

<http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/sit.2023.04.02>

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Physical education and sports in Polish education in Germany in the years 1918–1939

How to cite [jak cytować]: Jurek T., Połaniecka A., *Physical education and sports in Polish education in Germany in the years 1918–1939*, "Sport i Turystyka. Środkowoeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe" 2023, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 35–51.

Wychowanie fizyczne i sport w szkolnictwie polonijnym w Niemczech w latach 1918–1939

Streszczenie

W latach 1918–1939 w Niemczech mieszkało około 1,5 mln ludności polskiej. Najwięcej Polaków żyło na Śląsku, w Prusach Wschodnich, w centralnej części tego kraju, w Nadrenii-Westfalii oraz na pograniczu wschodnim. Formami działalności patriotycznej – mającymi na celu m.in. uniknięcie asymilacji – były wychowanie fizyczne, sport, turystyka i rekreacja oraz ruch gimnastyczny w ramach Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół”. Ważną rolę w tej działalności narodowej odgrywało polskie szkolnictwo w Niemczech. Sprawami szkolnictwa zajmował się powstały w 1922 roku Związek Polskich Towarzystw Szkolnych. Wśród wielu przedmiotów dużą popularnością cieszyły się lekcje wychowania fizycznego i pozalekcyjne zajęcia sportowe. W latach 1918–1939 trwała walka o rozwój polskiego szkolnictwa w Niemczech. W ramach zajęć szkolnych odbywały się lekcje wychowania fizycznego oraz pozalekcyjne zajęcia sportowo-turystyczne. Polsko-niemiecka rywa-

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lizacja o polską szkołę dotyczyła zwłaszcza terenów pogranicza, gdzie działalność sportowa była bardzo aktywna. Wychowanie fizyczne i sport szkolny spełniały rolę utylitarną, prewencyjną oraz patriotyczną. Należy podkreślić, że wszyscy uczniowie polskich szkół w Niemczech byli objęci w ramach programu obowiązkowymi lekcjami wychowania fizycznego.

Słowa kluczowe: polonijna kultura fizyczna, wychowanie fizyczne, sport szkolny, mniejszość polska w Niemczech.

Abstract

Between 1918 and 1939, Germany had a Polish population of about 1.5 million. Most Poles lived in Silesia, East Prussia, the central part of the country, Rhine-Westphalia and the eastern borderlands. One of the forms of patriotic activity to avoid assimilation was physical education, sports, tourism and recreation, the gymnastic movement within the framework of the Gymnastic Society "Sokol". An important role in this national activity was played by Polish education in Germany. Educational affairs were handled by the Union of Polish School Societies, established in 1922. Among many subjects, physical education classes and extracurricular sports activities were very popular. In the years 1918–1939, a real battle for Polish school in Germany with physical education classes and after school activities took place. This struggle affected mainly the Polish-German borderland and in this particular area the sport activities were also the most visible ones. Physical education had a utilitarian and a preventative role, but the Polish activists also laid an emphasis on the high standards of the physical education classes and after school activities that were very often educational and patriotic. All primary school students took part in obligatory physical education classes and additional after school activities. It should be noted that all students of Polish schools in Germany attended compulsory physical education lessons.

Keywords: Polish physical culture, physical education, school sports, Polish minority in Germany.

Introduction

The 19th century witnessed a political and economic exodus of Polish citizens from the three partitions to several countries of Western Europe and the United States.¹ The biggest number of Poles chose Germany on the European continent due to its proximity and favourable economic conditions. These favourable conditions for industry in the dynamically developing Second Reich after its victorious war with France and the country's unification definitely contributed to it. As a result, only in the years 1890–1910, the number of Polish citizens seeking "bet-

¹ According to the estimates, in the years 1871–1914, about 3.5 mln people (13.7 percent of Polish citizens living on the territory of three partitions) left the Polish territory, whereas in the years 1918–1939, the border of the Second Polish Republic was crossed by 2.5 mln people, mainly for financial purposes. The biggest number of Poles left for the United States of America and Germany. In the 30s of the 20th century, there were 7.5 mln Poles living abroad. The majority of them lived in the USA – 3.6 mln, followed by immigrants in Germany – 1.5 mln, the USSR – 0.9 mln, France – 0.6 mln, Brazil – 0.2 mln, Czechoslovakia – 0.2 mln and Lithuania – 0.2 mln. E. Kołodziej, *Emigracja z ziem polskich i Polonia 1865–1939*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa – Kraków 1988, pp. 5–6.

ter future” grew fourfold in Germany and before the outbreak of WWI it reached 1.5 mln people. Till the end of the interwar period, the number of Polish citizens living in Germany remained at a similar level. According to Polish estimates, during the interwar period, the biggest number of Poles lived in Upper Silesia (600–800,000), East Prussia (350–500,000), the central part of the country (120–150,000), Western Germany (95–120,000) and Lower Silesia (60,000).²

