

UNIVERSITY OF OPOLE

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Summary of the doctoral dissertation of Ryszard Kwieciński, MA

“Jakub Hoffman (1896-1964). Biographical Study”

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The dissertation presents the profile of Jakub Hoffman, a legionnaire, politician, teacher, social and educational activist of the Second Polish Republic, historian, editor of "Rocznik Wołyński" and ambassador for the reconciliation of nations inhabiting the eastern borders of Poland. Few studies devoted to Hoffman, modest biographical entries based on a limited source base, often in the nature of mere reminiscences of their authors, omit many important stages of his life, thus minimizing his services to the country, and in particular to Volhynia, with which he identified himself until his death.

The main assumption of the dissertation is to recreate the biography of this figure as accurately as possible, and describe his activity as a soldier, educational activist, animator of cultural and scientific activities, as well as a state official, representative of the power camp and participant of post-war emigration.

The source base consists of materials collected in foreign and Polish archives and libraries. A particular role is played by the previously poorly researched sources of the State Archives of the Rivne Oblast (containing documentation of the political, scientific, social and professional activities of the Hoffmans) and sources stored at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London. The source base of the dissertation was expanded to include legislative materials collected in the Library of the Polish Parliament and legal acts published in official journals issued by the competent state and local government bodies. The dissertation also uses archival materials related to Jakub Hoffman, kept in the Central Military Archives and the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw.

The chronological framework of the dissertation refers to the subsequent stages of Jakub Hoffman's life and activity and covers the period between 1896 and 1964. The work has a chronological and problematic structure and consists of an introduction, six chapters and a conclusion. The dissertation was supplemented with a bibliography and a list of illustrations included in the dissertation. Annex No. 1 to the dissertation contains a list of works published

in individual volumes of "Rocznik Wołyński". Annex No. 2 contains Jakub Hoffman's unpublished diary from his service in the 1st Infantry Regiment of the 1st Brigade, Polish Legions, combined from numerous fragments kept in the collections of the State Archives of the Rivne Oblast.

The first chapter outlines Jakub Hoffman's family circle and his involvement in the fight for Poland's independence and the defense of its borders. Already at the beginning of his life he was involved in the shooting movement. At the outbreak of World War I, he joined the 1st Brigade, Polish Legions. Service in its ranks shaped him ideologically for the rest of his life. After the Oath Crisis, he was active in the Polish Military Organization. Being a member of the Polish Army he took part in the war with Russia.

The second chapter is mostly devoted to his ties with Volhynia, where he settled in 1923. As a legion veteran, he joined the group of the Piłsudskiites' elite of the Eastern Borderlands, which set the tone for the social and cultural life of all the Eastern Borderlands of Poland, but especially, due to it being a particular mosaic of nationalities, ethnicities and religions, for Volhynia.

Hoffman's involvement in politics at the local level and his subsequent actions as a member of parliament are discussed in chapter three. Hoffman took an active part in the so-called Henryk Józewski's Volhynia Experiment. On behalf of the ruling camp, he also became a member of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland.

The fourth chapter describes Hoffman's fate in the years 1939-1942. After the Red Army entered the eastern territories of Poland, he began to organize conspiratorial activities in Volhynia. These activities were interrupted by his exile beyond the Ural Mountains, during which he was arrested and imprisoned. Trying to use all possibilities to escape from captivity, he signed an agreement to cooperate with the NKVD. After his release from Soviet prison, he worked as an embassy liaison with the 6th Infantry Division in Uzbekistan, dealing with civilians gathered around the places where Polish military units were stationed.

After evacuation with the Polish Army to Iran, he served as head of the Cultural, Educational and School Department for the foreign branch of Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. In 1944 began the next stage of his wartime wandering in which he became a cultural and educational officer and a school teacher for Polish children scattered on the Dark Continent. Hoffman's stay in Iran and wandering around East Africa are described in chapter five.

Hoffman spent the last years of his life in exile in Great Britain, working as an unskilled worker. He continued his scientific and social activity despite his serious illness, remaining

among the elite of Polish emigration until his death. This part of Hoffman's fate is described in chapter six.

In research on the genesis of the revival of Polish statehood, it is difficult to overestimate the role of diaries and other documents of private provenance. Jakub Hoffman's diary from the time of his service in the 1st Regiment of the 1st Brigade, Polish Legions, attached to the dissertation in the form of an annex, written from the position of a non-commissioned officer, lacking literary aspirations and emotions, is a valuable source on the history of the Polish Legions and their participation in World War I. As such, the diary it is worth entering into scholarly circulation.

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