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Renata URBAN*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7970-8076>

Patriotic and religious activity of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in the Polish lands (until 1939) – an outline

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Działalność patriotyczna i religijna Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” na ziemiach polskich (do 1939 r.) – zarys problematyki

Streszczenie

Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne „Sokół” było pierwszą i przez kilka lat jedyną polską organizacją, która w okresie zaborów uzyskała od władz państw zaborczych zgodę na prowadzenie działalności. Pierwsze gniazdo sokole powstało we Lwowie w 1867 r., kolejne powoływano w miastach zaboru austriackiego, pruskiego, a później także rosyjskiego. Mimo że – jak sugerowała nazwa – TG „Sokół” było stowarzyszeniem gimnastycznym, w programie jego działalności znaczącą rolę odegrały również inne formy aktywności. W gniazdach utworzono koła śpiewacze, czytelnicze, opiekuńcze, a członkowie TG „Sokół” uczestniczyli w uroczystościach religijnych i patriotycznych, kultywując w ten sposób polskie tradycje narodowe. Organizowano wieczornice i spotkania, upamiętniające święta religijne oraz ważne wydarzenia z historii narodu polskiego, które przypominały o wspólnych celach i ideałach w okresie niewoli narodowej. „Sokół” przyjął na siebie obowiązek nauczania mowy ojczystej oraz dziejów ojczystych. O zakresie i charakterze działalności patriotycznej i reli-

* assistant professor, Prof. of US, The Faculty of Health and Physical Education, The Institute of Physical Culture Sciences, University of Szczecin; e-mail: renata.urban@usz.edu.pl (corresponding author)

gijnej TG „Sokół” najlepiej świadczyły *Przykazania narodowe* oraz przeciwstawiane im *Grzechy narodowe*. Już sama ich nazwa i liczba wskazywała na głęboką religijność sokołów. Wynikała ona nie tylko z autentycznej wiary członków TG „Sokół”, ale i z ideologii tego ruchu. W tragicznych momentach dziejowych niewoli narodowej nadzieję pokładano w Bogu, a ukojenie odnajdywano w modlitwie. Wszystkie uroczystości sokole (jak również powszednia działalność TG „Sokół”) miały charakter patriotyczno-religijny.

Słowa kluczowe: Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne „Sokół”, tradycje narodowe, uroczystości religijne, rocznice patriotyczne.

Abstract

The Gymnastic Society “Sokol” (“Falcon”) (hereinafter: GS “Sokol”) was the first and for several years the only Polish organisation to obtain a permission from the authorities of the partitioning states to carry out its activities during the period of partitions. The first falcon nest was established in Lviv in 1867, with further nests being set up in the cities of the Austrian, Prussian and later Russian partitions. Although – as the name suggested – the GS “Sokol” was a gymnastic association, other forms of activity also played a significant role in its programme of activity.

Singing, reading and caring circles were formed in the nests and members of the GS “Sokol” participated in religious and patriotic ceremonies, thus cultivating Polish national traditions. Evenings and rallies were organised, commemorating religious holidays and important events in the history of the Polish nation, which reminded us of common goals and ideals during the period of national captivity. “Sokol” took on the duty of teaching native speech and native history.

The scope and nature of the patriotic and religious activity of the GS “Sokol” was best evidenced by the National Commandments and the National Sins which were contrasted with them. Their very name and number indicated deep religiousness of the falcons. It derived not only from the authentic faith of the members of the GS “Sokol” but from the ideology of the movement. In the tragic historical moments of national captivity they placed their hope in God and found solace in prayer. All Sokol celebrations as well as everyday activities of the GS “Sokol” were of a patriotic-religious nature.

Keywords: the Gymnastic Society “Sokol”, national traditions, religious celebrations, patriotic anniversaries.