The Polish minority in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich faced numerous difficulties concerning the discriminating Policy of German authorities and active attempts of denationalization. It was exercised in the economic, political, cultural and educational area, even the propaganda-statistical one. This policy reached its peak during the Third Reich period. To defend their rights, in 1922, the Poles established the Union of Poles in Germany – the main organization of the Polish minority within the borders of this country, whose motto was “A Pole serves his nation every day.” There were also several other organisations gathering Poles together, which demonstrated exuberant development of national life. They cultivated the traditions of “the old homeland” concerning the promotion of culture, especially the Polish language and customs. Their economic, political, religious, educational and sports activity was not without significance.³

Educational matters were attributed a very important role, especially as far as the development of minority education was concerned. Poles as the national minority were entitled to it within the German borders. Among the subjects taught physical education and extracurricular activities comprising sport, tourism and recreation had a crucial role. So far, historiography has rarely tackled the topic of the development of physical education and sport taught at school and it has not been thoroughly researched. While other areas of Polish national life in Germany have been described in numerous publications, the topic of physical culture was dealt with only at the regional level⁴ and as far as the activ-

² At that time, Poles constituted the biggest national minority in Germany. W. Wrzesiński, *Polski ruch narodowy w Niemczech w latach 1922–1939*, Ossolineum, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1993, pp. 27–29.

³ The most important monographs included the following publications: H. Chałupczak, *II Rzeczpospolita a mniejszość polska w Niemczech*, Poznań 1992; T. Klimaszewski, *Emigracja polska w Niemczech*, Białystok 2007; M. Lis, *Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego w Niemczech (1922–1939)*, Opole 1981; J. Marczewski [ed.], *Związek Polaków w Niemczech w latach 1922–1982*, Warszawa 1987; T. Musioł, *Polacy w Niemczech w latach 1918–1939*, Wydawnictwa Instytutu Śląskiego w Opolu, Opole 1963; M. Orzechowski, *Ludność polska w Niemczech w latach 1922–1939*, Warszawa 1967; A. Poniatowska, *Polacy w Berlinie w latach 1918–1945*, Poznań 1986.

⁴ B. Grańska, T. Jurek, *Polonijna kultura fizyczna w Nadrenii-Westfalii w latach 1899–1939*, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego im. Eugeniusza Piaseckiego, Monografie nr 444, Poznań 2015; A. Segner, *Polski ruch sportowy na Śląsku Opolskim w latach 1922–1939*, Rozprawy Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Wychowania Fizycznego, Wrocław 1966, pp. 21–81.

ity of the Gymnastic Society "Sokol"⁵ was concerned. Bernard Woltmann and Tomasz Jurek were the only authors focusing on the matters of physical education and sport taught at school. The monograph entitled *Polish Physical Culture in Germany (1918–1939) [Polonijna kultura fizyczna w Niemczech (1918–1939)]*, presenting many aspect of Polish physical culture within the German borders till 1939, should be considered the most important work. Due to the nature of this ample publication,⁶ it only offers a fairly general outline of the matters of physical education and sport taught at school.

Research methods and problems

The publication uses archival sources stored in the Federal Archives in Berlin, the New Archives Department in Warsaw, and the State Archives in Katowice, Piła and Poznań. Thematic studies, mainly memoirs proved very useful as well. The research material was studied with the help of the methods of analysis and synthesis of historical sources, induction and deduction, and the comparative method. The author formulated the following research problems:

1. Which role was played by Polish education in Germany in the national activity of Poles in that country?
2. What were the forms of obligatory and facultative lessons of physical education in Polish schools?
3. In which Polish circles in Germany were physical education and sport taught at school the most important?

⁵ D. Blecking, *Die Geschichte der nationalpolnischen Turnorganisation "Sokol" im Deutschen Reich 1884–1939*, Lit-Verlag, Münster – Dortmund 1987.

⁶ T. Jurek, *Polonijna kultura fizyczna w Niemczech (1918–1939)*, Polskie Towarzystwo Naukowe Kultury Fizycznej Sekcja Historii, Warszawa 2013. The matters of physical education and sport taught at school were also briefly discussed by other authors in their publications concerning Polish educational matters in Germany. These were the following publications: B. Woltmann, *Z dziejów wychowania fizycznego i sportu wśród Polaków na ziemi złotowskiej w latach 1919–1939*, "Rocznik Nadnotecki", no 3, Poznań 1970, pp. 279–291; ibidem, *Kultura fizyczna pod znakiem Rodła. Wychowanie fizyczne, sport i turystyka polskiej ludności rodzimej na ziemi złotowskiej w latach 1919–1939*, Koszalin 1972; ibidem, *Polska kultura fizyczna na wschodnim pograniczu niemieckim (1919–1939)*, Monografie AWF, no 125, Poznań 1980; T. Musioł, *Szkolnictwo polskie w reencji opolskiej 1919–1939*, Wydawnictwa Instytutu Śląskiego w Opolu, Opole 1964; B. Jęchorek, *Wśród polskich dzieci w Zakrzewie i Krajence*, [in:] E. Makowski (study), *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich 1929–1939*, Poznań 1964; W. Gębik, *Burzom dziejów nie dali się zgnieść*, Wydawnictwo Morskie, Gdynia 1967; J. Lubos, *Dzieje Polskiego Gimnazjum w Bytomiu w świetle dokumentów i wspomnień*, Wydawnictwo Śląsk, Katowice 1971; H. Lehr, E. Osmańczyk, *Polacy spod znaku Rodła*, Wydawnictwo Żywe Kamienie, Warszawa 1972.

