

POLISH PHYSICAL CULTURE IN GERMANY AND THE GERMAN MINORITY'S PHYSICAL CULTURE IN POLAND UNTIL 1939 — A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract The article represents the first attempt to depict the similarities and differences in the development of Polish physical culture in Germany and German physical culture in Poland during the interwar period of the 20th century. In both Poland and Germany, up until 1939, national minorities, notably the Germans in Poland and the Polish in Germany, played a significant role in fostering the development of physical culture. Drawing upon scholarly research and archival sources, commonalities between Polish physical culture in Germany and German physical culture in Poland can be discerned. They included: significant politicization, utilization for shaping patriotic attitudes and national integration, activity in the field of physical education, sports, and tourism, similar forms of activity of the Sokół Gymnastic Society in Germany and the German Turner Association in Poland, concern for the development of physical education among children and youth, and support from the respective home countries. However, notable disparities exist, including the longer-standing traditions of German physical culture on Polish soil, the considerably smaller scale of material support from Polish authorities for minorities in Germany, and the involvement of Deutsche Turnerschaft in Poland in a revisionist campaign against Poland in 1939.

Key words German Turner Association in Poland, Polish physical culture, German minority

Introduction

Until 1939, the territory of the Polish state was inhabited by a sizable German population, while numerous Poles settled in Germany. The influx of Germans to Polish lands stemmed from several waves of colonization, with the earliest dating back to the Middle Ages. Conversely, the migration of Polish people to Germany unfolded with a distinct dynamic, primarily occurring in the latter half of the 19th century and continuing until the end of the discussed period. These disparities were rooted in the motivations behind each group's migration – Germans settled in eastern regions as part of colonization initiatives, whereas Poles were driven by economic factors, seeking better financial prospects as they emigrated. The Polish population, often impoverished or facing persecution, found themselves in Germany due to economic and political emigration during the 19th century, and primarily economic

reasons in the first four decades of the 20th century (Kolodziej, 1988). As a result of these historical conditions, the economic circumstances of the German population in Germany were notably more favourable compared to the situation of the Polish population. In Poland, Germans held positions as landowners, affluent peasants, members of the intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie, and prosperous industrialists. This was particularly prominent in areas formerly under Prussian rule and the Łódź district (Dąbrowski, 1977). Overall, from 1918 to 1939, approximately 1.5 million Polish individuals resided in Germany (Wrzesiński, 2005), while the German population in Poland numbered less than 1 million people (Statystyka Polski. Pierwszy Powszechny Spis Ludności Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 30 września 1921 r., 1927; Statystyka Polski. Drugi Powszechny Spis Ludności z dnia 9 grudnia 1931 r., 1938; Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1938, 1939). Serious disputes arose regarding the accurate and precise count of national minorities. The Polish authorities only acknowledged census results, a stance contested by activists of the German minority who asserted that their estimates were twice as high as those provided by Polish data. In Germany, the local Union of Poles (ZPwN) believed that the German authorities deliberately downplayed the number of the Polish population to diminish its significance. Thus, even statistics became a means of diminishing the importance of the German minority in Poland, and conversely, the Polish minority in Germany, as evidenced by the German population census in 1939 (Jacimirski, 1965; Klimaszewski, 2007).

In comparison to the German minority in the Second Polish Republic, the number of Poles in Germany was nearly double, yet concerning the total population, the percentage of Poles in Germany closely paralleled the percentage of Germans in Poland. These disparities extended beyond merely economic advantages, encompassing legal standing and the tradition of promoting the German language that the German minority in Poland enjoyed. It was unilaterally covered by the Minority Treaty of 1919, and it also had significantly greater economic potential, additionally supported by the notorious Deutsche Stiftung and other aid programs (Fiedor, 1973). Polish people did not have such opportunities, protected only in Opole Silesia by the mutual Upper Silesian Convention (1922–1937), and indirectly by the non-aggression pact (1934–1939) and the declaration of non-violence (1937). Even more pronounced disparities were evident in the material circumstances, as Germans residing in the Second Polish Republic generally enjoyed greater wealth compared to Poles living in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. Similarly, the advantage in terms of the number of intellectuals was notable, exacerbating the acute sense of lacking among the Polish population in Germany. The Second Polish Republic did not have a tradition of supporting Polish identity and lacked economic opportunities adequate to the needs, so assistance for the Polish community in Germany was rather moral and symbolic, much below the expectations of compatriots in this country, aroused after regaining independence. The consequence of these adverse conditions was an inclination towards a defensive approach, focused on maintaining the existing position and preserving the current potential. Adopting a defensive strategy also exposed Poles to a lesser extent to open conflict with the German authorities and limited losses in the confrontation with the German state. The concept of activities in the realm of physical culture only began to take shape at the juncture of the 1920s and 1930s, emerging as a derivative of the overarching strategy of the ZPwN, which deemed sport as a principal tool for the national education of youth. This vision for the development of physical culture was underscored during the Second Congress of Poles from Abroad in 1934, wherein physical culture was designated a pivotal instrument for promoting Polish identity through Polish sports associations and youth organizations (Orzechowski, 1967; Woltmann & Jurek, 2002).