Introduction

The idea of establishing a national organisation whose activity could unite the Poles and lead to regaining the country’s independence had been maturing in Polish society that was subject to partitions for many years. It was the result of political, social-economic as well as cultural-educational changes taking place in Europe in the 19th century due to the development of capitalist economy. It also went along with the trend of creating physical culture institutions, including national-gymnastic ones, which played a crucial role both in the development of democratic states and in social life of people whose countries were still partitioned. In the first case, this gymnastic movement was to support the development and political and economic stability of these states, in the latter – it func-

tioned for patriotic purposes: maintaining physical fitness of repressed citizens and preparing them for future fighting for independence.¹

The first Gymnastic Society "Sokol" was established in Czechia in 1862, thanks to the initiative of Jindřich Fügner and Miroslav Tyrš. It was the result of propagating the so-called awakening movement, which was against the Germanisation of Czech society, and its main goal was to fight for the rights of Czech inhabitants for their national life and autonomy. Due to that fact, falcon nests in Czechia focused in their activity on promoting national education and culture. Klemens Žukotyński and Ludwik Goltenthal, the representatives of Lviv academic youth, drew from such inspirations while setting up their Gymnastic Society in 1867. In 1869, it was named the Gymnastic Society "Sokol". The founding meeting was attended by several dozen enthusiasts of physical activity, who decided to exercise and practise fencing regularly, as well as to legalise the Society's activity, which they succeeded in on 25 March 1867.²

State of the art

While various aspects of sports activity undertaken by the GS "Sokol" have been well-researched by a few academics in their collective works, among others, by Kazimierz Toporowicz,³ Andrzej Bogucki,⁴ Zdzisław Pawluczuk⁵ and Eligiusz Małolepszy,⁶ Andrzej Nowakowski,⁷ Agnieszka Mirkiewicz⁸ and others,

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- ¹ K. Toporowicz, *Zarys dziejów "Sokoła" na ziemiach polskich w latach 1867–1947*, [in:] Z. Pawluczuk (ed.), *Z dziejów Towarzystw Gimnastycznych "Sokol"*, Katedra Nauk Humanistycznych Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego w Gdańsku, Gdańsk 1996, pp. 7–8.
 - ² J. Gaj, K. Hądzelek, *Dzieje kultury fizycznej w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego im. Eugeniusza Piaseckiego w Poznaniu, Poznań 1997, p. 24; R. Wroczyński, *Powszechnie dzieje wychowania fizycznego i sportu*, Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk 1979, pp. 209–216.
 - ³ K. Toporowicz, *Geneza i początki sokolstwa polskiego (1867–1892)*, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego w Poznaniu, Poznań 1990.
 - ⁴ A. Bogucki, *Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne "Sokol" na Pomorzu 1893–1939*, Centrum Informacji Naukowej Sokolstwa Polskiego przy Towarzystwie Gimnastycznym "Sokol" II w Bydgoszczy, Bydgoszcz 1997.
 - ⁵ Z. Pawluczuk, *100 lat Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego "Sokol" w Gdańsku 1894–1994*, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego im. Jędrzeja Śniadeckiego Wydawnictwo Uczelniane AWF w Gdańsku, Gdańsk 1998.
 - ⁶ E. Małolepszy, Z. Pawluczuk (eds.), *Z dziejów Sokolstwa Polskiego w latach 1867–1997*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Częstochowie, Częstochowa 2001.
 - ⁷ A. Nowakowski, *Wadowicki "Sokol" wczoraj i dziś – na studziesięciolecie wadowickiej sokolni 1889–1999*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Częstochowie, Częstochowa 1999; A. Nowakowski, *"Sokol" w Wadowicach w latach 1918–1949*, Drukarnia i Wydawnictwo Grafikon, Wadowice 2009.
 - ⁸ A. Mirkiewicz, *Zarys dziejów sokolstwa słowiańskiego (1862–1939)*, Firma Sowa, Rzeszów 2014; A. Mirkiewicz, *Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne "Sokol" w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2017.