Results and discussion

National activity of Poles in Germany encompassed care for children and teenagers, who were especially susceptible to the influence of galloping Germanisation. The leaders of the Polish minority in Germany were aware of the fact that Polish circles deprived of any educational system were particularly vulnerable to the assimilation of their youngest members, deprived of access to the Polish language and the country's culture and history. As a result, in such places the disappearance of Polish national identity and cultural traditions progressed very fast, which was noticed and – according to the Polish minority leaders – everything was done to restrict this exceptionally dangerous process. Thus, at the time of the 20th century interwar period, the Polish circles in Germany were fighting for Polish school in order to counter the process of Germanisation of Polish children and youth.

Both the Union of Poles in Germany and the Union of Polish School Societies, established on 27 August 1922, tightly linked with the first organisation, played a crucial role in the process of creating Polish education in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. Thanks to the active and uncompromising stance of the aforementioned organisations' members in executing the educational rights, Polish state schools were established in the German part of the Upper Silesia, and a net of private schools was opened on the territory of Eastern Prussia. It derived from the fact that the border territories had a priority status for the Union of Poles in Germany as there was a concern that as a result of intensified Germanisation, the assimilation of Polish citizens on the originally Polish territories might proceed very fast. For generations, these were the territories inhabited by Poles, which, due to unfavourable results of the plebiscites organized in Silesia, Eastern Prussia and Powiśle district, were incorporated within the German borders.⁷

The educational matters were regulated by the so-called Little Geneva Convention concerning the Upper Silesia, which allowed for the establishment of Polish schools in the German part of this region. Initially, the impact was hard to notice. Thanks to this convention, in the years 1923-1926, 6 primary schools were established and they were attended by 2 229 pupils (2.6% of all school-age children). Despite the hope that the number of schools was going to grow every year, there was an opposite tendency and Polish educational institutions decreased in number. In the years to follow, the number of school got smaller and as a result in 1925 there were 53 of them (1269 pupils), in 1926 – 37 schools (951 children), in 1928 – 31 schools (507 children), in 1932 – 23 schools (254 children), and in 1936 – 6 schools (78 children). Such mediocre effects let us state that the process of creating Polish schools in German Silesia failed despite

⁷ T. Jurek, *Polonijna kultura fizyczna...*, p. 83.

quite promising initial outcomes of creating new establishments in the years 1923–1925. As a result, once the Upper Silesia Convention ceased to be valid in Upper Silesia, only a small number of Polish pupils could attend Polish schools.⁸

The next group of Polish primary schools were private establishments created pursuant to the so-called school ordinance issued in December 1928. It allowed to establish private schools after fulfilling certain conditions, which the Poles did so that they could create new schools. This phenomenon concerned mainly the borderlands inhabited by indigenous people along the whole former eastern border which mainly covered the area of the Frontier March of Posen-West Prussia (Grenzmark Posen – Westpreussen).⁹ Altogether, 72 Polish primary schools were open, the majority of them (70 establishments) at the time of the Weimar Republic, and only two of them at the time of the Third Reich. The biggest number of private schools were located on the following territories of the Frontier March of Posen-West Prussia: district of Złotów – 23, Warmia – 15, Opole Silesia – 13, Powiśle – 10, Babimost – 5, Kashubia – 4, Międzyrzecze – 1, Mazuria – 1. The total of 1955 pupils were registered in private schools, which constituted merely 2% of all Polish children subject to obligatory education. In particular borderland areas, the number of Polish private schools was as follows: the Frontier March of Posen-West Prussia – 1325, Eastern Prussia – 414, Opole Silesia – 143, Kashubia – 73. Similarly to Silesia, the number of Polish schools in the borderland areas was gradually decreasing, especially in the second half of the 1930s, at the time of Nazi anti-Polish chauvinism and totalitarian propaganda, reaching the number of 55 schools in the school year 1938-1939, attended by 1297 pupils, i.e. one third less than at the initial period of these establishments' operating.¹⁰

⁸ In 1936, only 11% of all previously established schools were created and they were attended by only 6% of pupils in comparison to the most numerous year 1925 in this respect. There were numerous reasons, mainly financial difficulties that Polish families suffered from, and the pressure exercised on Poles not to send their children to Polish schools. The Germans explained that fact with satisfaction by talking about "lack of Polish children", which was not true. T. Musioł: *Działalność oświatowa Polaków w Niemczech 1919–1939*, [in:] *Polacy w Republice Weimarskiej i w III Rzeszy*, Olsztyn 1965, pp. 93–94; W. Wrześniński, *Polski ruch narodowy w Niemczech w latach 1922–1939*, Ossolineum, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1993, pp. 145–146.