A comparative analysis of the development of physical culture among the German minority in the Second Polish Republic and the Polish minority in Germany during the years 1918–1939 reveals intriguing similarities and

notable differences in the evolution of gymnastics, physical education, sports, and tourism within these demographic groups. This topic has been largely overlooked in the historical literature, as prevailing narratives tended to focus on separate strands without connecting these seemingly disparate issues. However, it becomes apparent that the physical culture of national minorities in Europe during the interwar period shared numerous common features that have hitherto been neglected in scholarly discourse. Of particular significance was the attention given to this domain in both Germany and Poland, given the sizable presence of individuals from neighboring countries within their borders. Nonetheless, Polish and German scholars have largely overlooked this subject. This article draws upon archival materials from Polish and German institutions, supplemented by existing literature. The research employs historical source analysis and the comparative method (Topolski, 1973).

“Sokół” Gymnastic Society and the German Gymnastics Association

The “Sokół” Gymnastic Society played a paramount role in the realm of Polish physical culture, effectively transmitting the noble ideals of patriotic education from Polish territories to their groups in Germany. “Sokół” operated the longest and developed the richest repertoire of various pro-Polish activities. Its activity within the German state lasted half a century and significantly contributed to protecting its members and supporters from Germanization. Moreover, the Gymnastic Society set a compelling example for other sports and tourist organizations through its systematic efforts to uphold national identity. At its zenith in 1914, there were 182 “Sokół” groups in Germany, boasting 7,302 members. However, during the interwar period, both the number of groups and members dwindled. The largest number of groups, amounting to 141 with 4,531 members, was recorded in 1922. The effective operation of “Sokół” was evidenced by German apprehensions and the harassment endured by its members. Indeed, German authorities regarded “Sokół” as the most perilous, political, and militaristic Polish organization, deeming it highly detrimental to the German state and thus subjecting it to constant surveillance. Sports clubs established at the outset of the 20th century and continuing their operations until the end of the discussed period also made significant contributions to the achievements of Polish physical culture. In Germany, TG “Sokół” was dubbed a “military-civic school of Polish knights,” which, “along with other sports associations, was predominantly engaged in fostering Polish-nationalist consciousness” (Ueberhorst, 1992, “Orędzie Sokole” 1921, no 1).

The Turner movement constituted the primary domain of activity for Germans in Poland within the realm of physical culture. In 1921, the Turners consolidated under the German Gymnastics Association in Poland (DTP), with full integration of all gymnastic societies and certain sports clubs ultimately achieved in 1935. Jakub Jung, serving as the longstanding chairman of DTP, played a pivotal role in this process. As early as the spring of 1933, DTP unequivocally endorsed Nazi governance in Germany and, “as a reward,” was tasked with unifying all physical culture organizations in Poland. DTP also received financial backing from the German Foundation (Deutsche Stiftung). Despite strenuous efforts between 1935 and 1938, a unified German Turner and Sports Association failed to materialize in Poland. Against the backdrop of the successes of the Turner movement in Czechoslovakia and the effectiveness of Konrad Henlein, regarded as a role model for Germans in the Second Polish Republic, the position of DTP was considerably weakened, as it encompassed less than 1% of all Germans in Poland. Notable centres of conversion in Poland included Bielsko, Bydgoszcz, Chorzów, Katowice, Łódź, Poznań, and Toruń (Federal Archives Berlin. Deutsche Stiftung, no. 447; Fiedor, 1973; Jurek, 2002).

