



Polish Sports Congresses as a way of promotion and popularization of women's physical education and sport in the period of the Second Polish Republic

Authors' Contribution:

A - Study Design
B - Data Collection
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Abstract

In the interwar period of the 20th century the interest in women's physical education and sports movement in Poland increased. The issue of women's physical education and sport was a subject of debates of Polish sports congresses. An important role in formulating the assumptions and programme of the development of women's sport was played by the 2nd Polish Sports Congress (1927). The assumptions of sports congresses resulted in the activity of women's sections and clubs. Sports organizations and associations took intensified action to promote women's hygiene and health. Propaganda activities were reinvigorated in relation to women's physical education and sport through the organization of conferences, courses or camps. Women were active within the structures of sport in Poland, among others they sat on boards of sports associations and clubs. Departments for women's physical education and sport operated at the State Office of Physical Education and Military Training.

Keywords: *women, sport, physical education, the Second Polish Republic, sports congresses*

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INTRODUCTION

In the interwar period of the 20th century the interest in women's physical education and sports movement in Poland increased. The issue of women's physical education and sport was a subject of debates of Polish sports congresses. An important role in formulating the assumptions and programme of the development of women's sport was played by the 2nd Polish Sports Congress (1927). The Congress recognized the development of sport among women as one of the main ideas of physical education. It ordered sports associations and clubs to provide organizational and technical support to women's sports movement and appointed the management board of the Union of Polish Sports Associations to convene a women's sports convention. Women's sports congresses in the period discussed were convened twice: 1928 - 1st Congress for Women's Sport and Physical Education, 1934 - 2nd Congress of Women's Physical Culture. The 1st Congress demonstrated interest of state authorities in women's sport. The following research problems have been put forward in the study:

1. What was the importance of Polish sports congresses as regards promotion and popularization of women's physical education and sport in the period of the Second Polish Republic?
2. What was women's contribution to the development of the idea of promoting women's physical education and engagement in sport during Polish sports congresses?

MATERIALS AND METHOD

As part of preparation of the publication the following research methods have been used: analysis of historical sources, the method of synthesis and comparison. As far as the research is concerned preliminary research into Polish sports press from the interwar period was conducted. The literature used takes into account the issues of women's physical education and sport in Poland until 1939.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the 1st half of 1920s women's sport in Poland developed with little involvement of government, social and sports authorities [1]. Women took steps to establish independent sports structures and their right to participate in sport on an equal footing with men. The place where women proved their activity in the fight for equality in sport were Polish sports congresses. The 1st Polish Sports Congress was called at the initiative of the Union of Polish Sports Associations (UPSA). As part of sessions of the 1st Polish Sports Congress held in Warsaw on 7-8 April 1923, little attention was dedicated to women's sports movement. The requirements included in the agenda of the commissions in session (of propaganda, sport at school, sport at the army) did not include any ideas of women's physical education and sport. Only the Agenda Commission, stating that "*the Polish Sports Congress considers meeting the following requirements as the basic conditions for the development of sport*" [2, 3, 4] put forward one requirement regarding women's sport out of 21. "*Taking care of the rising sports movement among women and assisting in its organization*" [2,4]. Further comment on this issue came from Tadeusz Kuchar - a member of UPSA. In his lecture regarding "The most immediate needs of Polish sport" he recommended that sports unions, until the Union of Women's Sport Associations and Clubs was established, accepted women's sports sections and independent women's sport clubs then set up within the associations and clubs as ordinary members [5].

The Congress was attended by representatives of state (civil and military) authorities, municipal authorities, public institutions, sports associations and clubs, medical, educational, physical education associations and the press. As Jerzy Chelmecki writes "*All organizations and*

