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Traditions of social prevention in the activities of the Polish sports organizations. Selected aspects

Piotr Kędzia

University of Lodz
Faculty of Educational Sciences
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1708-5373>

Abstract

The analysis of the first Polish sports organizations indicate their multi-faceted contexts of social prevention. The most important of them can include: preventing factors that threaten health, the fight against illiteracy, social deviated prevention, prevention of violence and xenophobia stadiums and initiating preventive measures in defence of Poland. Preventive actions taken were aimed at not only securing proper psychophysical development of members of associations, but also expressed concern for the common good. Implemented by sports organizations preventive actions have a profound pedagogical dimension. Their main imperative was to take responsibility for the future of the young generations of Poles.

Key words: social prevention, sports organizations, the partitions, the interwar period

Introduction

Sports associations as an organized social community acting on behalf of citizens of psychophysical development, was and is now the subject of interest to many educators, sociologists, historians, politicians and journalists. Nowadays a formula of activities is a derivative of sports associations formed by generations of rules and formulas for community action. Their formal confirmation accounted for the goals and measures of effective popularizing of physical culture written in the statute. Ideas of sports union movement covered a wide range of social life, where participation in sporting competitions combined with issues of education, culture, tourism, politics, and military training. Analyzing the nature of the activities of sports associations in the interwar period we can divide them into two groups:

1) associations pursuing exclusively sports target; 2) the organizations acting for different directions of sports and educational contexts [4, p. 6].

This text is an attempt to approximate the operation of the second group of associations and to

show their activity aspects of the social prevention, organized as a concern for the common good. The implementation of postulates in the field of prevention of undesirable situations and behaviors of people meant that sports organizations have become a kind of security institutions existence of individuals in society. In the interwar period sports associations play the following preventive functions: they prevented the factors threatening health, counteracted social deviations, initiated actions against violence and aggression, fighting illiteracy, counteracted gambling, social exclusion and took action to prepare for the defence tasks.

The first sports organizations in Poland. Preventive actions

The reception of the union movement from Western European countries appeared on Polish lands already in the Middle Ages. The prototype of modern sports organizations were the so-called chanterelles. The first brotherhood was founded in 1253 in Swidnica, the second in 1256 in Poznań. Their activity focused mainly on improving shooting skills among the urban population. Promoting shooting as a prevention for defensive tasks was aimed at ensuring military security for the citizens of a given community by protecting private property and common good and their health and life.

Over time, combat training also turned into an entertainment and sport character. In addition to shooting competitions, festivities and feasts were also organized. Special rooms and libraries were established for the members of a given brotherhood. Therefore, the adoption of the collective responsibility clause for the fate of the local community by the chivalrous guilds was an expression of conscious concern for its safe and harmonious development [9, pp. 51-53].

The turning point in terms of the development of sport was the nineteenth century, where political and social changes as well as rapid industrialization processes spread throughout Europe. Due to the independence aspirations of many European nations, including Poles, sport associations began to be established based on the phenomenon of sport [17, pp. 13-14]. In the case of Polish society living under the three partitions, they were often a substitute for a lost state. Patterns of organizing the first Polish sports organizations were taken from English, German and French associations. These associations, in addition to promoting sport and physical education, undertook a number of preventive and preventive tasks. And although they were often not explicitly stated in the statutory provisions, in the actual activity of the associations the implementation of these postulates was expressed by preventing physical infirmity, social alienation, widespread illiteracy, social demoralization, depriving Polish citizens of their national identity, gambling and others. Such courses of action were chosen by one of the first Polish sports associations, ie: the "Sokol" Gymnastic Society in Lviv, the Warsaw Rowing Association, the Warsaw Cyclists' Association and the Warsaw Ice Skating Society [16, p. 274]. The mere organization of social events for members of the associations and their friends was intended to ensure the so-called. fair entertainment and was conducive to social integration. Banning gambling from the area of the association prevented addiction to games of chance and protected the material stability of members and their families. In contrast, sport and contact with other activists fostered self-esteem and stimulated self-improvement and self-education.

The period of partitions is also an important stage in the promotion of patriotic values in the activities of sports organizations. In order to offset the effects of the anti-Polish policy of the partitioning states, aimed at saluting Polish citizens, sports associations took a number of preventive and reactionary measures. To emphasize their national identity, they took names such as "Eagle", "Crown" or "Polonia". In addition, some of them described their colors as white and red, which referred to the flag of Poland. Also in the conducted cultural and educational activities, efforts were made to popularize patriotic values. Historical readings

were dedicated to important events in the history of Poland (eg "Battle of Grunwald", "Battle of Vienna") and plays on patriotic subjects were staged. For example, the dramatic section of the Łódź Sports Association staged patriotic etudes, ie "Kościuszko near Maciejowice" and "Carscy protagonists" [1, p. 84]. During the period of weakening of the partitioning power, sports associations organized and actively participated in the celebrations of national holidays and anniversaries (e.g. Constitution of May 3, November Uprising). Another form of deepening memory and national awareness were also tourist and sightseeing trips. Visiting places that are part of the national heritage was conducive to propagating knowledge about important events in Polish history.