In comparison to the German minority in Poland, although the number of “Sokół” groups in Germany was higher, but overall they collectively comprised a smaller number of members. Furthermore, during the interwar

period, the number of "Sokół" TG groups and members in Germany declined, while the count of Turner societies and their members in Poland doubled by 1939, reaching 5,672 members as of January 1, 1939 ("Mitteilungen der Deutschen Turnerschaft in Polen", 1926, no. 6, 1931, no. 4, 1936, no. 3, 1939, no. 1; "Sprawy Narodościowe", 1929, No. 2; Gasch, 1923). The traditions of the German Turner movement in Poland are markedly older and more extensive than the tradition of "Sokół" in the Second Reich. While the first Turner society in Poland was established in 1815, the inaugural association of the "Sokół" Gymnastic Society in Germany only emerged in 1889 – seven decades following the establishment of the society in Pszczyna and two decades subsequent to the inception of the first "Sokół" TG on Polish lands in 1867 in Lviv (Ryfowa, 1976). This chronological discrepancy had implications for the delayed development of "Sokół" in Germany relative to its development in Poland. During the interwar period, the number of "Sokół" groups in Germany and Turner societies in Poland were comparable, with similar levels of scope and activity (Wyskok & Jurek, 2018).

Sports clubs

Sports clubs established in the early 20th century and persisting until the end of the discussed period made a notable contribution to the advancement of Polish physical culture in Germany. These clubs served as focal points not only for sporting activities but also for comprehensive national endeavours. They facilitated numerous gatherings, cultural events, social evenings, and other activities. Sport served as a pretext for fostering the aforementioned forms of engagement and was not solely viewed in terms of athletic achievement. While sports outcomes held significance, even greater importance was placed on accompanying events, creating a sort of ritual around sporting events. Among the Polish sports clubs operating in Germany, those from Berlin, Silesia, Rhine-Westphalia, and the former border regions held particular prominence. With the influx of Polish emigrants into Germany, numerous groups of the proletariat emerged, particularly in industrial hubs such as Silesia, the Ruhr area, and Saxony. It was within these groups that workers' sports associations were established, representing essentially class-based forms of physical culture. Notably active in Silesia was the Federation of Polish Workers' Sports Clubs, founded in 1934, which later evolved into the Federation of Polish Sports Clubs "Siła." In 1936, a total of 1,324 members were enrolled across 14 workers' sports clubs. According to their principles, these organizations primarily attracted workers, although they also welcomed craftsmen and individuals from outside the working class. The milieu of Polish workers' clubs in Germany attained a relatively elevated status compared to German workers' sports associations in Poland. The latter faced numerous challenges, including size constraints and encounters with hostility from Nazi authorities between 1933 and 1939. The Polish workers' movement in Germany surpassed the presence of German workers' societies in Poland, with the latter comprising only 7 sections. However, the number of members within these sections was twice as large (2,800 members in 1931), compared to the associated Germans in workers' sports organizations in the Second Polish Republic. This advantage in both club numbers and membership stemmed from the fact that the working environment of the Polish minority in Germany was substantially larger in comparison to the concentrations of the German proletariat in the Second Polish Republic. The numerical advantage of Polish workers in Germany over German workers in Poland translated into the scale of workers' sports, which was proportional to the greater numerical potential of the Polish proletariat in Germany (Jurek, 2002; Grańska & Jurek, 2015).

The German sports movement in Poland achieved a high level of organization, with athletes attaining significant national and international successes. The development of sports was different, based on large clubs that had considerable independence and were not as flexible as the Turner movement. Some clubs in Pomorze

and Wielkopolska even established their own associations. For instance, the Poznań-Pomorze Rowing Association united five rowing societies, led by the largest one, RC "Frithjof" Bydgoszcz. Similarly, West Pomeranian Cycling Federation, headquartered in Nowy Tomyśl, played a similar role, uniting 30 small cycling societies from neighbouring towns. Rowing flourished primarily in Pomorze, while cycling thrived in Wielkopolska. Conversely, football gained immense popularity in Upper Silesia and Łódź, with clubs like I FC Katowice and "Union" Łódź ranking among the best in Poland. Notably, Katowice produced some of the finest Polish swimmers, including Ilse Boll, Helmut Barysz, and Joachim Karliczek from EKS Katowice, as well as talented water polo players from the same club. In Łódź, notable talents emerged in tennis, with multi-medallist champions such as Wera Richter and the Stolarow brothers, Jerzy and Maksymilian. German athletes made significant contributions to Polish sport achievements, with players like Ernst Wilimowski from I FC and Fryderyk Scherfke from "Warta" Poznań representing Poland at the 1938 World Championships. Eight German athletes proudly represented Poland in the Olympic team across various sports including cycling, football, swimming, and skiing. The best athletes in Poland also excelled in boxing, weightlifting, basketball, motorcycling, and wrestling (Jurek, 2002).