associations interested in physical education were represented. The participants were the most influential people in their environments" [6]. The patron of the congress was the then Prime Minister and minister of internal affairs Gen. Władysław Sikorski. Women during the Congress were represented by R. Łubieńska (Polish Women's Club in Warsaw), Józefa Gebethner (The Wilhelm E. Rau Garden Committee), Władysława Fynsztykówna (Warsaw Club of Female Rowers - WCFR), Helena Olszewska (community of Warsaw teachers), Zofia Miziewicz (teacher at a secondary school in Białystok) [5]. The largest group of Congress participants were the representatives of the army. The following delegates of the Ministry of Military Affairs participated in the sessions: Gen. Lucjan Żelichowski, Gen. Franciszek Zwierzchowski, Gen. Jan Jacyna, Gen. Aureli Serda-Teodorski (Commandant of the Higher Military School in Warsaw), Gen. Antoni Religioni (head of Military Sanitary Institute) [5], "(...) chiefs of the 3rd Unit of General Staff, responsible for physical education at the army, (...) sports clerks of all military districts and schools" [6]. The evaluation of the course of the Congress was published in "Military and Sports Education" of 15 April 1923. The effects of the Congress as to the expectations of the organizers themselves were received positively. It was reported that the congress "(...) established, or if someone prefers to say so, confirmed, the ideology of Polish sport. It provided the representatives of authorities and social organizations with the opportunity to declare that the educational and state role of sport finds understanding in the circles of those governing and leading public life" [7]. According to the editors, the congress was to be a "step forward" in the development of Polish sport.

When the 1st Polish Sports Congress was held in Poland there were independent women's sports organizations and clubs formed before World War I - the 5th Nest of the Gymnastic Society (GS) "Sokół" ("Falcon") - Grażyna, WCFR (1912) and female sections in sports clubs. In 1923, the Kalisz Club of Female Rowers (KCFR) was established. The women showed activity in students' sport. There were women's sports sections at the Students' Sports Association (SSA). Women sat on boards of SSA, among others in 1919 the board members of SSA Warsaw were Z. Dowbor-Muśnicka and Jadwiga Suligowska, whereas in 1921 Lucyna Janczewska was elected a member of the board [8]. Women were members of the boards of sports sections at SSA. The management board of the tennis section at SSA Cracow reactivated in 1920 was composed of Wanda Dubieńska and Maria Boniecka [9]. Women's activity was noticeable in the boards of sports associations and sports sections and clubs. In 1921, Jadwiga Pawłowska sat on the board of the ski section of the Sports Club "Czarni" Lviv [10]. However, the matters of women's sport were left to the discretion of the Polish Sports Associations.

The 2nd Polish Congress in Warsaw organized between 9 and 10 April 1927 proceeded in different conditions. In Poland, according to Dobiesław Dudek "*The beginning of the year 1927 brought about a formal determination of the organizational structure of physical education and military training*" [11]. Under the ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 28 January 1927, the State Office of Physical Education and Military Training (SOPEMT), Scientific Council of Physical Education (SCPE) and Provincial, County and Municipal Committees of Physical Education and Military Training were established. The tasks of SOPEMT included organization and management of physical culture in Poland in the years 1927-1939. SCPE was an advisory body to SOPEMT which determined the policy in the field of physical culture [12]. SCPE played "(...) *An important role in the formulation of ideological and programme objectives of women's sport movement*" [13]. Women were members of SCPE actively participating in its meetings and works of the commission. Kazimiera Muszałówna and Eugenia Lewicka served as secretaries of the Council. SCPE took action in the field of developing a uniform position in terms of popularization and development of women's physical education and sport [14].

The organizer of the 2nd Polish Sports Congress was UPSA, but as J. Chełmecki writes, the initiative was on the part of state authorities [6]. The President of the Congress Committee constituted on 11 January 1927, with the task of Congress preparation, was Lt. Col. Juliusz Ulrych, Director of SOPEMT. The Honorary Committee of the Congress, next to the President of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Military Affairs Marshal Józef Piłsudski, was