⁹ The Frontier March of Posen-West Prussia was established in 1920 and encompassed the borderland territories from Mazuria, along the whole border up to Opole Silesia with its capital in Piła. Its establishment was of a uniquely political nature, directed against the Polish community, to support the assimilation of Poles on the borderland territory.

¹⁰ However, this process was much slower than in Silesia as in 1939 there were 55 schools left, which constituted 76% of the schools originally created, attended by 66% of the maximum number of private schools' pupils. BA Berlin, Deutsche Stiftung, no 992, pp. 306–309; no 1000, pp. 418–429; AP Piła, Rejencja Pogranicza, no 3424, pp. 245–248; no 3926, pp. 142–144; no 3929, pp. 33–35; J. Baczewski, *Wspomnienia Warmiaka*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1961, pp. 101, 214–233, 301–306; T. Musioł: *Działalność oświatowa...*, p. 95.

In the years 1923–1929, the determination of the Union of Poles in Germany and the Union of Polish School Societies, not to mention parents alone, led to the establishment of 128 primary schools in Germany. They were also called folk schools (Volksschulen), with Polish being their language of instruction. However, only half of them (61 establishments) survived till the end of the interwar period, at the end of which they were attended by 1375 pupils. According to the classification of educational institutions, the establishments concerned should be categorized in the group of elementary schools (Grundschulen), having one joined class taken care by only one teacher. It should be emphasized that in primary schools the German curriculum was obligatory yet the Polish language, History and Geography were added. These subjects had a priority status as they constituted the most important tool used to promote Polish identity among pupils.¹¹

During the aforementioned period, the Polish schools in the Weimar Republic and in the Third Reich had to realise the German curriculum, which, according to the German school tradition, put a lot of emphasis on physical education. It derived from rich military Prussian traditions in this field (first a student – then a recruit), the national physical exercise system within the framework of German gymnastics system developed by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn as well as from the cult of physical fitness in the Third Reich society. The traditional teaching methods called Lernschule were gradually replaced with upbringing methods resorting to physical exercise (Bildungsschule), pursuant to the Nazi concepts of raising the nation of masters (rulers). It offered a significant opportunity of physical education and sport teaching for two lessons per week in lower grades and three lessons per week in upper grades.¹²

An analysis of the way the programme of physical education classes was really executed renders interesting observations. Despite priority given to physical education in German school curricula, organizing the subject in question in Polish schools faced certain obstacles and was dependent first of all on teachers' qualifications and a financial situation of a particular school as far as its sports facilities and equipment were concerned. Polish schools especially lacked gyms and they suffered from the shortage of specialist equipment, which significantly restricted the possibility of full realization of the physical education programme. The physical education programme encompassed three sections: general development exercises (Körperschule), movement games (Spiele) and sports (Leistungsturnen, Wettspiele). The first one focused on drill and shaping exercises, the second one covered games, plays and team sports, whereas the third one included the most popular individual sports disciplines in Germany: gymnastics, athletics and swim-

¹¹ AP Poznań, Polski Związek Zachodni, nr 206, Polnische Minderheitsschulen in Preussen. Verordnung der Preussischen Staatsregierung zur Regelung des polnischen Minderheitsschulwesens; B. Woltmann: *Wychowanie fizyczne młodzieży polskiej...*, p. 344.

¹² For more information see: T. Musioł, *Szkolnictwo polskie w rejencji opolskiej (1919–1939)*, Wydawnictwa Instytutu Śląskiego w Opolu, Opole 1964, p. 53.

ming.¹³ The very same programme was obligatory in Polish primary schools, similarly to schools run by other national minorities. As B. Woltmann states, the progress of the lesson should involve the following activities and exercises: I – greeting, drill and shaping exercises, II – hanging, exercises with the body supported on the hands, balancing, free and mixed jumping, movement games, III – correction exercises, calming exercises, saying goodbye. The surviving lesson documentation shows that gymnastic exercises and athletics dominated physical education classes. There was an acute lack of gymnastics equipment so out of necessity free exercises (their elements), shaping, stretching and drill dominated, where teachers could make use of small playgrounds and areas on school premises for that purpose. As far as games, plays, exercises and field games were concerned, there were more options to carry them out not only on school playgrounds but in the form of trips in the school surrounding area. More and more popular elements of the scouting method based on fieldwork began to reach schools. Steeplechase was becoming more and more popular. As archival relations and memoirs of pupils and teachers show, children were very eager to take part in engaging lessons implementing games and plays as well as field exercises and games.¹⁴