It is worth noting that the clubs operated under different conditions. Despite the enormous material pressure and ideological influence of the government in Berlin, some sports clubs retained considerable independence and subjectivity. They resisted the pressures of the Gleichschaltung campaign in the 1930s and did not become tools of the Third Reich authorities. This group encompassed rowing clubs, cycling societies, and clubs with football sections. The workers' sports associations, united in their own ATSBP union, completely independent of Berlin, went the furthest in opposing the organizational and program directives. Concentrated mainly in Silesia, these workers' associations found themselves in ideological conflict with the majority of Turner and sports associations, which leaned towards a bourgeois and nationalist orientation. While DTP and most clubs aligned with Nazism, workers' associations were ostracized by their compatriots and Poles, gradually diminishing in significance by the end of the discussed period (Jurek, 2004).

German sports organizations in Poland and Polish associations in Germany began emerging around the same period. Comparatively, Polish clubs in Germany outnumbered German clubs in Poland in terms of both their quantity and membership. However, German clubs in the Second Polish Republic demonstrated a higher level of sports training among their members. This was evidenced by their considerable success in major national competitions, including the Polish championships, as well as the notable participation of eight German athletes in the Summer and Winter Olympic Games between 1924 and 1936. The top athletes in Poland during this period excelled in various sports such as skiing, swimming, water polo, football, cycling, tennis, and rowing. The achievements of Polish club athletes in Germany in competitive sports are much more modest. They could not boast of valuable achievements as the activities of Polish associations were dominated by recreational forms, and sports results were placed on the back burner, with less importance attached to them.

Physical education in schools

Between 1918 and 1939, a significant struggle ensued for the establishment and maintenance of Polish schools in Germany, where physical education classes, as well as sports and tourist extracurricular activities, were conducted. This dispute over the Polish school system particularly impacted the Polish-German border regions, where sports activities were notably active. In addition to the utilitarian and preventive role of physical education, considerable emphasis was placed on maintaining a high standard of classes in this subject and sports, infusing

both lessons and extracurricular activities with an educational and pro-Polish character. The number of Polish schools in Germany fluctuated during this period. Following an initial increase in their number, there was a decline in the 1930s, especially in the latter half of that decade. All students attending Polish schools were required to participate in compulsory physical education lessons and additional extracurricular activities as per the school curriculum (Archive of New Files [Archive of New Files Warsaw]. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, No. 162).

Until 1939, physical education and sports in German schools in Poland enjoyed a privileged status, surpassing not only the number of German schools in the Second Polish Republic but also in achievements related to promoting recreation during physical education lessons and accomplishments in school sports. This superiority was attributed not only to the richer tradition of physical education in Prussian education but also to the more limited resources and less professional teaching staff in the Polish education system. Physical education, coupled with sports activities, was intended to foster the “German spirit” among children and young people. German schools implemented a curriculum that included two hours of physical education classes per week, with some schools offering up to four lessons. Private schools, particularly junior high schools, boasted the best faculty and facilities, underscoring the importance placed on physical education and school sports. Similar level of development was achieved in contacts between Polish schools in Germany and between German schools in Poland in the field of school sports (Jurek, 2020).

Tourist movement

In addition to physical education and sports, tourism remained a significant aspect of physical culture during the interwar period. The resurgence of an independent Polish state was a driving force behind this trend, encouraging Poles from various countries, including Germany, to visit their homeland. There were also families of many emigrants living in the homeland, which - apart from historical places and religious centres - were the destinations of individual and group visits. Moreover, summer camps for Polish children from Germany, particularly those from industrial centres, played a crucial patriotic and educational role (Jurek, 2014). The 1st Polish Olympic Games, held in Warsaw in 1934, served as a notable and distinctive tourist attraction for Poland. This unprecedented sports and tourism event brought together 381 participants from 12 countries worldwide, as well as the Free City of Gdańsk, including representatives from the German Polish community. While the sporting outcomes of the Polish diaspora competitions were not paramount, Poland emerged as the moral victor of the games, as emphasized at the time (Pierwsze Igrzyska Sportowe Polaków z Zagranicy, 1934; Rotkiewicz, 2005).

