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Recreational and Sports Activity of Prison System Employees in Poland in the Interwar Period

Abstract

The aim of the article is to discuss conditions for the development and a presentation of achievements in the field of recreational and sports activity of Prison Officers Poland in the interwar period.

When Poland regained independence in 1918, it mobilized many representatives of professional groups (the police, the military, the prison staff) to take the initiative of creating trade associations. Their main task was comprehensive help, medical care and concern for the preservation of health by organizing activities in the field of recreation and sports.

In January 1919, representatives of the penitentiaries established the Prison Guards and Officers Association renamed soon the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland. Recognizing the importance of physical activity for the proper development of the organism and the need to recover after exhausting work, the Association came up with a project of building health and medical resorts and creating boathouses, as well as establishing sports clubs and organizing sports competition.

Initially, the activities in this field developed slowly but gradually the action involved more and more branches of the Association in prisons throughout the country. By the end of the 30s of the twentieth century, the state of health spa infrastructure, recreation and sports had reached a satisfactory level and the rules of sporting competition had been established.

Keywords: recreation, sports, health and medical resorts, Prison Guard, Poland, the interwar period.

Initial steps for the establishment of Polish prison system were initiated in March 1918 before Poland regained its independence. Due to the ongoing Polish-Bolshevik war and the political situation related to the establishment of new Polish borders they were stopped until the end of 1921¹. In these difficult

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¹ The author writes about it wider R. Urban, *Znaczenie wychowania fizycznego w polskim systemie penitencjarnym w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym* [The importance of physical edu-

circumstances taking initiatives for the development of activities in the field of recreation and sports was impossible. Nevertheless, just in the pioneer period, the prison workers felt the need of organizing themselves in an organization that would represent their interests in various fields of their professional life.

The aim of the author was to present the comprehensive conditions for the development of this sphere of activity of Polish prison workers, which concerned all forms of leisure and tourism and real opportunities in terms of the protection and recovery of health, as well as achievements in this field. In the interwar period, there were issues regulated by the law, initiated rather by the needs of the interested parties. Thus, according to the author, it seems that it is worth giving this subject a little more attention, especially that in the previously published papers it was assigned a marginal place. In *Księga jubileuszowa więziennictwa polskiego 1918–1928* [*The Jubilee Book of Polish Prison System 1918–1928*] in the chapter entitled *Organizacja zawodowa pracowników więziennych* [*Professional Organization of Prison Officers*] Stefan Dąbrowski appreciated the establishment of the Union of Prison Committee of the Health Spa but he did not characterize its activity². By the end of the interwar period and for many years after the war no work was created that would have dealt with that problem. Similarly, in the two publications, which appeared in 1995 – K. Pawlak *Więziennictwo Polskie w latach 1918–1939* [*Polish Penitentiary in the Years 1918–1939*]³, and A. Rejzner *Kultura fizyczna w polskim systemie penitencjarnym* [*Physical culture in Polish penitentiary system*]⁴, reducing the description of the issue to small portions of the text by the authors of these studies was of course justified. The objective of K. Pawlak was a comprehensive presentation of all aspects of the Polish prison system in the interwar period and for this reason, some of them were only outlined. Whereas Rejzner presented the stages of development of physical culture among inmates in prisons (mostly after the World War II), but he did not analyze the actions taken in this field by prison staff.

cation in the Polish penitentiary system in the interwar period], “Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Kultura Fizyczna” [“Scientific Works of Jan Długosz Academy in Czestochowa. Physical Culture”] 2016, vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 9–10.

² S. Dąbrowski, *Organizacja zawodowa pracowników więziennych* [*Professional organization of prison employees*], [in:] Z. Bugajski (ed.), *Księga jubileuszowa więziennictwa polskiego 1918–1928* [*The Jubilee Book Polish Prison from 1918 until 1928*], Związek Pracowników Więziennych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej [the Union of Prison Workers of the Republic of Poland], Warszawa 1929, pp. 245–251.

³ K. Pawlak, *Więziennictwo Polskie w latach 1918–1939* [*Polish penitentiary system in the years 1918–1939*], Centralny Ośrodek Służby Więziennej w Kaliszu [the Center of Prison Service in Kalisz], Kalisz 1995, p. 212.

⁴ A. Rejzner, *Kultura fizyczna w polskim systemie penitencjarnym* [*Physical Culture in the Polish penitentiary system*], Instytut Profilaktyki Społecznej i Resocjalizacji Uniwersytet Warszawski [the Institute of Social Prevention and Rehabilitation, University of Warsaw], Warszawa 1995, p. 225.

In these circumstances, the author concentrated on exploration of the contents of two journals published during the interwar period, which were dedicated to issues connected with Polish prison system. These were: “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] and “W Służbie Penitencjarnej” [“In the Service of the Penitentiary”]. The query of their resources brought positive results. Articles on the issues of recreational activities, sports and health protections were published on the pages of these magazines. The participants were prison employees and their families. The value of the information contained in these publications, both in terms of quantity and quality, was varied, but it allowed to present an outline of the subject.