not to mention many scientific articles, the patriotic and religious activity remains its slightly less-known area and this matter lacks any synthetic approach. Mirosław Ponczek⁹ wrote about the relations between the Catholic Church and the Gymnastic Society “Sokol”, but his publications did not concern the activity presented in this paper. This aspect was also tackled by Kamil Solecki, who studied such relations, yet only with regards to Rzeszów, which resulted in the publication entitled *The relations of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszów with the Catholic Church (1886–1914)* (*Związki Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego “Sokół” w Rzeszowie z Kościołem katolickim (1886–1914)*).¹⁰ One also should mention the aforesaid author, Agnieszka Mirkiewicz and a sub-chapter in her monograph *The Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in the Second Polish Republic (Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół” w II Rzeczypospolitej)* entitled *The relations of „Sokol” with the Catholic Church (Związki “Sokoła” z Kościołem katolickim)*.¹¹ On the other hand, Janusz Motyka discussed priests’ engagement in the activity of the GS “Sokol”, yet only in Przemyśl, in the chapter *The participation of the Latin Catholic clergy in the activity of the GS “Sokol” in Przemyśl in the years 1885–1939 (Udział duchowieństwa obrządku łacińskiego w działalności PTG “Sokół” w Przemyślu w l. 1885–1939)*.¹² Therefore, the author considered this matter worth studying so that she could contribute to the way this aspect of the CG “Sokol” activity is presented. There are few independent texts dealing with this matter, and they provide rather scarce information on the topic. The rich collection of images stored in the National Digital Archive in Warsaw proved to be an invaluable source for the research on this matter. Based on these photos’ captions, the author presented various aspects of the GS “Sokol” activity, focusing mainly on its patriotic and religious character.

Research methods and problems

To research and to present the aforementioned topic, the author used the methods characteristic for the methodology of historical research, mainly anal-

⁹ M. Ponczek, *Kościół katolicki prowincji krakowskiej a „Sokół” w latach II Rzeczypospolitej – zarys problematyki*, Polskie Towarzystwo Naukowe Kultury Fizycznej, Rzeszów 1996; M. Ponczek, *Kościół rzymskokatolicki a Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół”*. Przyczynek do historii kultury fizycznej Polski, Wydawnictwo Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego w Katowicach, Katowice 1998.

¹⁰ K. Solecki, *Związki Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie z Kościołem katolickim (1886–1914)*, [in:] I. Pezdan-Śliż, M. Przydział (eds.), *Z tradycji kultury fizycznej w 150-lecie sportu w Polsce*, Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, Rzeszów 2018, pp. 263–278.

¹¹ A. Mirkiewicz, *Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne „Sokół” w II Rzeczypospolitej...*, pp. 166–192.

¹² J. Motyka, *Udział duchowieństwa obrządku łacińskiego w działalności PTG “Sokół” w Przemyślu w l. 1885–1939*, [in:] J. Motyka, G. Klebowicz (eds.), *Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół” w Polsce południowo-wschodniej. Tradycje i współczesność*, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauki w Przemyślu, Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu, Przemyśl 2015, pp. 65–91.

ysis and review of available archival sources, press and journals as well as literature and unpublished works. The method of synthesis was used for formulating general and specific conclusions.

The main research issue was demonstrating in which forms of the GS "Sokol" activity its patriotic character was manifested and how religiousness of "Sokol" members influenced the Society's functioning. It was also crucial to show the difference between goals and tasks of the GS "Sokol" in the time of partitions and right after Poland became independent (after 1939).