Tourism played a significant role in upholding national values among the German population in Poland. Noteworthy among tourist organizations were the Beskid Society based in Bielsko, boasting over five thousand members, and the Wanderbund, which operated throughout the country. Other notable tourist organizations included the “Wędrujące Ptaki” (Wandervögel), the Upper Silesian Tourist Association (Oberschlesischer Wanderbund), the Tourist Association (Turisten Verband), “Przyjaciele Przyrody” (Naturfreunde), primarily active in Silesia, as well as Union-Touring Łódź and the Alpine Society (Alpenverein). All these organizations fostered a strong connection to their homelands (Heimat - Little Homeland) and advocated for active recreation, particularly in the mountains. They vehemently opposed any Polish attempts to encroach upon their territories. This was notably evident in the prolonged conflict over tourist trails and mountain shelters between the Beskid Mountains Society and the Polish Tatra Society, which persisted throughout the interwar period of the 20th century (Jurek, 2008, Jurek, 2010).

A comparison of tourism between the Polish population in Germany and the German population in Poland reveals an intriguing observation: Polish tourist visits to their homeland were more widespread and frequent compared to the corresponding activity of the German population in the realm of tourism. The aforementioned 1st Polish Sports Games, unparalleled in other countries, including Germany for the German minority from Poland and elsewhere, garnered global attention. To some extent, the monumental German Sports Festivals, held in 1933 in Stuttgart and in 1938 in Wrocław, served as a counterweight. The latter event, in particular, carried significant propaganda implications, featuring the participation of approximately 500 German athletes from Poland in this Nazi showcase event - second only to the Olympic Games in 1936 (Jurek, 2000).

Other similarities and differences

The development of physical culture varied across different regions of Germany and Poland. Disparities were influenced by factors such as the financial circumstances of the Polish population and the traditions of falconry, physical education, sports, and tourism. In Germany, distinct areas of significant Polish activity in the realm of physical culture were evident. These regions typically aligned with the districts of the Association of Poles in Germany and the largest centres of Polish population. Here, Polish youth organizations, Sokół societies, sports clubs, and Polish schools played pivotal roles in promoting physical education, sports, and tourism. The most vibrant region in terms of physical culture was Silesia, particularly notable for the active presence of the Sokół movement, workers' clubs, and youth organizations. This activity encompassed the entire Opole region and the German part of Upper Silesia, forming a dense network (Szczerbiński, 1987). The second active area was the central part of Germany (Berlin, parts of Brandenburg, and Saxony), where the first centers of the "Sokół" Gymnastic Society were established, alongside a total of 6 Polish sports associations. Rhineland-Westphalia also exhibited significant potential in the realm of physical culture, boasting various activities in this field, albeit lacking workers' sports associations. Additionally, Polish physical culture made strides in Masuria, Warmia, and Powiśle, particularly thriving in Masurian Mazovia. In total, 39 sports organizations were established in the area, fostering physical education, sports, and tourism. The former border area had the fewest sports organizations, attributed to the widespread dispersion of the Polish population and significant distances between individual small groups of Poles, primarily engaged in agriculture. However, Krajna Złotowska and Babimojszczyzna stood out as positive exceptions in this regard (Jurek, 2013).

In Poland, German physical culture thrived primarily in the regions of the former Prussian partition, encompassing cities and even small towns in Wielkopolska and Pomorze. Among the most renowned centres of the Turner and sports movement in these areas were: Bydgoszcz, Chojnice, Grudziądz, Leszno, Nowy Tomyśl, Poznań, Rawicz, and Toruń. Additionally, Turner societies and sports clubs in Upper Silesia and the Łódź district displayed notable activity. Major Silesian hubs of German physical culture included: Bielsko, Chorzów, Cieszyn, Katowice, Lipiny, Myslowice, Pszczyna, Rybnik, Siemianowice, Szopienice, and Świerklaniec. In the Łódź district, Łódź stood out prominently in this regard, with gymnastics and sports associations also thriving in Aleksandrów, Konstantynów, Pabianice, Tomaszów, and Zgierz. In other parts of Poland, characterized by "language islands" (Sprachinsel), the German population did not actively participate in physical culture, with the sole exception being the "Vis" Lviv sports club (Jurek, 2002; Urban, 2006).