During this period, prison staff consisted of two groups of employees. The first one included prison officials. They were: prison Wardens, their assistants (deputies), prison assistants, secretarial assistants and clerks, teachers and doctors, employed on the basis of individual employment contracts. The other group contained lower rank of prison officers, such as: prison janitors and medics, paramedics and messengers, admitted to work on different principles. The presentation of this division was necessary, because each of these groups had different rights and privileges, which also had a significant impact, e.g. on the terms of using the medical and health base⁵.

There is no doubt that an important part in initiating activities for the dissemination of sports and recreation and activities concerning health protection of the prison employees was played by the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland. It was formed in Warsaw in January 1919 as the Association of Prison Guards and Officers, but after a few months, in June of the same year the final name was approved – the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland. After creating the Prison Wardens Unit in January 1933 the association was liquidated and the Society of Mutual Aid of Prison Guards and Officers was established in its place and took over the assets of the Association and it continued its activities significantly extending its objectives. The extent of the influence of the Association spread throughout the country and its task was to promote the legal and moral interests of prison employees. One of the motives of the Association was also the concern for preservation and improvement of physical condition and for increasing health of its members. How important this problem was can be seen in data from 1919, according to which 36 out of 100 deceased prison officers died of tuberculosis, 14 of typhus and 7 of pneumonia⁶.

Our union is an institution based on the principles of mutual aid and self-help ideas aimed at the welfare of prison employees [...]. The aim of our Union is to obtain the

⁵ S. Rajowski, *Personel więzienny i jego wykształcenie* [Prison staff and its training], [in:] Z. Bugajski (ed.), *Księga jubileuszowa więziennictwa polskiego...* [The Book of Jubilee Polish prison...], p. 87.

⁶ A. Rejzner, *Kultura fizyczna w polskim...* [Physical Culture in the Polish...], p. 17, “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 6, p. 3.

most suitable working conditions, pay, protection in case of illness and inability to work [transl. A. Szembek]⁷.

During the consecutive meetings, the Association passed decisions important for the entire prison environment. In 1922, for the first time the congress of the Association was attended by representatives of all Polish regions (after the final setting of national borders), and a resolution to issue a press organ of the Association “Pracownik Więzienny” [“The Prison Employee”]⁸ was taken. Its first issue appeared in April. In the early November 1922, as part of their humanitarian activity, the Association started Funeral Cash Register, in 1923. – Cash Register of Mutual Aid, in 1927 – Health and Medical Resort Committee was established. At the 9th Congress of the Association (1927) a project of the organization and construction of spa houses for prison employees was made real and it was implemented in the following years. The importance of appointed Building Committee of Health Resorts and its future contribution to improving the health of the penitentiary staff was approved by the Minister and Deputy Minister of Justice – Alexander Meysztowicz and Stanislaw Car, who took the honorary patronage of the Committee and its activities⁹.

The idea of creating facilities to improve the health of prison employees was present almost since the inception of the Association. Considering the difficult working conditions in prisons, requiring staying indoors, often dark and damp and the impact of this kind of work on the psyche of prison staff, it was necessary to take steps to allow regeneration of strength and health of both officials and officers. One of the first mutual initiatives of prison staff was the institution “Our House”, which in 1927 was renamed the Construction Committee of Health and Medical Resort Houses. At its inaugural meeting the Committee was attended by the following members: Kazimierz Bartoszewicz, the Warden of the Vilnius Łukiszki prison – the President, Mieczysław Kobyłecki, the Warden of the prison in Grodno – Vice-President, Teofil Morris, an inspector of the prison in Warsaw at ul. Dłuda 52– the Treasurer. The statute was developed and a special bank account was opened to which payments were made for the construction or purchase of a holiday house¹⁰.

⁷ A. Rejzner, *Kultura fizyczna w polskim...* [*Physical Culture in the Polish...*], pp. 17–18; K. Pawlak, *Więziennictwo polskie...* [*Polish Prison...*], p. 40.

⁸ In 1925 a periodical “Pracownik Więzienny” [“The Prison Employee”] significantly expanded the range of its publishing interests also changing its current name to “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”].

⁹ S. Dąbrowski, *Organizacja zawodowa pracowników...* [*Professional organization of prison employees...*], pp. 246–247, 251.

¹⁰ *Sprawozdanie Komitetu Budowy Domów Uzdrawiskowych dla Pracowników Więziennych oraz wychowania fizycznego* [*The Report of the Committee for Construction of Houses of Health and Medical Resort and Prison Physical Education*], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 11, p. 14.

This required a tax of 1% a month from the received salary. The basis of the calculation was the number of prison employees. According to estimates, with three thousand employees and their average salaries at that time, the set amount of the contribution was to provide the Committee of Health Resorts with an income of 6 thousand zlotys per month. However, due to very low salaries and a lower than it had been expected interest in the initiative in 1928 the contribution was reduced to 0.5%. Despite this, the collected funds, amounting to 10,994.87 zł in 1927, and to 39,600.97 zł in 1928, allowed – with the support of the Main Board of the Association and a bank loan – to purchase the property “Orla Strzecha” in Świder (on the river of the same name) near Warsaw. At the meeting of the Committee of the Health and Medical Resort on 1 June 1928 an unanimous decision was made to purchase a villa for 75875 zł¹¹.