Goals and tasks of the Gymnastic Society "Sokol"

Officially, the Society was to promote gymnastics and other sports disciplines, and its goal was the physical and spiritual development of all layers of Polish society, not limiting it to the privileged classes, including the nobility. That is why every person over 18, regardless of their social status, could become the Society's member. It was crucial "[...] not only to protect Polish culture against extinction, nationality from destruction – but to develop the guidelines for the nation – to uplift its spirit [...] Thus, it was necessary to revive our nation by letting other social classes, apart from the nobility, participate in that oeuvre [...], to develop a link with the testament of Poland, the Constitution of 3 May."¹³

However, it was very difficult to fulfil that task as its realization could not be performed in a transparent manner. Due to Poland's partition by three foreign powers, their different policy towards the Polish nation, escalating Germanization and Russification of Polish society, and above all severe repressions imposed on Polish citizens, all activities of a patriotic character were performed with utmost care, clothed as caring about citizens' physical fitness and health by cherishing and developing physical exercising in groups, organizing group trips (showing the beauty of our native land), singing lessons (especially patriotic and religious songs). In reality, from the very beginning, falcons had had a different ultimate goal in mind – patriotic and religious education of a physically, morally and spiritually healthy young generation of Poles and preparation for future fighting for freedom and national independence. It was realized in the atmosphere of social solidarity, democracy and patriotism, and in the spirit of deep religiousness, adopting this Latin sentence as a motto: *Mens sana, in corpore sano* – A healthy mind in a healthy body,¹⁴ which obviously referred to more lofty goals than physical health only.

¹³ M. Wolańczyk, *Macierz Sokola w 60-letnim rozwoju (1867–1927)*, Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne "Sokol-Macierz", Lwów 1927, p. 8.

¹⁴ K. Toporowicz, *Zarys dziejów „Sokoła” na ziemiach polskich w latach 1867–1947...*, pp. 8–9.

The tasks undertaken by the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” are illustrated best by one of the organisation’s aphorisms that can be regarded as a certain guideline of patriotic behaviour:

- To care for one’s and others’ physical health.
- To follow the rules of pure Polish speech and writing.
- To support Polish industry and trade.
- To spread awareness among people so that they are ready to work for the nation.¹⁵

This idea was difficult to realise which can be illustrated by the fact that for several years the Society in Lviv was the only one functioning on the Polish territory although its statute made it possible to create branches. Yet, it was not easy to convince Polish society that the idea was worth trying especially that it could not be presented in a clear and legible way. After many years of humiliation and failure of national uprisings followed by severe repressions, Polish citizens almost lost all their hope for gaining independence. Thus, at first they were watching the activity of “Sokol” in Lviv with great caution. Gradually, its popularity grew, and the publication of a monthly “Gymnastic Guide “Sokol” (“Przewodnik Gimnastyczny “Sokół”), since 1881, undeniably contributed to the organizational development of the Society. It resulted in a dynamic growth in the number of new falcon nests, established mainly in the Austrian partition (e.g. 1884 – Tarnów,¹⁶ Stanisławów, 1885 – Kołomyja, Kraków, Przemyśl, Ternopil, 1886 – Bóbrka, Rzeszów, 1887 – Jasto, Nowy Sącz, Wadowice, 1888 – Stryj, 1889 – Jarosław, Sanok¹⁷), the Prussian one (e.g. 1884 – Inowrocław, 1886 – Bydgoszcz, Poznań, 1887 – Gniezno, Szamotuły, 1891 – Pleszew, 1893 – Kruszwica, Śrem, 1895 – Chełmno, Toruń, Trzemeszno¹⁸), and later on the Russian one as well. The falcon movement became also popular in the United States of North America and in a few countries of Western Europe, playing a crucial role in maintaining patriotic and religious feelings of Polish emigrants.

Patriotic and religious activity of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol”

Initially, the patriotic-religious activity of the falcon movement was very limited and it mainly focused on the educational importance of gymnastics, which,

¹⁵ *Aforyzmy Sokole*, “Sokół” Organ Związku Sokołów Polskich w Państwie Niemieckim” 1913, no 10, p. 83.