composed of the ministers of the most important government departments: Kazimierz Bartel – Deputy Prime Minister, Gustaw Dobrucki – Minister of Education (Religions and Public Enlightenment), Paweł Romocki – Minister of Communications, Felicjan Sławoj- Składkowski – Minister of Interior Affairs, August Zaleski – Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rev. Kazimierz Lubomirski – a delegate to the International Olympic Committee. UPSA was represented by the president Stanisław Osiecki [15]. The opening ceremony of the 2nd Polish Sports Congress was attended by the President of the Republic of Poland Ignacy Mościcki. *"The presence of the Head of state not only added external splendour to the sessions, but became a visible sign to the society of the significance of sport in its life"* [16]. I. Mościcki was also a patron of the congress. The congress was attended by about 400 delegates. In comparison with the 1st Polish Sports Congress, at the 2nd Congress women's community was represented by a much larger number of participants. Women were represented, among others by: SCPE (Józefa Gebethner H. Olszewska, Eleonora Reicher, Z. Zabawska-Domosławska), Union of Polish Sports Associations (J. Gebethner), Emigration Association (Jankowska), Association of Higher and Secondary School Teachers (Wanda Nowacka, M. Szymańska – Warsaw, Lemanówna, Amelia Żółtowska – Białystok), Association of Secondary School Teachers (M. Kraskowska – Płock, Zakrzewska – Białystok), Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (Helena Śliwowska, M. Samulakówna), Polish Association of Gymnastic Societies "Sokół" [Falcon] (Helena Korewo), Shooting Association (Lena Szydłowska, Halina Kowalewska, Żukówna), WCFR (W. Fynfszytkówna), sports press (K. Muszałówna – an editor of „Start”, Wanda Pełczyńska – an editor of „Modern Woman”), student community of National Institute of Physical Education in Warsaw (R. Lisowska) [15].

During the congress 13 papers were delivered. J. Ulrych with his lecture "On the cooperation of authorities with the public in the field of sport and physical education" began the works of Congress. During the plenary debate lectures were given by: Władysław Osmolski "Sport and record," Eugeniusz Piasecki "Professionalism in sport," Rev. K. Lubomirski "On the eve of the 9th Olympic Games in Amsterdam," Mieczysław Fularski "Shooting - sport of national defence", Władysław Dybowski "Sport and health" [15,17]. The remaining speakers delivered their papers during the works of the general, agenda and propaganda commissions. The issue of women's sport was also discussed. On April 10, 1927 as part of the session of the Propaganda Commission the lecture entitled "Women's sport and its requirements" was given by K. Muszałówna. She referred to issues related to the competition aspect of women's sport, indicating that as far as this issue was concerned it was still at the stage of experimentation. She justified this statement with the fact that there were insufficient studies that would decisively indicate which sports were suitable for women and thus there was no systematization of sports as regards their value for the physical development of women [18]. In addition, she critically examined the conditions of organization of women's competitions, pointing out that, among others, running distances or types of women's running races are not determined on the basis of practical tests and medical check-ups. Medical care of women in sport was also assessed negatively. On the basis of these statements K. Muszałówna directed attention to the absolute need for women's qualifications for exercises in competitive sport on the basis of medical examinations and the presence of a doctor at women's sports competitions [19]. She perceived the main goal of women's sport in raising the general level of health and not in the pursuit of records. She therefore called for avoiding specialization in women's sport and instead striving for versatility in exercises. She promoted the idea of women gaining sports badges. Assessing organizational structures of women's sports, she referred to the operation of women's sports sections at men's clubs. Lack of sufficient financial, organizational and technical conditions of women's sections according to K. Muszałówna was not conducive to their development. There were too few sections with no training of female instructors and no regard for a high level of fitness in the female members [18]. As J. Chelmecki writes *"She accused activists of unequal treatment of women in organizational structures of physical culture and their incapacitation as sportspeople"* [6]. She saw the improvement of such situation in establishing independent

women's clubs, as well as in the involvement of social and state factors in their development. In order to promote physical exercises among women, she adopted the position of appointing a central Polish women's organization for physical education and sports. Another issue raised at the presentation concerned the female instructors of physical education in primary and secondary schools. Assessing their engagement in sport in such areas as swimming, tennis and rowing as low, K. Muszałówna requested that further training courses be organized in various branches of sport during summer holidays. An important problem discussed was also the matter of democratization of physical exercises among women. Fast involvement of women in sport would aim at the promotion of different kinds of sports that would not require large financial outlays from both the state and sports clubs. K. Muszałówna pointed out that in this aspect, sports games with their added educational value would be the most appropriate. She mentioned that through the promotion of sports games in female education and establishment of contacts between school sport and club sport, a practical result would be achieved, whereby young people finishing their school education would not lose contact with sport, and its continuation would take place in sports clubs affiliated to the central women's organization [18]. The next issue was a proposal to be made by the Polish party to the project as for standardising female ski races in the international and domestic arena and a call for including women's cross-country skiing in the Winter Olympic Games.