In 1930, at the 12th General Assembly of the Association the Committee of the Health and Medical Resort, submitted an application to obtain another holiday home in Ciechocinek, the cost of which was estimated at about 95 thousand zł. Delegates to the Congress positively commented on this issue, arguing that its purchase was due to the concern for the health of prison employees permanently exposed to the inconvenience associated with being in closed, dark, damp areas of old prisons. They passed (an overwhelming majority: 49 for, 14 against) a periodic tax in the amount of 0.5% of their salaries. Unfortunately, due to the irregular payments and therefore no prospects of obtaining such large funds, this plan was never implemented. Until the end of August 1931, the Committee of Health Resort had managed to accumulate on their bank account the amount of only 8583 zł, which had to be used to repay the loan taken out for the purchase of “Orla Strzecha” from the Main Board of the Association and cover the costs associated with furnishing a house in Świder with the equipment necessary for a rest and recreation. The initiative did not find support everywhere, which indicated insufficient understanding of common good and lack of the sense of solidarity, especially in prisons in small towns in the provinces¹².

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the idea was proper and nobody had any doubts – either the authorities of the Polish prisons or prison staff. In the

¹¹ A. Rejzner, *Kultura fizyczna w polskim...* [Physical Culture in the Polish...], p. 18; S. Dąbrowski, *Organizacja zawodowa pracowników...* [Professional organization of employees...], pp. 250–251; in *Sprawozdanie Komitetu Budowy Domów Uzdrawiskowych dla Pracowników Więziennych oraz Wychowania Fizycznego* [The Report of the Committee for Construction of Houses of Health and Medical Resort and Prison Physical Education], reproduced in No. 11, “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931 on p. 15 given the amount of \$ 8,750.

¹² K. Pawlak, *Więziennictwo polskie...* [Polish Prison...], p. 39; *Sprawozdanie Komitetu Budowy Domów Uzdrawiskowych dla Pracowników Więziennych oraz Wychowania Fizycznego* [Report of the Committee for Construction of Houses of Health and Medical Resort for Prison Staff and Physical Education], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 11, pp. 15–16.

statements published on the pages of the “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”], the director of the Department of Ministry of Criminal Justice Michał Lorentowicz in the Book of Visitors of Health and Medical House in Świder in 1931 wrote:

I am enchanted with Orla Strzecha and the warm welcome that I have received. I wish and hope that similar settlements arise in all corners of the Republic of Poland as a place of rest and respite for prison employees after their hard and responsible work [transl. A. Szembek]¹³.

In contrast, a prison employee, after staying at the “Orla Strzecha” shared his reflections in the “Review...”:

You do not need to remind anyone in what conditions we have to work. A prison employee, more than anyone else, is deprived of air and sunshine during his service. He has to spend half of his life in the walls of the prison, deprived of nutritious sunlight necessary for human health and life. He is exposed easier and faster than anyone else to the loss of health and he can contract rheumatism, tuberculosis or other severe diseases. Where should a prison worker go to spend his holiday leave and recover his weakened health? [transl. A. Szembek]¹⁴.

Prison staff was in a much more difficult situation than representatives of other professional groups, who have their own houses of health, pensions, sanatoriums and health resorts in several towns in Poland, e.g. BuskoZdrój, Druskienniki, Zakopane, Żegiestów and others. Teachers, police officers, postal workers were far more numerous than prison workers, whose total number was estimated at 4,000 people, of which only about 2,400 people were affiliated to the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland. Organizations, bringing together the employees of other professional groups were ten times more numerous and it was easier for them to take organizational activities. Therefore, activities initiated by the prison staff to raise awareness of their comrades of the importance of recreational activities to maintain and protect the health and encourage them to use the possibility of their regeneration and their families in the Health House in Świder¹⁵ should be more appreciated. Also slogans published in the “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] persuaded them – “Do not lavish the sun and fresh air to those who work for you, but cannot use them!” or “Among many needs – saving health is the first need”¹⁶.

¹³ *Z działalności Komitetu Uzdrawiskowego* [On the activities of the Health and Medical Committee], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1932, No. 9, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Dział organizacyjny. Na marginesie akcji uzdrawiskowej* [Organizational department. On the margins of health action], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 3, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Dział informacyjny. Do Jaśnie Wielmożnego Pana Dyrektora Departamentu Karnego Ministra Sprawiedliwości. Memorial z dnia 6 lutego 1931 r. Nr 177* [News department. For the Director of the Criminal Department of the Minister of Justice. Memorial of 6 February 1931. No. 177], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 2, p. 3–4.