Table 1. A weekly number of hours devoted to particular subjects in the grades I – VIII of Polish school in Germany

Subject	I	II	III-IV	V-VI	VII-VIII
Religion	4	4	4	4	4
Writing	1	2	—	—	—
The Polish language	5.5	6.5	4	4	4
Calculations (mathematics)	4	4	5	5	5
Art	2	1	2	2	2
Singing	1.5	1.5	2	2	2
Practical activities	2	1	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
The Latin language	—	—	5	5	5
Knowledge about the region	—	—	2	—	—
History	—	—	—	2	2
Nature	—	—	—	2	2
Geography	—	—	—	—	2
Total	22	22	28	30	32

Source: T. Musioł, *Szkolnictwo polskie w rejencji opolskiej (1919–1939)*, Wydawnictwa Instytutu Śląskiego w Opolu, Opole 1964, p. 53.

¹³ AP Piła, Rejencja Pogranicza, no 3934, pp. 240–241.

¹⁴ B. Woltmann, *Wychowanie fizyczne młodzieży polskiej...*, p. 345.

The teachers who significantly contributed to the development of physical education and sport in particular schools were those who were not always specialists in that discipline but nevertheless they ran not only school classes but also promoted sport among the youth in a given environment.¹⁵ Bolesław Jęchorek – a teacher in Polish schools in Krajenka, Nowy Kramsk and Zakrzew – stated that after regular lessons he often played an animator role of young people's sports-cultural life. He wrote as follows:

In my after-school time I took care of sports club "Jedność" already known to me from Obrzycko from 1929, and I also worked in a library. The members of the sports club met twice a week to practise gymnastics in the room of the restaurant managed by Władysław Dobberstein. [...] Young people in great numbers willingly took part in such exercise and oftentimes the room was too small to accommodate all of them and put them in an exercise line. Among exercises practised for sports days, there were a few that stood out: rhythmic gymnastics, human pyramids very popular at that time, and singing march songs while marching. Each lesson started and finished with singing. [...] The sports team in Zakrzew belonged to the best ones in the Borderland area, it even surpassed the German teams from Piła and Złotów. After our training, if it was still before 10 p.m., our young people formed a line on the street and singing along marched through the village. These were very touching moments. Singing shaped their patriotism and evoked national pride. Our gymnastics practice was often controlled by German gendarmes. To distract them and make them give up any intervention, when young people were leaving and singing, one had to diplomatically take care of them.¹⁶

In the summer, in many schools, teachers in cooperation with youth associations organized school events, often accompanied by performances and dancing. The whole local community participated in such events and "fraternal associations" with their banners also arrived from neighbouring villages. In his published memoirs, Jan Maćkowicz, a teacher from Kleszczyna wrote:

Almost all boys and girls belonged to the sports club. Football and volleyball teams were formed at that time. Volleyball was more popular. The teams would leave to play matches with other district associations, enjoying a lot of success. Football enjoyed less popularity due to the lack of a proper pitch [...]. The matters of sport were in the hands of youth instructor and teacher, Henryk Jaroszyk from the School Society in Złotów. In the evenings, he would arrive on his bike to school where young people were waiting for

¹⁵ Teachers were obliged by the German education authorities to use generalny binding didactic rules. Many of them, however, did not possess necessary qualifications to teach physical education. Their knowledge came from various methodology conferences and Reading a specialist journal, "Teacher's Guidebook" ("Poradnik Nauczycielski." They also obtained some help from Poland in the form of Physical Education textbooks. Sports instructors employed by the Union of Poles in Germany in particular districts were also a very precious help to Polish schools teachers. As mentioned earlier, many schools' former scouting activity should not be underestimated either. Thanks to teachers and scouting instructors, it was transferred to fieldwork, trips and camping. T. Jurek, *Polonijna kultura fizyczna...*, pp. 89–90.

