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## The genesis of the sports clubs movement in Poland

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### Abstract

The formation of the first Polish sports associations is not only an important stage in the development of Polish sport, but is also a crucial element of Polish tradition and culture. The process of shaping the sports association movement, initiated in the 19th century, was a reflection of the social, political and economic changes that took place throughout Europe, including the Polish lands under partitions. It is the sports associations that are the keystone of various activities that have introduced to social life such phenomena as mass and competitive sport, a sports spectacle, the principle of fair play, the fan movement and others. Analyzing the course of formation of sports associations, Maria Rotkiewicz and Kajetan Hądzulek note: "Two stages can be distinguished in the development of Polish sport up to a year 1918: 1) the creation of sports associations in the second half of the nineteenth century, based on organizational models of aristocratic hippic and hunting societies; 2) development of the club movement in the first years of the twentieth century in Galicia, the Kingdom of Poland and Greater Poland, gathering primarily school and academic youth" [13, p. 130].

**Key words:** sport associations, partitions, Polish lands

## Introduction

Although the first Polish associations were established already in the Middle Ages, typical sports organizations had their origins during the partitions, and specifically in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Polish society's effort to organize itself in various institutional forms at that time was primarily a manifestation of social self-preservation instinct. Established associations, with various industry goals, created a substitute for lost statehood. That is why, in addition to the implementation of statutory tasks, the associations established in the local dimension also satisfied the need to express their own national identity.

In the first half of the 19th century, the lands of the Austrian Partition constituted a place of intense repression for the Polish population living in these areas. The consistently implemented imperative of Austrian policy aimed at centralizing power in the annexed areas of the Austrian monarchy resulted in the economic and cultural backwardness of the inhabitants of Galicia. The introduced political restrictions hampered all Polish educational and cultural initiatives aimed at creating organized forms of social life. Similar restrictions also applied to the establishment of sports and gymnastic associations. Despite the fact that the nineteenth century was a period of lively interest in matters of physical education and sport throughout Europe, it was the matter of physical condition and health of Poles that was not of interest to the partitioning authorities [14, p. 25]. Due to the lack of political prosperity, the first physical culture association was founded in the Free City of Krakow (FCK), a state with moderate internal autonomy. It was the Krakow Shooting Society, which was founded on May 31, 1833. The founders of this association referred to the military shooting traditions of the chanterelle brotherhood formed in 1562. Their activity focused on organizing entertainment and fun by shooting at a target [5, p. 13].

It was only during the period of Galician autonomy in 1860-1873 that the quantitative and qualitative development of associations took place. In 1867, under the influence of the ideas of Mirosław Tyrš and Henryk Fügner, the Gymnastic Society in Lviv was established [20, pp. 225-227]. This association, in accordance with the statutory provisions of 1869, adopted the name - "Sokol" Gymnastic Society (GS "Sokol"). Its goal was to educate Polish youth. They practiced gymnastics, fencing, shooting, swimming, horse riding, athletics, games and activities as well as tourism. In "Sokol" non-sport activities were also developed by organizing various educational and cultural campaigns on patriotic subjects. In the scattered nest structure, the celebration of national holidays was cultivated, libraries and reading rooms were organized, choirs, theaters and orchestras were founded. Bernard Woltmann notes: "[...] "Sokol" was above all a gymnastic society with national and liberation goals (and less and only later, a sports organization)" [19, p. 3].

In addition to Sokol organizations, other associations were established in Lviv to promote physical culture. Starting from 1869, skating associations led the way, aiming to promote organized forms of physical recreation [12, pp. 121-123]. The Lviv Cyclists' Club, founded in 1886, also made a significant contribution to the development of cycling sport. The association's activities focused not only on bicycle races, but also included active tourism.

Also in Krakow, a number of organizations were founded to improve the physical fitness of young generations. The original idea of the activities of Krakow associations of physical culture was extracurricular activities to support physical education. Over time, however, some

associations began to enrich their educational offer with a sports factor. In the years 1867-1890 - as R. Wasztyl reports - these were the following associations: "White Eagle" Gymnastics and Shooting Society (1870), Ice Skating Society (1871), Krakow Ice Skating Society (1877), Hunting Club (1882), Krakow Society of Rowers (1884), "Sokol" Gymnastic Society (1885), Cracow Cyclists 'Club (1886), Cracow Fencers' Club (1889), Cracow Hunting Company "Wisła" (1889) and the International Horse Racing Society (1890) [18, p. 194].