The health house “Orla Strzecha” was situated in the curative climate. It was a two storey villa with a terrace and a large park, where recreational activities for children and adults were organized. Despite limited financial resources, thanks to the funding of the Criminal Department of the Ministry of Justice, the residence of members of the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland and their families was initially completely free of charge. The Inmates of “Orla Strzecha” got the reimbursement of travel expenses to Świder and during their stay they were taken care of by a prison doctor, who commuted from Warsaw. Just in the first year of its functioning (1930), which was defined as a trial period, the center was equipped with the necessary equipment to rest; loungers, hammocks and accessories for all kinds of games, both mental and recreational activities, as well as books and magazines. Although initially the turnout of people using the Health House was not too high because for many workers with low awareness it was hard to see the need to care for their own health, it was growing thanks to residents who published their remarks in the penitentiary press and it influenced over time the increase of the popularity of “Orla Strzecha”.

Spending my holiday leave in the Health Resort of prison employees in Świder, I noted frankly that we were completely free, were not embarrassed by anything and besides, we were offered a variety of entertainment that we could use, I mean a library, three daily newspapers, checkers, chess, dominoes, etc. For all of these I thank the Main Board of Committee of Prison Employees with the old Polish expression “God bless you” [transl. A. Szembek]¹⁷.

Unfortunately, these positive feedback and awareness of usefulness of the resort building, only slightly affected the increase in the number of visitors to the object. In the following years due to the financial difficulties of both the Committee of the Health Resort and the general economic crisis of the state and lack of financial support from the Criminal Department a free of charge stay in the Health House was annulled. Residents were obliged to cover the costs in the amount of 3,50 zł per day, which for many prison employees was more than they could afford. In 1932, during the period from 15 June to 31 August, a total of only 30 people benefited from the “Orla Strzecha”. They were members of the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland, including 19 people from a branch in Warsaw, two from the branches in Końskie and Prużany and one – from Koło, Kowel, Lublin, Łódź, Łuck, Ostróg and Zamość. This fact was undoubtedly influenced by the need to cover the cost of travel to Świder, as it was confirmed by the increased attendance of employees of prisons located near the

¹⁷ *Dział organizacyjny. Dom Wypoczynkowy naszego Związku „Orla Strzecha”* [Organizational Department. Holiday House of Our Union “Orla Strzecha”], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1930, No. 5, pp. 7–9, 11; *Echa pobytu Kolegów więzienników w naszym Uzdrawisku* [Echoes of stay of Colleagues – prison employees in our health and medical resort], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 1, p. 12–13.

area and their families, both for a longer stay, as well as short stays in on Sundays and public holidays. Day trips organized on 15 August and 15 September, when the Health House was visited by about 100 prison employees' children from Warsaw, were the most popular. Childcare and organizing various types of movement games and recreational activities were entrusted to the representatives of the individual departments, who expressed readiness to do social work with children¹⁸.



Fig. 1. Prison employees' children camps in the Health and Medical Resort "Orla Strzecha"

Source: "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego" ["Overview of Polish Prisons"] 1930, No. 7, p. 5.

In subsequent years, the Health House "Orla Strzecha", mainly due to weak interest of penitentiary staff, developed in the direction of the center organizing summer camps for children of prison workers. This idea was well received, especially from the time when Maria Michałowska, the wife of the Minister of Justice Czesław Michałowski, started to supervise the idea of summer camps. Not only was she a frequent visitor to Świder, but also worked for the camps in Warsaw by organizing e.g. balls, during which among prominent guests contributed cash donations to organize the rest of children of prison employees. The interest of influential personalities, representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the judiciary, the prosecutor's office, the palestra and the penitentiary collected funds that made it possible to annul the fee for the stay of children at summer camps and improve housing conditions in the "Orla Strzecha", provide constant medical care and teaching, as well as to expand sports and recreational facilities and

¹⁸ *Z działalności Komitetu Uzdrawiskowego* [On the activities of the Committee of the Resort], "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego" ["Overview of Polish Prisons"] 1932, No. 9, p. 13; *Święto dzieci w "Orlej Strzesze"* [Festival of children in the "Orla Strzecha"], "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego" ["Overview of Polish Prisons"] 1931, No. 9, pp. 9–12.

adapt them to the needs of children. In high season (from 15 June to 1 September) camps were usually attended by about 200 children aged from 6 to 14 coming from urban environments, including Warszawa, Łódź, Częstochowa, Lublin, Brest-on-the-Bug¹⁹.

It is worth mentioning that prison employees had the opportunity to use the so-called Health House in Inowrocław. It was organized in the city prison in the building of Municipal Court, where three bright, simple and functional furnished rooms had been put at the disposal of patients. Inowrocław, because of its health spa character, the functioning of the Brine Water Pump Room and the Department of Natural Medicine, set in the old Health Spa Park, where every day concerts of a military band were held, was an exceptionally attractive holiday destination. There were also favorable financial conditions for prison employees. The cost of a full day of living (housing, services, electricity, bedding, towels and soap) fluctuated around 1.50 zł, while medical care was free of charge. The total fare from Warsaw to Inowrocław (a half ticket) by a direct train in 3rd class was 9 zł 10 gr. The most expensive were the treatments offered by the Institute of Natural Medicine. They ranged from 1 to 5 zł, and each bather could use them depending his financial possibilities²⁰.