K. Muszałówna's speech and the subsequent discussion resulted in the Congress adopting the resolutions which demonstrated support for women's sport. At the request of Mieczysław Orłowicz, the Congress instructed sports clubs and associations to provide organizational and technical support for women's sports movement and to take action aimed at extending events in sports to which women had been admitted as part of OG and international competitions, and sports unions to appoint women's sport female clerks in a given department to sit on sports boards and commissions [15]. In addition, a positive reference was made to the appointment of independent women's clubs as a contributor to the development of women's sport, whereas the resolution called for their support by state authorities and local governments. Another resolution was to promote physical activity among women. The position of the Congress was that the best effect in this respect would be achieved through the promotion of physical exercise both in schools, sports clubs and social organizations. The resolutions of the Congress also recommended the popularization of sports badges among women and organization of further training courses for female instructors of physical education. Medical qualifications before sports competitions with medical examinations afterwards were advised. In response to K. Muszałówna's voice, as for the lack of qualifications of sports most appropriate for women, the Congress recognised swimming as the most appropriate discipline for women and ordered its popularization. An important resolution of the Congress was recommending that UPSA convened a separate congress dedicated to women's physical education and sports [15.17], which proved appreciation by government authorities of women's fight for equal rights in sport.

A critical reference should be made as regards the fact that the resolutions of the Congress did not include the proposal asserted by K. Muszałówna concerning the appointment of the central Polish women's organization for physical education and sports. The matter of establishing a women's sports federation in Poland was addressed among others in sports press as early as in the preceding years. In issue 4 of "Stadium" of 22 January 1925 r. K. Muszałówna justified the need for the appointment of the Polish women's sports federation. She stated that Polish Sports Associations did little to address the issue of women's physical education and showed "(...) scarcely any organizational initiative even within existing women's sections and clubs" [20]. A negative effect of such actions, as she wrote, was that "(...) We do not see Polish women in international competitions, we do not attempt to create separate sporting regulations for women, and unions care of Polish sports women comes down to tolerating them in men's clubs" [20].

It is worth noting that on October 31, 1921, in Paris, at the initiative of Alice Milliat International Women's Sports Federation (FSFI) was set up [21]. The main purpose of the Federation was primarily to: popularize sport among women through maintaining continuous contact between sportswomen of all countries, creating sports centres in countries that did not have independent women's sports organizations yet; developing rules and regulations of sports competitions, determining and approving records and every 4 years organizing <<Women's Olympic Games>>, following the example of the Olympic Games [1]. The members of FSFI were women's sports federations in Belgium, Estonia, France, Japan, Luxembourg, USA, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Italy. Argentina, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Canada, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Poland, South Africa and Sweden were represented by men's sports unions [22]. Poland was a member of FSFI from 1925. In view of the fact that in Poland sports practised by women were subject to boards of state sports associations, Polish women were represented in FSFI by the Polish Association of Athletics, which joined FSFI in 1925, and from 1930 by the Polish Association of Sports Games. This fact allowed Polish women to participate in the Women's World Games organized by FSFI in 1926 in Gothenburg, in 1930 in Prague and in 1934 in London. Polish women did not participate in the 1st Women's Olympic Games in Paris in 1922. The success of women's sports activists was the adoption during the debates of the Congress of the International Federation of Athletics (IAAF) in the Hague in 1926 of a resolution to admit women to track and field events during the 9th Olympic Games in Amsterdam in 1928 [23]. The same resolution was adopted during the IOC session in Lisbon in 1927 [24]. Female representatives of Poland participated in summer OG in the years 1924-1936 in such sports as gymnastics, athletics, swimming and fencing. The first Polish female Olympian was Wanda Dubieńska, who at OG in 1924 in Paris competed in fencing (foil).