The next stage in the development of associations in the Austrian Partition was the creation of organizations focused on practicing a given sport. In addition to cycling associations, movements specializing in football also became very popular. The game of "football" was already very popular in Europe at that time. On the Polish territories, its first forms appeared at the end of the 19th century [4, pp. 14-17]. The precursor official soccer show was presented on August 30, 1891 in H. Jordan Park in Krakow. The first Polish football associations were established in Lviv. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Lviv Sports Club "Lechia" Lviv (1903), the Lviv Sports Club "Czarni" (1907) and the Lviv Sports Club "Pogoń" (1908) were created. The oldest associations of Krakow included the "Cracovia" Sports Club (1909) and the "Wisła" Sports Association (1910). The initiators of establishing football associations were the youth of Lviv and Krakow high schools [1, pp. 388-389].

Completely different conditions for establishing socio-cultural organizations, including sports, prevailed in the Prussian partition. The emerging sports associations, in addition to carrying out typically hedonistic tasks related to the organization of free time, aimed to raise a patriotic spirit among Polish citizens. The organization of the sports movement in association structures was primarily the result of collective resistance and the fight against the oppression of the Prussian partitioner.

The difficult socio-political situation of the Prussian partition was an important factor stimulating the activation and organization of Polish society. Grassroots social initiatives led to the establishment of various political, economic and cultural organizations. In the Grand Duchy of Poznan, these activities also initiated the emergence of the first physical culture organizations. In 1839, an Equestrian club was founded in Poznan at the Horse, Cattle and Sheep Breeding Improvement Society. This association promoted equestrian sport, which modeled its activities on English associations. The founders of the club came from aristocratic layers of Polish and German origin, and its goal was to organize races and horse riding shows. The creation of the first typically Polish association took place a few years later, in 1845 in Poznan. Teresa Ziółkowska states: "It was set up (sports association - PK note) by the young riders from the Horse, Cattle and Sheep Breeding Improvement Society. It was a jockey club. [...] The jockeys soon, in 1845, led to the founding of the Chararki Society, also known as the Hunting Society" [21, p. 324].

One of the crucial elements of the struggle of the Polish population against the Prussian partitioner was the defense of Polish heritage and culture. Referring to the medieval traditions of chanterelles, many efforts were made to maintain and cultivate the memory of these ancient associations. The result of these activities was the establishment of the Hunting Club in Poznan in 1877, which in addition to shooting tournaments, also organized many cultural and educational actions [7, p. 82].

The first Polish gymnastic association in the Prussian partition - according to W. Lipoński - the Poznan Gymnastic Society was founded in 1862. The motive behind the

association was the creation in 1860 of a German organization called Deutscher Männer Turnverein, which strongly demonstrated its anti-Polish activity. The founder of the Polish organization was the Greek and Latin teacher Bonifacy Łazarewicz [11, p. 16]. Over time, however, as a result of persecution by the Prussian authorities, members of the society began to meet under the patronage of the Industrial Society. Soon, however, the operations were suspended.

At the end of the 19th century, the first "Sokol" organizations began to form in the Prussian partition [3, p. 4]. Due to the fact that the activity of "Sokol" was conducted in a patriotic and anti-Prussian spirit, it became the object of many repressions by the partitioning authorities. Despite the difficult operating conditions, this organization was developing dynamically. Wiktor Gładysz was the main promoter and first gymnastics teacher at "Sokol". The earliest "Sokol" association was established in Inowrocław in 1884, and its creator was the lawyer secretary, Maksymilian Gruszczyński. In 1886 the clubs were founded in Poznan and Bydgoszcz. In Prussian Silesia, the first falcon branches were established in 1894 in Wrocław and in 1895 in Bytom [15, p. 93].

The traditions of Greater Poland's modern sports associations date back to the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and are closely related to the patriotic activity of high school youth. Their activity for establishing sports associations was mainly caused by two factors: the Western European trend to take sport into institutional forms and the national action of opposing Polish organizations to the German sports movement. The established associations were specialized and focused their activities on promoting such sports disciplines as: football, cycling, rowing, tennis, athletics, shooting, swimming, fencing et al. Only in Poznan in 1899 the Cyclists' Club of Poznan and the Tennis Club were created. In 1904, however, the first Polish rowing association was founded - Rowing Club "04". However, football associations were still the most popular. According to Renata Urban, the oldest organizations included: in Poznan, "Normania" (1907), later "Posnania", "Warta" (1912), "Trytonia", later "Pogoń" and "Sparta" (1913). ), in Ostrów Wlkp. - Venetia (1908) and "Ostrovia" (1909), in Jarocin - "Victoria", in Kościan - "Fervor" and in Leszno - "Polonia" (all established in 1921) [17, p. 122]. Other sport disciplines were also cultivated in these associations, thus expanding the sports offer and the number of members of the association.

The conditions shown for the establishment of sports associations in the Austrian and Prussian partitions constituted a diverse picture of political impact on the development of social and cultural life. However, the most difficult area for the Polish population was the lands of the Russian partition. The political and economic oppression of the Kingdom of Poland imposed by the partitioning powers was systemic and exterminating. The intensification of the persecution and restrictions of the Russian partitioner contributed to the armed uprisings of the Polish population in 1830 and 1863. The defeat of independence uprisings brought not only the fall of the national spirit, but also showed the physical inability of Poles.