Holiday trips of penitentiary staff to Drohobycz with an access to Truskawiec, 6 km away were organized. Beds were prepared in a local prison in the period from 1 June to 1 October. All-day cost of staying in Drohobycz was 2 zł and included accommodation and food, as well as transportation to the nearby health spa in Truskawiec, in which treatments were paid for by individual participants. The whole project was officially settled by Inner Order of Penitentiary No 55 of 28 April 1932 of the President of the Criminal Department of Ministry of Justice²¹.

It is difficult at this stage of research to determine why the initiative taken by the Committee for the Construction of Health Resorts for Prison Employees,

¹⁹ *Kolonia dla dzieci pracowników więziennych w Świdrze* [Camp for in Świder], "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego" ["Overview of Polish Prisons"] 1932, No. 5, p. 11–12; *Z kolonji letnich dla dzieci pracowników więziennych w Świdrze* [From summer camps for the prison employees' children], *ibid*, 1932, No. 7 and 8, pp. 2–4; *Dancing na kolonie letnie dla dzieci pracowników więziennych* [Dancing at summer camps for prison employees' children], *ibid*, 1934, No. 7, p. 13; *Kolonie letnie dla dzieci funkcjonariuszów Straży Więziennej* [Summer Camps for Children of Prison Officers], *ibid*, 1935, No. 7, p. 14; *Z kolonii letnich dla dzieci funkcjonariuszów Straży Więziennej w Świdrze* [From summer camps for children of Prison Officials in Świder], "W Służbie Penitencjarnej" ["In the Service of the Penitentiary"] 1937, No. 18, p. 11.

²⁰ M. Zonenbergowa, *Z mego pobytu w Inowrocławiu* [From my stay in Inowrocław], "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego" ["Overview of Polish Prisons"] 1932, No. 11, p. 5.

²¹ *Możliwość wyjazdu do Truskawca i Inowrocławia* [The opportunity to go to Truskawiec and Inowrocław], "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego" ["Overview of Polish Prisons"] 1932, No. 5, p. 11; *Z pobytu w Drohobyczu* [From the stay in Drohobycz], "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego" ["Overview of Polish Prisons"] 1932, No. 9 and No. 10, p. 7.

which was guided with proper ideas, in order to take care of the health and recovery of prison staff did not find understanding in the environment, from which they benefited. Perhaps this was due to lack of awareness of prison employees in terms of the necessity to care for their own health. Financial costs incurred by prison employees must have had significant influence, as it constituted an excessive burden for their modest family budgets. Although in theory it was a voluntary tax on certain purposes, in fact, decisions on this matter were taken by delegates to conventions deriving usually from among officials of higher rank of prison employees. This aroused opposition among the lower rank officers, who were often struggling with the basic problems of life, and they did not have any possibility of making use of the rest, especially if its form and method of implementation was imposed “from above”.

The situation was different in physical education and sport. Initiatives in this area were developed among prison employees, usually spontaneously, in provincial prisons. They were not centrally directed, but they were appreciated and won their approval and support, e.g. from the Main Board of the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland, or the Criminal Department of the Ministry of Justice. In one of the articles published in “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] in the name of Building Committee of Health Resorts for Prison Employees an additional section: “and Physical Education” was added. It is difficult to say for certain whether the name of this committee had actually been extended due to the development of physical education among prison employees, or it was merely an expression of over-zeal of the author of the article, because the changed name was not confirmed by other sources²².

One of the leading centers in the field of popularization of physical education and sport was the environment of prison employees in Luck, where in 1930 due to prison guards’ initiative a Rowing Club “Temida” was established. The river Styr flowing through Lutsk provided excellent opportunities for water sports. The club initially had only one boat – “Złota Strzała” [“The Golden Arrow”] (made in prison workshops, but could effectively compete with those built in expensive shipyards), which made it possible to train two crews, and the second boat was under construction. They organized a temporary marina and an action was taken to approve the statute. The Board of a Club was appointed, headed by the President – T. Korolko, a Deputy Head of the District Court in Luck, and the Vice President – Alfred Surmiński, the Warden of prison in Luck. The boss of the marina was Marjan Dłużniewski, and S. Lisowski, a caretaker in prison in Luck was the Secretary. In spite of the fact that the Rowing Club in

²² *Sprawozdanie Komitetu Budowy Domów Uzdrawiskowych dla Pracowników Więziennych oraz Wychowania Fizycznego* [Report of the Committee for Construction of Houses of Health and Medical Resorts for Prison staff and Physical Education], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 11, p. 14.

Luck functioned as a club of prison employees for several years, since the beginning of its existence it had aroused so much interest that the desire to sign up for it was also expressed by senior officials of the prosecutor's office and other individuals²³.