¹⁶ B. Jęchorek, *Wśród polskich dzieci w Zakrzewie i Krajenke*, [in:] E. Makowski (study), *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich 1929–1939*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 1964, pp. 78–79.

him. He knew how to approach them; he organized sports teams, gave instructions, taught them youth songs and made them laugh with various anecdotes.¹⁷

Contrary to a widely spread net of primary schools, especially in Eastern Prussia, secondary schools were practically non-existent, and all the attempts of establishing new institutions undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw and the Union of Poles in Germany were usually unsuccessful. The only lower-secondary schools were open in Bytom and Kwidzyń. The other attempts to establish more schools of this type fell through. It concerned two male lower-secondary schools in Piła and Złotów and a female lower-secondary school in Racibórz. There was one more unsuccessful attempt to create a lower-secondary school (seminary for kindergarten teachers) in Olstyn. The two schools in Bytom and Kwidzyń operated for quite a short time to satisfy current needs. Due to that fact, Polish youth from Germany was forced to attend schools on the territory of Poland, especially teacher training schools in Greater Poland, and most often in teacher seminars in Rogoźno Wlkp. (for boys) and Leszno (for girls).¹⁸

The first Polish lower-secondary school in Germany was open on 8 November 1932, in Bytom. This elite school was attended by 505 students, and till 1939 the final exams had been passed by 64 students. The other school was established after five years in Kwidzyń and its opening was celebrated on 10 November 1937. Overall, 162 students attended this institution. The school in Bytom and Kwidzyń were destined for boys only, thus they constituted the group of their students and graduates. The level of teaching in the aforesaid institutions was very high and learning there was a privilege. The most important task of Polish lower-secondary schools was “raising a comprehensively educated graduate – both mentally and physically.” In the aforesaid lower-secondary schools “a Physical Education, Art or Singing lesson was as important as Mathematics, Biology or Latin.”¹⁹ That was the didactic-educational ideal of both institutions.²⁰

¹⁷ J. Maćkiewicz, *Polska szkoła w Kleszczynie*, [in:] *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich...*, pp. 108–109. Other memoirs also describe common undertakings of Polish school teachers in the Borderland area aimed at sport and culture. See L. Kowalski, *Światła na wzgórzu*, [in:] *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich...*, p. 98; W. Maćkiewicz, *Polsko-Katolicka Szkoła Mniejszościowa w Radawnicy*, [in:] *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich...*, p. 115; L. Obst, *Z polską dziatwą w Nowej Świętej, Skicu i Buczku Wielkim*, [in:] *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich...*, p. 132; S. Piątek, *Z pamiętnika nauczyciela polskiej szkoły w Wiśniewce*, [in:] *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich...*, p. 137; J. Redlarski: *Szkoła przy krwawiącej granicy*, [in:] *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich...*, p. 140; W. Wittstock, *Pięć lat pracy nauczycielskiej w Zakrzewie – stolicy Polaków w Niemczech*, [in:] *Pamiętniki nauczycieli złotowskich...*, pp. 154–156, 158, 160.

¹⁸ H. Zieliński, *Polacy i polskość ziemi złotowskiej w latach 1918–1939*, Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 1949, p. 123.

¹⁹ W. Gębik, *Burzom dziejów nie dali się zgnieść*, Wydawnictwo Morskie, Gdynia 1967, pp. 75, 103, 249–252; Relacja pisemna W. Przybylskiego.

²⁰ The principal of the lower-secondary school in Kwidzyn saw the school’s mission in the following way: “We treated all school subjects like gymnastics equipment pieces used to shape and

Thanks to perceiving that curricular variety, physical education was put on a par with other subjects. Besides shaping physical strength and individual and team sports skills, the aim of the subject was to develop discipline, awareness of consequences, courage and national pride."²¹ Polish lower-secondary schools, similarly to aforementioned primary schools, used the German curriculum that initially included four hours of physical exercise, and from 1938 it was divided into six subject groups with physical education belonging to the first and most important group with 5 lessons per week. What is interesting and worth emphasizing, each student received more than a general grade from physical education on his school certificate as it was accompanied with detailed grades from several sports disciplines: boxing, gymnastics, sports games, athletics and swimming, which emphasized a high status physical education enjoyed.²²

The aforementioned aims concerning physical education were realized not only during physical education lessons, but also by participation in sports contests and active participation in the tourism-sightseeing movement. A textbook by Peter Jaeck of 1931 constituted a theoretical basis. In chapter III of his book, the author puts an emphasis on various practical classes, including basic, free and equipment gymnastics so popular in Germany, correction exercises, athletics, team games and classes (handball, football, palant, *pięstówka* – a team sport popular before the arrival of volleyball that replaced it – field games, dancing), swimming, rowing, winter sports (skiing, skating, luge), gliding and trips.²³ In each lower-secondary school a teachers council discussed and implemented an appropriate timetable and the classes were run by qualified physical education teachers. Most often there were three obligatory lessons in the school timetable, and the rest of them were placed in the afternoon programme as sports training.²⁴

During the spring-summer-autumn season, physical education and sports training classes took place mainly on school pitches, where students practiced above all athletics and team games. In the winter and when there were unfavourable weather conditions, physical education lessons were held in the school gymnasium, which was used for physical education lessons and sports training. The aim was to exercise our bodies and minds – which was to develop Kwidzyn schoolers' physical and spiritual posture approaching the educational ideal of our school. Bearing this assumption in mind, it was not the most important thing in Kwidzyn how much a given student knew but how he knew it." W. Gębik, *Burzom dziejów...*, p. 119.