In Poland, women made an attempt to create the central organisation of women's sport. On February 28, 1925, during a conference of Warsaw women's clubs and sections the Organising Committee of the Polish Women's Sports Association was established. Its goal was to "(...) coordinate sports action among women, represent women of Poland at the International Federation and facilitate Polish women to make sports contacts abroad" [1]. The Committee was composed of: J. Gebethner - chairwoman K. Muszałówna (WCFR) - deputy, W. Fynfszytkówna (WCFR), Sława Szmidówna (SC „Polonia” Warsaw), Feliksa Tryburska (GS „Grażyna”), Z. Zabawska-Domosławska (WCFR) - members. The Committee joined PAA as the Department of Women's Sport in order to apply for membership in FSFI [25]. After the acceptance by PAA as a member applying to FSFI, due to a conflict between PAA, and the Department of Women's Sport, the Organising Committee of the Polish Women's Sports Association dissolved at the end of 1925. The continued effort of female activists to make women's sport independent resulted in greater interest in the issues of women's physical education and sport on the part of state authorities. At SOPEMT the Women's Physical Education Department was established, which was run by Wanda Prażmowska-Ivanka and Women's Sport Department run by M. Miłobędzka. In 1928, in regional offices of physical education and military training female clerks for physical education and sport started to be appointed [12]. Therefore, matters related to women's physical education and sport were in the hands of women themselves.

On the occasion of the Congress, on 8-13 April 1927, a Sports Exhibition was organized, where, among others, elements of women's sport were presented. A magazine "Start" was showed which appeared since April 10, 1927 and was dedicated to the issues of women's physical education, sport and hygiene, also winning trophies of WCFR were presented. Female athletes of Warsaw clubs - "Warszawianka" and "Polonia", played matches of Czech handball in order to popularize this sport among women [26, 15]. Another note of women's sport was a sports photography competition initiated by the Congress Committee. Works by 7 photographers were entered. The first prize was awarded to Ryszard Walter. In the photographs he presented, among others, Halina Konopacka during a discus throw and female

athletes finishing their 60-m run (Ludwika Gorloff, Rittner, Stefania Chrupczałowska) [15]. The competition was intended to increase the illustration level of Polish sport press, and the works entered for the competition were to be of artistic and sports value with the opportunity to be published in the press. One of the events of the Congress were gymnastic shows of Warsaw female falcon nest "Grażyna". Sets of physical exercises were presented performed during the winter and preparing for the summer season. In the first part of the show a lesson of gymnastics for girls aged 14-16 years old was presented, in the second one for girls over 17 years of age. The third part was dedicated to the so-called plastic exercises (corrective factor) carried out by F. Tyburska. The performance was intended to show "(...) *how high technical level can be achieved by a rationally systematically trained women's team*" [27]. K. Muszałówna in a commentary to the show stated that the high technical level of exercises exhibited by female falcons, was a result of hard, comprehensive and systematic work. She also mentioned that in Poland apart from "Grażyna", in no other women's club or section had such high level of women's technique and physical fitness been achieved.

At the request of K. Muszałówna, the resolution of the 2nd Polish Sports Congress within the scope of convening a congress dedicated to women's physical education and sports was made real. In autumn 1927, the Organizing Committee of the Congress was appointed composed of: M. Orłowicz, Aleksander Bobkowski, S. Lesiewicz – delegates of UPSA; K. Muszałówna – speaker at the Congress; E. Lewicka, J. Gebethner, H. Olszewska, Z. Zabawska-Domosławska, E. Reicher – members of SCPE; W. Prażmowska, Maria Miłobędzka, Maria Wittek – sports clerks at SOPEMT; F. Tryburska and Kazimierz Weyrauch. The Committee was constituted as follows: M. Orłowicz – chairman, K. Muszałówna – vice-chairwoman, W. Prażmowska – secretary [28,29]. Office activities were commissioned to Janina Grabicka. The Committee established among others the date and venue of the congress and the subject of papers. Gymnastic exercise performances were scheduled [30]. The 1st Polish Congress for Women's Sport and Physical Education was held on 14-15 April 1928 in Warsaw on the premises of the the Queen Jadwiga lower secondary school [31]. The initiative for the organization of the Congress gained support of SCPE and Marshal J. Piłsudski who became a patron of the Congress. The Honorary Committee was composed of: Anna Piłsudska – J. Piłsudski's wife, Gen. Felicjan Sławoj-Składkowski – Minister of Internal Affairs, dr Gustaw Dobrucki – Minister of Religious Faiths and Public Enlightenment, Col J. Ulrych – director of SOPEMT and president of UPSA, Zygmunt Słomiński – mayor of Warsaw, Władysław Jaroszewicz – the commissioner of the Republic of Poland Government [32].