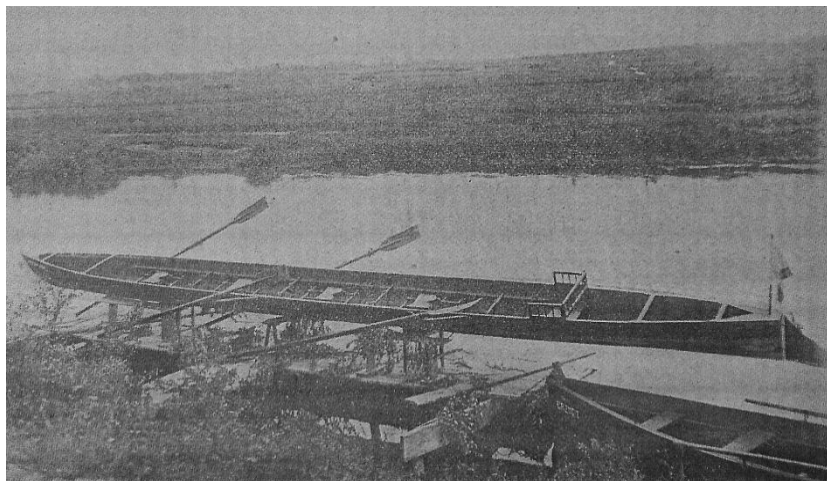


Fig. 2. KS “Temida” Rowing Marina in Luck, together with the boat “Złota Strzała” and “Syrena” [“Mermaid”], made in the prison workshops in Luck

Source: “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1930 No. 8, p. 11.

Rowing had become a real passion for prison employees of Lutsk and they devoted every spare moment for the benefit of their own health and physical condition and development of the Club. One year after the inauguration of its activity, during the opening ceremony of a new sports season, the prison chaplain blessed the new marina of the rowing club “Temida” and two boats, “Rusalka” [“Rusalka”] and “Wodnik” [“Vodyanoy”]. The creation and activity of this sports club aroused recognition not only for Luck society, but also for the Board of the Prison Officers Association of the Republic of Poland. Radyszkiewicz, a delegate of the Association presented his speech, in which he expressed admiration for the work and commitment of prison employees in the popularization of physical education. At the end of the ceremony a rowing regatta took place involving prison employees – fours with a steersman at a distance of 2000 m (three crews) and the ones with a steersman at the distance of 1000 m (two crews on the boats “Syrena” and “Rusalka”), which in the following years were regularly continued²⁴.

²³ *Z Lucka [From Luck]*, “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1930, No. 7, p. 14.

²⁴ *Z Oddziału w Lucku. Protokół z poświęcenia i otwarcia przystani, chrztu łodzi i regat [Department of Luck. Minutes of the dedication and opening of the marina, the baptism of the boat and*



Fig. 3. The opening of the season in the Rowing Club “Temida” in Luck on May 15, 1932

Source: “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1932, No. 6, p. 9.

The year 1932 proved to be more active than the previous one. In the winter season, six canoes were made in the prison workshops prison, one double, which allowed for the creation in the Rowing Club “Temida” a separate canoeing section, which became a member of the Central Union of Canoe Boating in Warsaw. The rowing marina was also refurbished and the renovation of rolling stock was conducted. Because of the initiative of the Board of the Club a Water Sports Committee was established in Luck. It consisted of present rowing clubs: Luck Rowing Association, the Military Rowing Club and the Rowing Club “Temida”. The establishment of the Committee enabled Luck to strengthen the existing cooperation in the field of water sports in the area of Luck and to undertake common actions for the development of rowing, canoeing and swimming. The confirmation was not only the regatta organized in the summer season but also a swimming competition, in which the representative of KW “Temida”, S. Lisowski took the 1st place²⁵.

Although the main interest of Luck Club was focused on water sports, prison employees engaged also in competitions in other sports, e.g. in shooting. They achieved significant successes in competitions with local clubs: Military Sports Club, Police Sports Club or Shooting Association, which were by far more experienced in this field. In 1933 in team KW “Temida” took the 2nd place, going un-

the race], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1931, No. 6–7, pp. 11–12.

²⁵ *Z życia sportowego klubu “Temida” w Łucku* [The life of a sports club “Temida” in Luck], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1932, No. 6, pp. 9–10; *Z życia sportowego więzienia w Łucku* [From the sporting life in prison in Luck], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1932, No. 9 and No. 10, p. 7.

der the Military Sports Club. Based on the results several prison employees in Luck won bronze shooting badges: Alfred Surminski (the prison Warden), Marjan Dłużniewski (an aspirant), Stanisław Kędziora (a senior guard), Titus Szomański (a champion)²⁶.

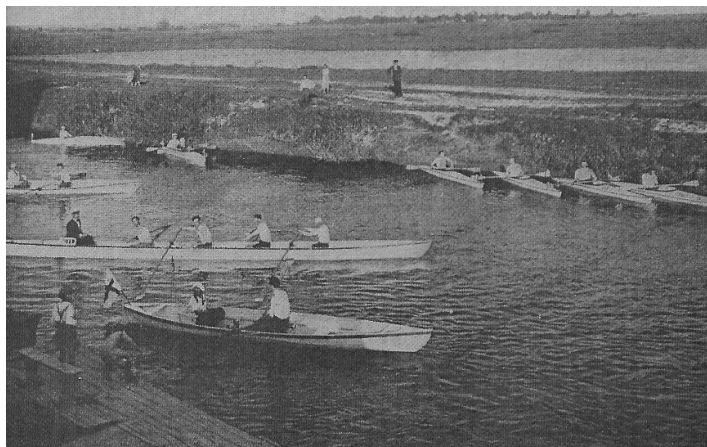


Fig. 4. Club Tabor “Temida” in Luck, together with the canoeing section

Source: “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1932, No. 6, p. 10.