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²¹ J. Lubos, *Dzieje Polskiego Gimnazjum w Bytomiu w świetle dokumentów i wspomnień*, Katowice 1971, pp. 39, 48, 84–85, 193–208.

²² H. Lehr, E. Osmańczyk, *Polacy spod znaku Rodła...*, p. 138.

²³ See more in: P. Jaeck, *Körperliche Erziehung. Handbuch des Unterrichts an höheren Schulen*. Bd 17. Frankfurt/M. 1931.

²⁴ BA Berlin, Reichsamtministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, no 3264, p. 348; AAN Warszawa, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, no 9646, p. 22; Konsulat RP w Kwidzynie, no 7, pp. 40–42; AP Katowice, Prywatne Gimnazjum w Bytomiu, no 8, pp. 87–91; no 11, pp. 63–65; no 22, pp. 137–144; no 36, pp. 1–; no 282, p. 4; no 290, p. 4.

avourable weather conditions the classes were run in school gyms and then gymnastics, dancing, self-defence and boxing dominated. Each student had to learn how to swim, so lessons were run in local swimming pools or open swimming areas. Usually classes in open swimming areas were combined with trips and field marches. Swimming also enjoyed a high status. If, for any reasons, a given student did not master the skill of swimming, he was obliged to practise on his own and if he did not succeed he did not get promoted to the next grade. Lower-secondary school students could apply for swimming cards entitling them to swim in open waters.²⁵ The winter sports programme was the most problematic one as students could develop their skiing skills only during a short skiing camp in the mountains. Due to lack of specialist equipment and facilities, skating, luge, gliding and rowing were not practised.²⁶ A high status of physical education among the subjects taught in lower-secondary schools was confirmed by the fact that this subject was included into the final exams. It contributed to the growing level of physical education and the youth's care about their physical fitness, which was objectively verified during their final exams.²⁷

Supplementary evening schools became an interesting form of secondary education. They were established in the 1930s and lasted for a very short time. They were attended by students who, for various reasons, could not learn in the two open Polish lower-secondary schools. The Union of Poles in Germany and the Union of Polish School Societies tried to open these schools already in the second half of the 1920s. At that time they did not obtain permission for the establishment of these supplementary schools (Ländliche Fortbildungsschulen). The German authorities were afraid they could be converted into rural agricultural vocational schools. Finally, the schools were open once the permission was issued by the Administrative District in Piła on 16 July 1930. Twenty three supplementary general-education schools (Förderschulen) were created then. They operated just for a year as the district authorities cancelled their permission and on 1 October 1931 the schools were closed. Similar institutions were established in Opole Silesia. There were only 5 supplementary schools there, nevertheless, they caused concern of the local German authorities. They were finally closed in

²⁵ Only in one school year 1937/1938, the students of the lower-secondary school in Bytom obtained 97 special swimming cards, which shows the popularity of this form of developing students' swimming skills. T. Jurek, *Polonijna kultura fizyczna...*, p. 98.

²⁶ AP Katowice, Prywatne Gimnazjum w Bytomiu, no 4, pp. 14–15; no 188, p. 21.

²⁷ As far as the final exams were concerned, lower-secondary school students underwent special tests of physical fitness encompassing one sports game of their choice (football or palant), athletics discipline (usually a short 200-meter or 400-meter run, a chosen jump – high jump or long jump, and shot put), and gymnastics in the form of an exercise set performed with the help of various equipment. AP Katowice, Prywatne Gimnazjum w Bytomiu, nr 1, p. 5; no 5, p. 29.

1934, putting an end to a short period of time during which this specific form of Polish schooling developed.²⁸

As it has been mentioned before, lessons were divided into two parts, one of which (2 lessons) took place in the afternoon, within the framework of extra-curricular 2-lesson units. Such lessons were organized during the whole school year, they were of a sports nature and were called game afternoons (*Spielnachmittage*). Their programme included mostly games and plays, especially sports games and athletics – addressed to older students, and movement games and plays destined for younger students. Some of these classes took part outside school premises as far as marches, games and field athletics were concerned. This extracurricular programme often lasted longer than planned as children and teenagers eagerly participated in such lessons. Teachers from primary and lower-secondary schools saw it as an opportunity for students to meet again, that is why they encouraged them to participate in this form of school lessons. Every year, most schools also organized sports days filled with simple fitness contests, matches, selected athletics disciplines competitions. All the students took part in these events, and even their parents used to join in. The schools cooperated in this sports field, which resulted in joint contest and trips. These inter-school duels, usually taking part between two neighbouring schools, most frequently competed in very popular team games (volleyball, football, pal-ant, dodge ball) and athletics disciplines (short runs, steeplechase, high and long jump, shot put).²⁹