The debate was chaired by H. Olszewska. The following were appointed to the presidium: K. Muszałówna, J. Gebethner, W. Prażmowska, N. Kryńska and H. Ryszkiewiczówna. The Congress was attended by over 400 people. K. Muszałówna on the pages of "Start" wrote about considerable interest of women's community in the Congress: "(...) *Although teacher spheres were most numerous, next to them, however, there came quite a few doctors, social activists, writers, and MPs, not to mention sports groups, where we saw a lot of female instructors, contestants, organisers and sports activists*" [33]. The first plenary session was opened by J. Ulrych. He outlined the directions for women's action as regards the popularization of the idea of physical education. He called for women to take action aimed at promoting physical education among children on the grounds that "*The action of educating the young generation is the action for the future and power of the nation*" [28]. He proposed that women convinced education authorities about the need to reduce time spent at school by, among others, girls, indicating that "*the body of girls at school age (...), in particular in urban unhygienic conditions of life, requires (...) much more movement, sun and air, than a child could receive with an existing excessively long working day*" [28]. In addition, J. Ulrych, showed his full approval with regard to actions for the independence of women's sport movement. He recognized laying the foundations for the independent women's movement for sport and physical education as the main purpose of the Congress. Also, he quoted J. Piłsudski's words from the meeting of the Marshal with the members of the

Organizing Committee of the Congress on 13 April 1928 "You ladies must set about working but not of copying men or pretending to be boys (...), but of developing your own methods and programmes, which would allow for gender differences and physical abilities" [28]. The following lectures were given during the Congress: Eleonora Reicher - "Scientific basis of physical education", Z. Zabawska-Domosławska - "Guidelines for women's sport", k. Muszałowna "Organizational requirements of women's sport", W. Osmolski - "What is sport and what should it be for a modern woman", Z. Prażmowska - "Sport and character", W. Dybowski "Medical control in sport" and "Physical exercise and profession or social rank", W. Sikorski "Training female sports instructors", H. Olszewska - "Review of modern methods of gymnastics for women" [32].

During the plenary debate, the first speaker to deliver a lecture entitled "Scientific bases of physical education" was E. Reicher. E. Reicher interests concerned sports medicine. As a member of SCPE she supervised physical education at schools and operation of sports and medical clinics. She conducted research in the field of human physiology, physical activity and physical development of the youth. She was interested in the development of school medicine. She was a director of the Sports and Medical Clinic at the 2nd Clinic of Internal Medicine in Warsaw. As M. Maślińska writes "The role of Dr. Eleonora Reicher in the creation of sports medicine is proven by the fact that she was asked to deliver an inaugural lecture at the 1st Polish Congress for Women's Physical Education and Sport" [34]. The author of the paper discussed the impact of physical exercise on the human body. Pointing to the need and usefulness of exercises in different periods of human life, she drew attention to the fact "that physiological requirements of the system are different, depending on whether the system is mature, or maturing, depending on whether it is a woman or a man" [28], and warned against careless provision of regular doses of physical activity. She was critical of physical education in which failing to take into account psychological and physiological differences between women and men, one often blindly copied men's exercise methods in relation to women. E. Reicher called for the need for medical control in physical education and sport. She recommended gymnastics and eurhythmics in physical education classes for 9-10 year-old girls, as the most compatible with their psyche, while during the period from 15 to 18 years of age she considered it appropriate to introduce classes in athletics (running at short distances, throws, jumps) [35].