Golden falcons also made an important contribution to strengthening national ties. Uniform, a high level of discipline and cooperation of members of "Sokol" from all partitions, aroused admiration of the patriotic Polish society [2, p. 9].

Also, the growing popularity and importance of the revived Olympic Games were noticed by Polish sports activists. The idea of Olympism based on humanistic values gave hope for physical and moral revival of young generations of Poles. And although the official start of Polish players at the games was not possible, efforts were made to promote the idea of Olympism among the Polish society. A number of competitions were organized referring to the resurrected Olympic Games. The first such events, organized by Polish organizations, were the Polish Games organized by the Society of Movement Games in 1911 in Lviv and the Great Olympic Games of Łódź under the patronage of the Łódź Sports Club in 1912. The essence of these professions went beyond the emulation dimension, constituting an important platform for local unification in the spirit of sport. At international level, Polish activists have recognized the importance of the ceremony of the modern Olympic Games. Prepared in the form of rituals, the ceremonies of starting or ending the competition created an opportunity to display the flag, national emblem and national anthem.

Directions of social prevention and the activities of sport organizations in the interwar period

Sports organizations operated in a similar vein during the Second Polish Republic. Regaining independence by Poland caused that these associations expanded their lines of action. In particular, educational and cultural activities have been developed. Some organizations stress the importance of implementing extra-sport work. In Łódź, such associations included, among others, the "Odrodzenie" Sports and Educational Society, the L. Geyer Factory Sports and Educational Association and the Łódź Sports and Educational Society. In Warsaw they were, among others "Skoda" Culture and Sports Club, "Znicz" Arts and Sports Club, and "Orkan" Sports and Educational Society. These associations focused their preventive actions on fighting with illiteracy, preventing social deviations and carrying out actions to secure the existence of the country.

Organized by sports associations, various lectures, readings, talks, courses, and reading rooms and libraries were associated with the perception of the problem of illiteracy among Polish society by sports activists. Undertaking activities to combat illiteracy by sports associations were of particular importance especially in the early 1920s, when nearly one-third of Poland's inhabitants were illiterate. The census carried out in 1921 showed that out of 27,400,000 Polish citizens 6,511,307 over 10 years old could not read or write [12, p. 43]. Therefore, in the 1920s, training campaigns conducted by sports organizations focused mainly on catching up with educational backlogs that arose during the partitions. Over time, their character had evolved and in the 1930s they focused on passing knowledge from various fields, including physiology, hygiene or history. In addition, to enable the members of their association to acquire and expand their competences, their authorities organized language courses, military training, medical assistance, pilotage, fishing, skiing and instructional courses and coaching in

a given sport discipline, etc. [4, pp. 343-344]. Readings and lectures were given by authorities in the field of physical, natural, medical and military theory. On the other hand, magazines and books of scientific and fiction nature were made available in the associations' reading rooms and libraries. If the association identified itself with a certain political option, the book also contained items with ideological content. It is worth emphasizing that popularizing readership among members of associations was conducive to developing a specific attitude towards the written word. This was reflected in the psychological development of the members of a given sports organization, because they could, in addition to physical fitness, develop their mental abilities. An outstanding sports journalist of the interwar period Wiktor Junosza-Dąbrowski wrote: "The club should have its own reading rooms and club premises; without relationship and a warm atmosphere, it will never do its job properly. It must distract young individuals far from stuffy restaurants, cards, give them health and a clear serene view of the world in return" [6, p. 51].

While at the beginning of the 1920s sports associations were not the subject of interest of state authorities, after the "May Coup" they entered the orbit of influence of military spheres. One of the effects of these interactions has become the setting of sport associations' goals for prevention for defence tasks [3, p. 55]. Gained after more than a hundred years of captivity, independence forced the rulers of the state to care for securing the state's existence and borders. Due to the inability of the army to carry out a nationwide military adoption campaign, these duties were assigned to paramilitary organizations that strongly promoted physical education and sport. Activities for the military training of non-school youth over 16 years of age were entrusted to falconry, shooting and scout associations. While conducting sports training, they included in their program tasks that develop a sense of discipline, obedience and teamwork skills in young people. On the other hand, shooting and fencing sections were established in strictly sporting organizations, which were to prepare the members in fighting spirit in case of armed conflict. For example, in 1927, competitors of the ŁKS cycling section took part in military training maneuvers in which they performed the function of couriers [10, p. 7]. Knowledge of military theory was passed on to athletes during readings and lectures.