When conducting a further comparison, it is crucial to consider the political conditions that shaped the development of German physical culture in Poland and Polish physical culture in Germany. During the discussed

period, Poland emerged as a relatively politically stable and predictable country guided by democratic principles, particularly towards national minorities. In contrast, Germany in the interwar period initially upheld democratic values and pursued a balanced policy towards national minorities. However, following the rise of the Nazi regime in 1933, attitudes towards all national minorities gradually deteriorated. This deterioration escalated into hostile actions towards the sports and tourist activities of the Polish population in 1938–1939 (Szczzerbiński, 1987).

Stages of development of physical culture of national minorities in Poland and Germany

The comparison of distinct stages in the history of German physical culture in Poland and Polish physical culture in Germany offers intriguing insights. In the development of German physical culture on Polish lands and in the Second Polish Republic, several significant stages emerge, influenced by the status of the German population under partitions, the state of Polish-German relations, internal developments in Germany, and to a lesser extent, the policies of the Polish authorities. The first stage unfolded during the years 1918–1921, a tumultuous period for both neighbouring countries as they delineated their common border. The numerous conflicts of that time, including the Silesian Uprisings, the Greater Poland Uprising, and plebiscites in disputed regions like Upper Silesia and Warmia and Mazury, did not foster the resurgence of the Turner and sports movements. The activities of reactivated societies and clubs were marred by numerous conflicts, particularly prevalent in Silesia, where in the aftermath of the uprisings, armed incidents against athletes, mutual terror, and sabotage of German sports events were common occurrences. The revitalized Turner sports movement encountered the significant challenge of post-war emigration to Germany, which, coupled with previous war losses, depleted the ranks of physical culture associations. In regions like Silesia, Pomorze, and Wielkopolska, the loss of members amounted to as much as half of the pre-World War I numbers. Despite these difficulties, the Turner movement was reborn, developed and consolidated for the first time at the end of 1921, creating a still small but extremely important nucleus of the future nationwide organization in Wielkopolska and Pomorze. The second stage covers the years 1922–1925, when, in the conditions of post-war stabilization, German physical culture developed within Turner societies, sports clubs, tourist societies, as part of school activities and minority organizations. During this period, a campaign of material support from Germany was initiated. This stage was crowned by the merger in 1925 of the two existing DTP districts with the Silesian district into the National Turner Association, which stretched, as it proudly claimed, “from the Baltic Sea to the Beskids”. The third stage, covering the years 1926 to 1932, saw further progress in the sports movement. Athletes excelled in various sports such as football, swimming, and tennis, actively participating in national competitions and demonstrating a high level of sporting prowess. The opposite trend was observed in Turnerism, which, despite reaching its organizational peak at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, experienced stagnation in the number of societies and their membership. This was attributed to the nationalist nature of the Turner movement and the absence of sports exchanges with Polish associations during this period. Meanwhile, a campaign to train instructors began in Germany and the Free City of Gdańsk. The fourth stage, spanning from 1934 to 1938, witnessed a rapprochement between Poland and Germany. The significant emphasis placed on physical culture in the Third Reich influenced the development of German physical culture abroad, including in Poland. Consequently, there was an increase in contacts between German associations in Poland and teams from the Reich. The activity strategy was shaped by the principle of Gleichschaltung, aiming for the unification of all physical culture in line with Nazi ideology. In Poland, the authorities in Berlin designated the main organization as DTP, but attempts to unite all sports organizations under this banner failed, leading to fragmentation in German physical culture. The final stage in the

history of German physical culture occurred during the crisis period before the outbreak of World War II, particularly evident in 1939 when the bilateral treaty expired. The activities of German gymnastics societies and sports clubs became increasingly marked by revisionism and anti-Polish slogans. While previously restricted by official German authorities, these sentiments gained momentum just before the war. However, they were still suppressed, allowing German gymnastic, sports, and tourist associations to operate without major obstacles (Jurek, 2002).

