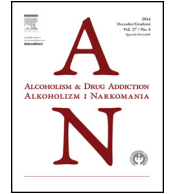




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Fighting alcoholism among railway workers in the light of early 20th Century Polish-language temperance publications

Zwalczanie alkoholizmu wśród kolejarzy w świetle polskojęzycznych czasopism abstynenckich z początku XX wieku

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The temperance magazines issued between 1843 and 1914 in Polish lands and among the Polish diaspora in Germany and USA constitute a barely known, and thus rarely used, research source on the history of addictions, including of course alcoholism. The purpose of the article is to present how the creators and correspondents of Polish-language temperance periodicals considered the problem of railway workers' alcoholism and their attempts to overcome the habit.

Method: The main research method employed was analysis of press content (qualitative method). The quantitative method was abandoned due to the small number of texts available for the analysis. A historical and critical method of source analysis as well as chronological-and-problem analysis also proved quite useful.

Discussion and conclusions: The Polish-language temperance periodicals provide, among other things, valuable information referring to as yet unknown though essential problem of fighting alcoholism among railway workers in Europe, USA and the Polish territories of the Three Partitions.

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S T R E S Z C Z E N I E

Słowa kluczowe:

alkoholizm
abstynencja
kolejarze
prasa abstynencka
XX wiek

Wprowadzenie: Czasopisma abstynenckie ukazujące się w latach 1843–1914 na ziemiach polskich oraz wśród niemieckiej i amerykańskiej Polonii stanowią mało znane, a przez to niewykorzystywane na szerszą skalę, źródło badań nad historią uzależnień, w tym oczywiście alkoholizmu. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, jak na problem alkoholizmu wśród pracowników kolei i na próby przewycięzania przez nich tego nałogu spoglądali twórcy i korespondenci polskojęzycznych periodyków abstynenckich.

Metoda: Jako główną metodę badawczą zastosowano analizę zawartości prasy (metoda jakościowa). Z uwagi na niewielką liczbę tekstów wykorzystanych do analizy zrezygnowano z metody ilościowej. Przydatna okazała się także metoda historyczno-krytyczna źródeł oraz metoda chronologiczno-problemowa.

Omówienie i wnioski: Na łamach polskojęzycznych periodyków abstynenckich można znaleźć m.in. cenne informacje odnoszące się do tak mało znanej, ale bardzo istotnej problematyki, jaką jest zwalczanie alkoholizmu przez kolejarzy z Europy, USA oraz ziem polskich trzech zaborów.

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Introduction

Alcohol is one of the main psychoactive substances that has always been mankind's companion. It has been used both in moments of joy and sadness; some even believed it was a cure for certain ailments. So it is no wonder that drunkenness came to plague family and religious life and has even led to the material and spiritual degradation of whole societies. The effects of excessive drinking, recognised as an illness with a psychological foundation already in 1804, came to define a new unwelcome phenomenon in human history to be challenged and combatted known as alcoholism [1–3].

The United States ought to be recognised as the cradle of the anti-alcohol movement with an ethical and religious message. The first association promoting temperance was established in Moreau in New York State in 1808, and another in Boston in 1813. In 1826, the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance was founded and, like the Moreau and Boston associations, initially supported moderate drinking. The drinking of small amounts of weak beverages like beer or wine was accepted. However, after a few years, support grew for total abstinence [4, 5].

Tidings of these first temperance initiatives filtered through first to Western Europe and then to Polish lands itself. The first to draw attention to abstinence were professors at the University of Vilnius when they established an ethical association known as the

Rascal Society (Towarzystwo Szubrawców) with a statute published in 1817. It mentioned, among others, drunkenness, billiards and card games as morally and materially ruinous “misdemeanours”. The Radiant Association (Związek Promienistych) founded by Tomasz Zan in Vilnius in 1820, an offshoot of the Philomath Society (Towarzystwo Filomatów), also promoted the abstinence. On 6th May 1820, at a May picnic party organised for Vilnius university students, Zan emphasised the temperance character of the Radiant Association, suggesting they drank milk in favour of alcohol. The foundation of the next abstinence association did not take place until around 1836. This was established in Książ in Great Poland, and was supposed to encourage the limitation of the sale of alcohol to abuse drinkers. There was also the Association for Abstinence from Strong Drinks (Towarzystwo Wstrzemięźliwości od Mocnych Napojów) founded in Cracow in 1839. Its members were committed to drinking alcoholic beverages only for medicinal purposes and to avoid contact with drunk persons or those who drank too much. Also, the Polish anti-alcohol movement boasts the Association for the Suppression of the Use of Vodka in the Grand Duchy of Poznań (Towarzystwo ku Przytłumieniu Używania Wódki w Wielkim Księstwie Poznańskim) founded in 1840 with its offices in Kórnik [4–6].

The Catholic Church also has services in the fight against alcoholism. The Church's temperance

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