The Polish Lower-Secondary School in Bytom enjoyed the highest level of sports lessons. The student self-government of this school issued its own journal “Let’s go” (“*Idziemy*”), where a lot of space was devoted to physical education matters and school sport. In its policy statement article entitled “The sun, air and sport” (“*Słońce, powietrze, sport*”), the author presented the aim of its activity in the area of sport, emphasizing joint effort in creating joint strength.³⁰ The lower-secondary school in Kwidzyn had much less sports experience as it

²⁸ These establishments did not include physical education classes, which derived from their specificity of evening schools. AP Poznań, *Polski Związek Zachodni*, no 10, pp. 1–6; *Rejencja Piła*, no 393, pp. 6–7; no 3941, pp. 3–4, 245, 230–231, 238, 245, 348; H. Zieliński, *Polacy i polskość ziemi złotowskiej...*, p. 129.

²⁹ It can be confirmed by numerous entries in the archives of Polish schools from Buczek Wielki, Buntów, Nowa Kaletka and Woryty; “*Młody Polak w Niemczech*” 1936, no 3, p. 106; 1938, no 6, p. 213; “*Gazeta Olsztyńska*” 1932, no 290; 1938, no 294; W. Knosała, *Była nas gromadka spora*, Wydawnictwo Pojezierze, Olsztyn 1972, p. 99.

³⁰ The article reads as follows: “[...] the point is to create via sport the atmosphere of friendship, comradeship and peaceful coexistence in any situation. Comradeship is necessary to achieve victory. Being real sportsmen, we avoid to think “me”, and we replace it with “us”. If we learn to think in such a way, we will learn how to selflessly sacrifice “us” for the sake of the team. We’ll create strength.” “*Idziemy*” 1938, no 11, p. 11.

had been operating for only two years and was following into Bytom's footsteps. Sports classes were run in the Sports Circle of Kwidzyn Students, which organised inter-class and school competitions. The most popular sports disciplines were team games, gymnastics, athletics and boxing so that school championships were organized for them. Kwidzyn students competed in sports games with students from German schools. But after many victories the Poles were banned from league contests without any right to come back to them.³¹ In the school year 1939/1939, there were plans to create a lower-secondary school sports club, but increasingly difficult circumstances and the threat concerning the outbreak of the war put an end to these plans.³²

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be stated that physical education and sport in Polish education were much more widespread in primary schools, whose number and impact range clearly dominated over merely two secondary schools that were created. However, the level of teaching physical education and sport in the lower-secondary schools was high, which cannot be said about primary schools. Physical education and sport played mainly an integrative and patriotic role among the Polish youth. Evaluating physical education and school sport in Germany till 1939, one has to take into account the fact that they constituted – beside the Gymnastic Society "Sokol", sports movement, tourism and recreation – an element of Polish physical culture, creating one of the areas of national activity of Poles in that country. Physical education and school sport played a crucial role in the process of pro-Polish upbringing of children and youth, constituting a counterbalance to the wave of growing Germanisation. Thus, it can be stated that in the years 1918-1939, there was a constant battle for the development of Polish education in Germany. The problem concerned especially the former eastern borderlands, where sports activity of Polish local inhabitants was particularly intense. There, physical education and school sport were also of the

³¹ "Słowo na Warmii i Mazurach" 1939, no 33, p. 3; "Mały Polak w Niemczech" 1939, no 6/7, p. 29.

³² In the spring of 1939, when the international and bilateral relations between Poland and Germany exacerbated, the lower-secondary school in Kwidzyn created a 20-person security guard whose members were the fittest in the school's sports circle. The concerns were not misplaced as on 2 August 1939, the teachers and students of the Polish Lower-Secondary School in Kwidzyn were arrested and sent to Tapiaw near Königsberg, and then to Gruenhof and Strohbienen, where they were confined till 21 September 1939. In these places, they focused on sport and conspiracy in the Friends of the Deed Circle. Sport let them forget about traumatic experiences of arrest and the September campaign failure. B. Woltmann, *Wychowanie fizyczne młodzieży polskiej...*, p. 353.

highest quality. To a large extent, the exceptional engagement of Polish teachers contributed to this situation. The modern, attractive curriculum, encompassing the latest achievements of pedagogy in the area of physical education should not be underestimated. Concluding, one may state that physical education and school sport significantly contributed to the preservation of Polish culture, especially in a very difficult period of growing nationalist sentiments in Germany during the Third Reich. They also prevented assimilation with local inhabitants, especially in mid and western Germany, thanks to emphasising Polish national identity everywhere it was possible.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article *Physical education and sports in Polish education in Germany in the years 1918–1939*.

FUNDING

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article *Physical education and sports in Polish education in Germany in the years 1918–1939*.

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