The Rowing Club “Temida” significantly enriched its sports base in a period of only four years of functioning. In the inaugural year of its existence, it had just two boats and organized 73 boating trips. In subsequent years these numbers significantly increased. In 1931, the Club had three boats and organized 139 boating trips, in 1932 – it had nine boats and conducted 687 boating trips, and in 1933 it was the owner of twelve units and sailed 789 times. Club members successfully competed with representatives of other city clubs. The most important, however, was the fact that the activity of prison employees sprang from their needs and care for their own health. Undoubtedly, Alfred Surmiński, the Warden of the prison in Luck, who sought the funds for activities, as well as new equipment contributed a lot to such a dynamic development of the Club. He was the best example for his subordinates, participating in sporting competitions. In 1934 thanks to his efforts and financial aid of a protector of the Club, the Director of the Criminal Department of Ministry of Justice, Michał Lorentowicz, a new double sports boat was acquired, which allowed for an inner club competition. From the name of its founder the boat received the name “Lorentówka”²⁷.

²⁶ *Z więzień i zakładów wychowawczo-poprawczych. Z życia sportowego więzienia w Łucku* [From prisons and educational-correctional facilities. From the sporting life of the prison in Luck], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1933, No. 4, p. 12.

²⁷ *Z więzień i zakładów wychowawczo-poprawczych. Z życia sportowego więzienia w Łucku* [From prisons and educational-correctional facilities. From the sporting life in prison in Luck],

By the end of the interwar period, the Club had developed very dynamically despite the change of the Warden of the prison in Luck. Rowing was not only entertainment and pleasure, but above all, the basis of physical development. Initiatives taken by the prison staff, who were the members of the Club – regatta sports, excursions, participation in the celebration of various holidays, for example the Sea Festival, Physical Education and Military Festivals, as well as the organizational development of the Club – canoe and shooting sections were formed – it aroused interest among prison employees in other regions of Poland. This led gradually to the promotion of physical culture and appreciating the importance of physical activity for man's health and, consequently, to the establishment of new clubs²⁸.

An intensive activity was also displayed also Sports Club of Prison Wardens in Wilejka. Although it is difficult to determine precisely the date of its creation, there is no doubt that since 1933 it participated in the celebrations of the Sea Festival. Among other events, rowing regatta and canoeing races in which prison employees occupied high places were organized as part of the celebrations. In 1934, representatives of the club also participated in cycling events at the distance of 20 km, winning the first and the third prize, which indicated a high popularity of the sport²⁹.

While in the twenties of the twentieth century the interest in the sport among the employees of the prison was negligible and at a similar level was their awareness of the impact of physical activity on human health, it was just in the next decade that significant changes in both the first and the second aspect were observed. Certainly it must have had an impact on the prison officers who were involved in the courses organized at the Central Institute of Physical Education in Bielany in Warszawa (later APE), as well as the overall development of the sport and the achievements of Polish athletes in international competitions. It influenced also the increase of interest in physical activity of penitentiary staff. Selecting the sport was determined usually by environmental circumstances. Thus water sports were very popular, especially in the prisons located in cities located

“Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1933, No. 5, pp. 14–15; *Z więzień i zakładów wychowawczo-poprawczych. Otwarcie sezonu w Klubie Wioślarskim Straży Więziennej “Temida” w Łucku* [From prisons and educational-correctional facilities. The opening of the season in the Club Rowing of Prison Wardens “Temida” in Luck], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1934, No. 8, pp. 10–11.

²⁸ *Z pracy społecznej i kulturalno-oświatowej wśród Funkcjonariuszów Straży Więziennej. Z życia sportowego Klubu Wioślarskiego Straży Więziennej “Temida” w Łucku* [Taken from social, cultural and educational work among Prison Wardens' officials. Sports life of the Rowing Club of Prison Wardens “Temida” in Luck], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1935, No. 10, p. 14–15; *Z więzienia w Łucku* [From a prison in Luck], “W Służbie Penitencjarnej” [“In the Service of the Penitentiary”] 1936, No. 8, p. 10.

²⁹ *Z życia sportowego Straży Więziennej w Wilejce* [Sports life of Prison Wardens in Wilejka], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1934, No. 9, p. 11.

on rivers, as presented earlier: Luck on the Styr and Wilejka on the Wilia river. In 1935, the construction of the rowing marina on the Warta was completed by employees of one of the largest prisons in Poland –Wronki. The opening ceremony of the facility, dedication and giving the name “Temida” took place in the presence of invited guests from Warsaw and Poznan as well as the authorities of the local prison. With the fleet of several rowing boats and some tourist canoes Prison Guard officers were active until the outbreak of war³⁰.



Fig. 5. One of the rowing settlements of the Wronki “Temida”

Source: “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1935, No. 11, p. 14.