In the development of Polish physical culture in Germany, the first stage covers the period from the establishment of the first branch of the Gymnastics Society "Sokół" in 1889 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. During this time, branches of the Gymnastics Society "Sokół" were founded, organizational structures of this association were established, the first Polish sports clubs were founded, and pioneering forms of sports competition took shape. The second period concludes within the timeframe of the World War I, when activity in the field of physical culture practically ceased. Sokół members, as well as members of Polish sports clubs, became victims of the Great War (Blecking, 1987). The subsequent period spans the existence of the Weimar Republic and is closely associated with the establishment of the Association of Poles in Germany in 1922, which brought together most Polish organizations, including sports clubs. The final stage in the history of Polish physical culture occurred during the Third Reich and lasted until the outbreak of World War II. Despite the bilateral treaty on non-aggression between Germany and Poland signed on January 26, 1934, there was a gradual deterioration in the conditions of Polish national activity in Nazi Germany, with a particularly challenging final period of open hostility in 1938–1939. This period witnessed a crisis in the "Sokół" Gymnastic Society and a weakening of the sports movement, accompanied by a reduction in the scope of physical education in Polish schools. Poles suffered repression during this time. The analysis of the presented stages leads to the conclusion that Polish physical culture in Germany encompassed the Sokół movement, Polish sports clubs of various origins, youth organizations, particularly scouting, and organized as well as individual tourism. It evolved within three political systems: the Hohenzollern monarchy (until 1918), the democratic Weimar Republic (1918–1933), and the totalitarian Third Reich (1933–1939). None of these regimes actively supported the national activities of Poles in the realm of physical culture, and during the final period of the Third Reich, there were even attempts to completely eradicate Polish sports, tourism, and physical education in schools. In such initially complex and increasingly difficult conditions since 1933, Polish physical culture in Germany served not only hedonistic and utilitarian purposes but primarily fulfilled national and patriotic objectives. German physical culture in the Second Polish Republic initially served a national function, which later evolved into a revisionist one (Chalupczak, 1992; Jurek, 2013).

Conclusions

When evaluating Polish physical culture in Germany until 1939, it is crucial to consider the intricate circumstances under which the Sokół movement, sports initiatives, physical education, and tourism developed. It is important to recognize that Poles faced not only the challenge of natural assimilation but also the significant threat of organized Germanization on a national level. Preserving Polish identity emerged as the paramount objective of Polish diaspora efforts, conducted across various spheres: political, economic, social, educational, cultural, religious, among others. Physical culture played a significant role in nurturing pro-Polish consciousness. The emergence of the Polish national movement coincided with the inception of falconry, sports movements, and tourism in exile. Physical culture activities proved to be as appealing to young people as other forms of organizational work. Physical education, sports, and tourism served as valuable and popular platforms for fostering national

sentiments and cultivating patriotism and resilience in the face of harsh persecution, particularly during the late 1930s under the reign of Nazism. Poles were deprived of their rights, subjected to constant surveillance, and sentenced to what was termed “statistical death,” foreshadowing the tragedy and the ultimate sacrifice that many Rodło activists paid during World War II for their earlier Polish diaspora endeavours.

When assessing German physical culture in Poland, it is crucial to consider the prevailing strong nationalism during the Third Reich and the increasingly revisionist stance towards Poland. Physical culture was strategically employed by the Nazi authorities in Germany and among the German minority in Poland as a platform for national activity fuelled by a spirit of revanchism for perceived „grievances” stemming from the Treaty of Versailles. The German Gymnastics Association in Poland played a significant role in this process. Consequently, Adolf Hitler justified aggression against Poland and the onset of World War II by citing alleged injustices against the German population, which were often fabricated and utilized for propaganda purposes. The physical culture of the German population flourished in the Second Polish Republic without significant hindrances, albeit overshadowed by escalating chauvinism and instrumentalization by German authorities. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the positive aspects, particularly the substantial contribution of German athletes to the successes of the Polish Olympic movement and sports in Poland. In this regard, German athletes notably surpassed their Polish counterparts in Germany, where recreational activities predominantly prevailed and the level of sportsmanship remained low.

In summary, it can be concluded that there were notable similarities as well as distinct differences in the development of Polish physical culture in Germany and German physical culture in Poland. Common features included strong politicization, the utilization of gymnastics, physical education, sports, and tourism to foster patriotic sentiments and national integration. Both regions witnessed similar activities in physical education, sports, and tourism, with analogous forms of engagement by organizations like the “Sokół” Gymnastic Society in Germany and the German Turner Association in Poland, along with ongoing efforts to promote physical education among children and youth with support from their respective home countries. Significant differences included the much longer and more robust traditions of German physical culture on Polish soil, the comparatively lesser material support from Polish authorities for minorities in Germany, and the involvement of the Deutsche Turnerschaft in Poland, along with certain sports organizations, in an anti-Polish campaign in 1939.

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