Hard physical work and passive rest, often spent on alcohol and gambling, meant that sport organizations popularized sport as a factor preventing the negative effects of professional work, hypokinesia and addictions. The offer of associations including summer and winter sports fostered health care, body hardening, general physical fitness and eliminated the adverse effects of external environment. For example, the Department of Physical Education and Health Polish YMCA (Young Men's Christian Associations) faced the following preventive and health tasks: 1) Removing acquired or congenital body defects; 2) Immunizing the body against diseases and early old age; 3) Improving the functioning of the body; 4) Post effort training; 5) Awareness in such issues as e.g. hygiene of life and work, nutrition, etc. [7, p. 84]. The factors improving the implementation of the tasks undertaken were the possession of appropriate facilities, in the form of sports fields, halls and sports equipment. This allowed sports organizations to conduct exercises and workouts in the open air while schools were struggling to provide the right conditions to conduct classes in physical education [13, p. 139 et seq.]. To increase the impact, some associations organized sports camps, trips, summer camps and camps. In many cities, with the support of the State Office of Physical Education and Military Preparation they organized also sports and medical clinics operating at associations and unions venues. In Łódź, among Polish sports organizations, factory, military and Poland YMCA clubs had their own medical care. In addition to emergency medical care, members of the associations were subjected to periodic medical examinations and were informed about contraindications to perform specific physical exercises. Sanitary and first aid courses were conducted in workers' sports associations [5, pp. 141-143]. At the beginning of

the 1930s, sports organizations organized a nationwide campaign on swimming training. On the one hand, these activities were aimed at promoting water sports, on the other, they prevented a large number of drowning in water.

Undertaking preventive measures against aggression by sports associations and lack of tolerance during a sporting spectacle was supposed to protect sport against moral devaluation in public opinion. The insults accompanying the matches, pressure on footballers and referees, and fraud caused a decline of the educational values of sport. To address these growing problems, publicists and physical education theorists called for respect for humanistic values. Władysław Osmolski wrote: "In sport you must not and cannot cheat. (...) And whoever contributes to honesty in the game in the sports field, this diligence, accuracy, honesty and loyalty will probably also bring to the field of his professional and public work "[15, p. 26]. In order to promote the principle of dignified and noble combat, sports organizations carried out a series of activities aimed at neutralizing undesirable behavior. The most important of them included publishing a number of articles in the press in which they called for cultural support, organizing matches for the cup supporters and organizing competitions promoting a fair play attitude

[8, p. 5]. Repeated attempts to solve the problem of demoralization of supporters aimed to provoke a social discussion in which bad behavior was stigmatized and the desired characteristics of a good fan were defined. All these activities prevented the spread of bad supportive patterns and had a pedagogical dimension, promoting behavioral patterns for the cultural reception of a sports spectacle [11, p. 7].

In the activities of many associations, sport was not only an attractive form of competition or a way of spending free time, but also served as a preventive tool against social deviations. As W. Osmolski noted: "Sport is a fierce enemy of drunkenness and debauchery - and physically pushes these customs out of the youth's life. It takes time that could otherwise be spent in a way that is doubtful for physical and moral health (...) "[14, p. 4]. For managers of sports associations alcoholism was a particular challenge. The principle of not drinking alcohol in sports facilities was observed, and care was taken to ensure that the ritual of celebrating sports success was carried out without drinking alcohol. The effects of sobriety policy implemented by sports organizations were also calculated to develop appropriate habits in non-sport life.

Summary

Among many activities of sports organizations, the trend of social prevention was one of the more expressive areas of work for the benefit of the general good. The basic factors determining the effectiveness of preventive impact were those determined by passion for sport, a deeply subjective sense of community, and a strong need for belonging and identity. The preventive activity of sport associations reached its full dimension only when it was conducted with a sense of responsibility for the future fate of generations of Poles. It was not only about preventing the spiral of all kinds of undesirable and extreme behaviors, but also about appropriate and commensurate with the ability of the individual use of one's abilities and talents. Attention is attracted to this fact by W. Junosza-Dąbrowski, who writes: "(...) unions and clubs (...) should remember that they will deserve condemnation if they allow their members, in maniacal pursuit of the triumphs and victory, to waste their life possibilities, that after a great sports career, diverting from education and professional work, when the period of splendor passes, they suddenly appear to be deprived individuals, unprepared for a hard fight for bread, unable to take any position in social life. On the contrary, they should make sure that they are educators of not playground masters, but valuable people who want to use the virtues acquired on the pitch for the benefit of the community "[6, pp. 43-44].

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