In the second half of the thirties, sports competitions were increasingly organized in different sports disciplines between representations of various prisons, Prison Guard troops or within prisons, for example to get a National Medal of the Sports and a Shooting Badge. Reports of the competition were published in “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] and “W Służbie Penitencjarnej” [“In the Service of the Penitentiary”]. In 1935, a troop of Prison Wardens from Stryj fulfilled their civic duty participating in the “10 shots for the glory of the homeland”. The crew from Rawicz prison in the number of 44 senior officers faced the attempts to get a National Medal of the Sports and a Shooting Badge and a team of cyclists participated in the cycling races³¹.

³⁰ *Otwarcie przystani wioślarskiej Straży Więziennej we Wronkach* [The opening of the rowing marina of Prison Wardens in Wronki], “Overview of Polish Prisons” [“Overview of the Polish Prison”] 1935, No. 11, p. 13–14; *Sluchacze Szkoły dla wyższych funkcjonariuszów Straży Więziennej w Centralnym Instytucie Wychowania Fizycznego na Bielanych* [School students for higher officers of Prison Wardens at the Central Institute of Physical Education in Bielany], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1933, No. 3, p. 12.

³¹ *Z pracy społecznej i kulturalno-oświatowej wśród Funkcjonariuszów Straży Więziennej* [With social work and cultural education among officers of Prison Wardens], “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1935, No. 9, p. 13–14.



Fig. 6. The team of cyclists from the prison in Rawicz

Source: “Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego” [“Overview of Polish Prisons”] 1935, No. 9, p. 14.

In 1938, in the Drohobycz district a patrol march was organized on a route of 32.5 km under the patronage of the municipal Physical Education and Military Training Festival. It was attended by 53 patrol teams representing: the 6th Regiment of Riflemen, the Battalion of National Defense, the Prison Guard, the State Police, troops of Rifle Association, PR&CC organizations, the gentry and other sports clubs from the area. In the competition on the difficult and demanding route, the team of Prison Wardens took in its age group (over 25 years) – the 1st place, winning a silver cup. The occasional speeches emphasized not only the importance of physical activity for health, but above all the military value of sport, which in the tense political situation of the late thirties of the twentieth century was essential³².

It is difficult to make a clearly positive assessment of the activities of Polish prison employees in the field of recreation and sports in the interwar period. There is no doubt that many numerous attempts were undertaken to initiate and conduct such activities, as it has been reflected by the examples given above. But in most cases they did not reach a wide spectrum, just remaining local projects. This was due to a small number of prison employees as a professional group (only about 4000 people in Poland), compared to e.g. the police, railroad or postal workers, as well as the remoteness of prisons and therefore – organizational difficulties in taking action in this regard. There was also a need of legislation that would require or even tend penitentiary staff to improve their physical

³² *Z więzień i zakładów. Z więzienia w Drohobyczu* [From prisons and penalty centres. From a prison in Drohobycz], “W Służbie Penitencjarnej” [“In the Service of the Penitentiary”] 1938, No. 16, p. 12.

fitness as, for example, in the case of police officers. Moreover, there was insufficient awareness of prison employees concerning the importance of physical activity for health. Such issues, although they were included in further educational courses, but only on the margin of the main penitentiary problems. Nevertheless, the activities of prison employees in the prisons, where sports clubs functioned and recreational activities were carried out should be viewed positively. They were even more valuable, because it originated from the initiative of the prison staff and they were not an order of the central authorities. Therefore, it promised the survival despite many unfavorable external circumstances.

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Działalność rekreacyjna i sportowa pracowników więziennictwa polskiego w okresie międzywojennym

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest omówienie uwarunkowań rozwoju i prezentacja osiągnięć w zakresie działalności rekreacyjnej i sportowej pracowników więziennictwa polskiego w okresie międzywojennym.

Odzyskanie przez Polskę niepodległości w 1918 r. zmobilizowało reprezentantów wielu grup zawodowych (policjantów, wojskowych, personel więzienny) do podjęcia inicjatywy utworzenia zrzeszeń branżowych. Ich głównym zadaniem była wszechstronna pomoc, opieka lekarska oraz troska o zachowanie zdrowia poprzez organizowanie działalności w zakresie rekreacji i sportu.

Przedstawiciele więziennictwa już w styczniu 1919 r. powołali Związek Dozorców i Pracowników Więziennych, przemianowany wkrótce na Związek Pracowników Więziennych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Dostrzegając znaczenie aktywności fizycznej dla prawidłowego rozwoju organizmu oraz konieczność regeneracji sił po wyczerpującej pracy, Związek wystąpił z projektem budowy domów uzdrowskich, tworzenia stanic wodnych, powołania klubów sportowych oraz organizowania rywalizacji sportowej.

Początkowo działalność w tym zakresie rozwijała się powoli, ale z czasem objęła coraz więcej oddziałów Związku, działających w zakładach karnych na terenie całego kraju. Do końca lat 30. XX w. stan infrastruktury uzdrowskiej, rekreacyjnej i sportowej osiągnął zadowalający poziom, a zasady współzawodnictwa sportowego zostały ustalone.

Słowa kluczowe: rekreacja, sport, uzdrowsko, Straż Więzienna, Polska, okres międzywojenny.