Z. Zabawska - Domosławska, similarly to J. Ulrych and E. Reicher, took a negative position with regard to copying men's sport in women's sport. She listed sports discipline that due to considerable traumatism negatively affected a woman's body. Among them she included: weightlifting, wrestling, boxing, rugby, football, ice hockey, basketball, ski jumping, jumping off the tower, cycling and horse racing [28]. In turn, W. Prażmowska referring to the educational values of sports, considered the following as the most appropriate for women: fencing, team games, swimming, rowing, sailing, skiing, mountaineering, qualified tourism and wrestling sports. The sports mentioned according to the author of the paper develop in women the will to act, need and speed to make their own independent decisions, endurance, resilience, self-confidence and teach how to rely on themselves. H. Olszewska assessed the implementation of bodily exercises in physical education classes for girls. As a physical education inspector, she claimed that most exercises were too intense, did not take into account a proper form of exercise, lacked freedom, naturalness and flexibility, and thus did not meet health and aesthetic requirements. She saw the improvement of such situation in advancing the method of women's gymnastics exercises by organizing courses at home and abroad for bodily gymnastic teachers in order to familiarize them with the latest exercise trends for women. W. Sikorski in his speech pointed to the need for training of female sports instructors. His view was that "Training of female sports instructors is closely connected with the direction and progress of women's physical education and sport." and that "Female sport must therefore be consistent with the destiny and natural properties of women" [28], and a man as an instructor does not feel the spiritual needs of women and acts subjectively. He called for female sports instructors to have full secondary education and preparation within the scope of physical education studies or courses,

which would allow them to work in different environments: sports clubs and sections, sports associations.

K. Muszałówna's speech was of different character. In her lecture regarding "Organizational requirements of women's sport" she presented defects and deficiencies of forms of organization of women's sports in Poland [36]. On the one hand, she pointed to men's merits in the development of women's sport, who instilled the ideas of sport among women and had been the founders of the first organizational units of women's sport, on the other hand, she accused men of imposing their own ideology of sport, working methods and technical conditions of competitions on female sport, <<moulding female competitors in their male image>> demanding that they achieved maximum results. She referred to men's objections as regards signs of masculinization in women's sport, who claimed that "*sport masculinizes women, leaves their imprint on their character, distracts them from the tasks attributable to women*" [28]. K. Muszałówna rejected these accusations, stating that "*The world of men, making accusations towards competing ladies and assuming the role of a moralist forgets, however, that if we indeed can see some signs of masculinization in women's sport, the total blame solely and exclusively lies with... the man. (...) After all it was him who was a model that one tried to copy*" [28]. She took the view that the way to confront the masculinization would be creating women's own ideology of sport and their own organizational structures.

The resolutions of the Congress argued for, among others, women's physical exercises, especially gymnastics, to be conducted in women's sections at men's sports clubs by female instructors whereas medical care over exercising women would be provided by women doctors only. There were appeals for entrusting women with managing of women's sections at men's sports clubs, establishing independent women's committees at national sports associations and representing women's sports movement internationally by women. The participants in the Congress turned to state and local authorities with the request to provide care of and assistance to independent women's sports clubs, to organize physical education courses and camps and women's sport [37]. During the Congress a first-ever attempt was made to create a synthesis of the programme and working methods in the field of women's physical education and sport. The resolutions of the Congress were reflected in the organizational structures of women's sport. At PSA women's departments were established. At PAA the women's department was run by M. Miłobędzka at the Polish Association of Sports Games - H. Olszewska, at the Polish Swimming Association - K. Muszałówna, at the Polish Archery Association - R. Lisowska, at the Polish Union of Rowing Associations - a female delegate of WCFR [38]. Women's departments were also established at some district sports associations. Within the structures of the Polish Skiing Association (PSA) in 1928 the Women's Sports Committee was created. The chairwoman of the Committee was K. Muszałówna, vice-chairwoman Elżbieta Ziętkiewicz. It should be noted that at that time it was the only sports federation which had an independent Women's Committee, other associations back then had female clerks for women's sport. [19] The objective of the Committee was to co-operate with the Executive Board of PSA within matters related to women's and children's skiing. The Committee also appointed female clerks for women's skiing in ski resorts. In Cracow, the function of the female clerk was served by Irena Popiel, in Lviv - Janina Dybowska, in Zakopane Hanna Schielowa.

The organizational effect of the 1st Polish Congress for Women's Sport and Physical Education, in accordance with the slogan proclaimed by the Congress - "Sport for All" - was the establishment in 1933 of the Association for the Promotion of Women's Physical Culture (APWPC). The aim of APWPC was to include women of all social strata in the physical exercise programme, "*(...) regardless of the environment, ideological beliefs and material conditions*" [39]. APWPC played an important role in health, hygiene and health promotion actions. With a widely conducted campaign of making sports facilities and devices available for a minimum fee, it popularized and promoted physical activity among women who were not members of sports clubs. [40] It conducted swimming lessons, classes in athletics, gymnastics, sports games and

organized sightseeing tours. SOPEMT also supported actions for the popularization of women's physical education and recreation. On the initiative of SOPEMT in 1933 factories introduced work breaks intended for gymnastic exercises, the so-called "ten-minute breaks" for female factory workers and physical activity classes after work [41]. The classes were taught by female instructors, based on exercise models developed and tailored to the type and nature of women's work.