In the Kingdom of Poland, the first sports associations were founded in the late 1870s. Thus, the association initiative falls on the final phase of the extremely dynamic development of European sport [6, p. 498]. The initiated association movement also coincides with the decline of aristocratic organizations such as the Imperial Horse Racing Society in the Kingdom of Poland or the Warsaw Hunting Association. Established sports associations, in addition to

strictly sports and recreational tasks, also undertook patriotic activities. Therefore, apart from content covering tasks in the field of physical culture, quite numerous postulates of cultural and educational actions were also formulated. One of the first Polish sports associations that were established in the Kingdom of Poland were: the Warsaw Rowing Association (1882; WRA), the Warsaw Cyclists' Association (1886; WCA) and the Warsaw Ice-skating Association (1893; WIA) [20, p. 272].

During this period, the founders of the associations came mainly from influential spheres, i.e. those connected with the aristocracy or representatives of the industrial and commercial sector. For example, the long-time president of WCA was Count. August Potocki (1886-1905), and of WIA Count Maurycy Zamoyski [9, p. 250]. Well-known writers Bolesław Prus (WRA and WCA) and Henryk Sienkiewicz (WCA) also belonged to Warsaw societies.

The outbreak of the revolution in Russia in 1905 eased political oppression in the Kingdom of Poland and introduced moderate social freedom. Using the existing circumstances, "Sokol" clubs were established [10, p. 42]. The first was founded in 1905 in Warsaw. In 1906, several of them were already operating. The main goal of this organization was to prepare Polish citizens to effectively join the fight for the independence of the Polish state. That is why training of obedience, discipline and physical fitness was top priority. However, the legal activity of "Sokol" in the Russian partition did not last long, and after the fall of the revolution his activities were secreted or carried out under the banner of other associations.

An important contribution to the popularization of the idea of extracurricular physical education and sport among children and youth of Warsaw schools were also made by recreational and sports institutions. This form of activity was conducted, among others, by Children's Games and Gardens of W. Raua. These centers were established in 1899 due to the initiative of the Warsaw Hygiene Society (WHS). Established in 1899-1914, the foundation, modeled on H. Jordan's Parks, created 15 gardens in Warsaw accompanied by a special Youth Games and Play Committee. Its activities were managed by outstanding educators and hygienist doctors. The main purpose of the gardens was to rationally organize free time for children and young people. The basic means of educational influence were games and activities organized in the open air.

On the wave of revolutionary events of 1905, which inspired various social and political initiatives, organizations of physical education and sport began to appear. A significant contribution to the development of sporting life of school youth was made in 1907 - Warsaw Sports Club (WSC) [8, pp. 251-252]. The offer of this association was initially aimed only at adults. With time, however, its activities expanded and a Movement Games Section was organized in 1908. At that time, high school students who were subjected to moral upbringing influences could also belong to it. It is the youth gathered around WSC that initiated the establishment of the first school football teams. These teams usually consisted of students of the same educational institutions they attended, giving them original names and specific colors. Only until 1910, 20 such teams operated at WSC. J. Chelmecki lists the most important among them: "Stella" (Real School of E. Konopczyński), "Mercury" (Commercial School of the Merchants' Assembly) and "The Crown" (Junior High School of the Mazovian Society) [2, p. 55]. School teams functioned more significantly and it was from them that the first Warsaw football associations were created. An example is "The Crown"

a sports Club, which during the First World War was already a multi-sectional association with its own headquarters [9, pp. 268-280].

In the Polish Kingdom, sports organizations were also established outside of Warsaw. Rowing associations were founded in Płock (1884), Włocławek (1886) , Kalisz (1894) and Łomża (1901), while cyclists' associations in Kalisz (1882), Łódź (1887) and Lublin (1893). Many of them drew on the experience and models of Warsaw societies.

An important stage in the formation of the Polish association movement was the emergence of its various ideological and organizational forms, which were the result of the demand for specific social groups. The most characteristic currents of Polish sport include: the creation of workers' sport organizations, the emergence of sports associations, the development of women's sports associations and the emergence of academic sport associations.

### **Summary**

Summing up the achievements of the Polish union movement during the partitions, it should be noted that they were impressive and had a significant impact on the development of sports associations during the Second Polish Republic. Due to difficult socio-political conditions, in which the first Polish sports organizations were founded, this movement was marked by a significant delay compared to analogically developing Western European and Scandinavian associations. JuliuszUlrych rightly states: "A hundred-year captivity under three invaders and governments must have stopped the development of national life in all areas, in particular in those areas where fitness, vigor and strength of characters grew. The partitioning powers obeyed the principle of preventing the development of social institutions, which are a forge in the creation of collective power " [16, p. 11].

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