship under supervision of Oscar Hertwig and developed long lasting cooperation with eminent German histologists [15, 19]. Thus, his activity best suited a brilliant continuation of work of his tutor. Therefore, the choice of relatively young Bolesław Jałowy to be his successor as the head of the academic department was not an accident made by Władysław Szymonowicz but reasonable decision made on the ground of profound observation that referred to his trainee.

### ☞ Personality of Prof. Bolesław Jałowy

Professor Bolesław Jałowy was dedicated histologist who perfectly complemented his dermatological medical practice with his scientific activity. He was characterized with calm personality, gentle approach to such a scientific field as microscopic structure of human body and friendly but demanding attitude to his cooperators. However, he lived in time of World War Two, which meant extermination of intellectual elite of Lvov society in the background of nationalistic struggles, e.g., numerous professors of medicine were killed by Nazi Germans in Lvov at the time [1–3, 20]. His example proves that little time for a great and devoted scientist could be enough to provide lots of useful work for academic community and science.

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