On 28-29 April 1934 in Warsaw the 2nd Congress of Women's Physical Culture was organised. The organizer of the Congress was APWPC with the participation of female representatives of other associations. The patron of the Congress was Marshal J. Piłsudski, thereby expressing his interest in women's physical culture, while the honorary presidency was held by Maria Mościcka - the wife of the President of the Republic Poland, and Anna Piłsudska - the wife of Józef Piłsudski. The interest in the issues of women's sport and physical education was proved with the fact that the number of participants in the Congress exceeded six hundred people [42]. The ideas of the Congress were presented by Feliks Frankiewicz (Polish Teachers' Union) during his welcome speech. He expressed the hope that *"this Congress will inevitably contribute to the popularization of physical culture among the vast majority of Polish women"* [43], who prefer education- and health-oriented exercises without competitive sports. As part of the Congress, mainly the subjects of adult sport and physical recreation were raised. 12 papers were delivered. The fundamental views on the sport of women were expressed in the paper by K. Muszałówna entitled "Ideological and organizational insufficiency." She criticized club sport. She called for the separation of sport for hygiene-, fun- and health-related purposes from competitive club sport indicating that the club sport had lost the ideals of physical culture and *"the efforts of club activists were focused solely on the elite sport of competition"* [11]. She adopted the position that sports clubs were not able to develop fun- and health-related sport and thus did not popularize physical activity among women. Aimed at obtaining high performance results, they were not incentives for girls and women to improve their physical fitness. The way to make wide range of women engaged in sport according to the author of the lecture were to be associations whose activity should be based on tourism activities [44,45] and *"(...) whose objective will be to provide its members with cheap sports entertainment, which will have instructor forces, the right equipment, network of sports facilities, its own administrative and propaganda apparatus, calculated to acquire new female members and the continuous action among the unaffiliated ones"* [13].

Some papers referred to women's physical culture in terms of hygiene (E. Reicher - "The importance of bodily exercises for different periods of a woman's life" W. Dybowski - "What branches of sport are most appropriate for women?" Zofia Franio - "The influence of physical education on a woman's nervous system and psyche"; and "Janina Miedzińska - "The issue of physical exercises for working women") [42]. Both familiar and new issues were discussed in the speeches. Among others J. Miedzińska, a labour inspector, presented the problem of physical exercises for female factory workers. She showed that physical exercises increased productivity at work, therefore, their introduction should be the responsibility of every employer because *"(...) physical education plays a major role as a positive factor for health, and a counterbalance to mental breakdowns, especially now, during a spiritual depression, caused by severe economic conditions"* [43].

In summary it must be noted that the Congresses became a place which female sports activists chose to fight for equality in sport. As J. Chelmecki writes, the congresses recognized sport as an important instrument for women's equal rights in public life. The 1st Polish Congress for Women's Sport and Physical Education and the Second Congress of Women's Physical Culture proved to be an effective manifestation of the power of women in the struggle to gain autonomy in Polish sport. The congresses also showed the increasing organizational maturity of women's environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The assumptions of sports congresses resulted in the activity of women's sections and clubs. Sports organizations and associations of different provenance took intensified action to promote women's hygiene and health. Propaganda activities were reinvigorated in relation to women's physical education and sport through the organization of conferences, courses or camps. The proceedings of the congresses were extensively covered by the contemporary press. Women were active in the structures of Polish sport. At the State Office for Physical Education and Military Training, Women's Physical Education Department, Department for Women's Sport and Department for Women's Training for National Defence were established. At Polish Sports Associations there were women's committees or departments. Women sat on boards of associations and clubs.

The publication is a contribution to the historiography of women's physical culture in the period of the Second Polish Republic. The material contained in the article is a basis for further discussion about the importance of women's physical activity in Poland in the interwar period.

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