¹⁶ The activities initiating the establishment of the GS “Sokol” in Tarnów were undertaken in 1883, its statute was accepted in 1884 and in the very same year it was officially registered. Its first board was formed though only on 11 January 1885; see: M. Olejnik, *Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół” w Tarnowie i gniazda okręgu tarnowskiego do 1919 roku*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego – Prace Historyczne 147” 2020, z. 1, pp. 113–114.

¹⁷ S. Zaborniak, *Na galicyjskim szlaku gniazd Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego “Sokół” (1884–1914)*, Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, Podkarpackie Towarzystwo Naukowe Kultury Fizycznej w Rzeszowie, Rzeszów 2004, pp. 15, 46–47, 67–68, 100, 125, 144, 153.

¹⁸ R. Łobożewicz, *Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół” w Chełmnie Pomorskim w dwudziestolecu międzywojennym*, M.A. printout, Gorzów Wlkp. 1980, pp. 23–24.

if practised regularly, evoked certain courage, strong will and energy, and once its level grew – also moral motives for exercising. What is more, collectively undertaken sports challenges blurred the boundaries between students, craftsmen or workers exercising side by side and evoked heartfelt solidarity that went far beyond a gym or a playground. Soirées and events organized by falcon nests to celebrate religious holidays and commemorate important events from the history of the Polish nation, both the distant ones like the battle of Grunwald or Vienna, and more recent ones like the Kościuszko Uprising, the Constitution of May 3, the November or the January Uprising, gathered together people from different social classes, professions and political views, reminding them of their common goals and ideals at the time of national captivity. “Sokol” undertook – following the positivist trend of grassroots work – a task of teaching the mother tongue, studying the history of the nation and state, propagating national and patriotic songs, spreading information on famous and noble national heroes such as Tadeusz Kościuszko, Jan Henryk Dąbrowski, Prince Józef Poniatowski, and celebrating the anniversary of their birth or death. These events were celebrated in a very special way, in the company of distinguished representatives of the Church and falcon management. The GS “Sokol” taught to “[...] respect the past, love the present, and in this way it taught the nation with such a past that it is entitled to the future as well.”¹⁹

The aspect of referring to Poland’s glorious past was also reflected in the architecture of falcon nests. Many of them resembled old Polish fortified castles with high walls, soaring towers, slender-contoured windows. Some of them, especially the building of the GS “Sokol” in Brzozów, managed to collect a large number of national symbols. In the walls of this nest, the busts of Casimir III the Great, queen Jadwiga, Ladislaus Jagiello, Tadeusz Kościuszko were incorporated, not to mention the coats of arms of the Kingdom of Lithuania and Ruthenia, Galicia and Lodomeria. The walls of the “Sokol” seat in Sanok were decorated with an image of a falcon in a uniform, breaking the chains tying up a falcon wearing a crown, symbolising the participation of the falcons in regaining Polish independence.²⁰

The dynamic development of the falcon movement towards the end of the 19th century, especially in the Austrian and Prussian partition, made it necessary

¹⁹ *Z rozmyślań sokolich*, “«Sokół» Organ Związku Sokołów Polskich w Państwie Niemieckim” 1913, no 2, pp. 17–18; *W hołdzie księciu Józefowi*, “«Sokół» Organ Związku Sokołów Polskich w Państwie Niemieckim” 1913, no 20, pp. 185–187, 192–193; Z. Pawluczuk, *100 lat Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego “Sokół” w Gdańsku (1894–1994)*..., p. 9; B. Gruszczynska, *Działalność i rozwój Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego “Sokół” w Inowrocławiu w latach 1919–1939*, maszynopis pracy magisterskiej, Gorzów Wlkp. 1990, p. 32.

²⁰ S. Zaborniak, *Na galicyjskim szlaku gniazd Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego “Sokół” (1884–1914)*..., pp. 7–11.

to put it in some organizational frame in the form of nest clusters functioning on a given territory, which made it easier to coordinate their activities and maintain the cohesion of the whole falcon movement as far as its programme, ideals and organization were concerned. On 23 December 1892, the Association of Polish Gymnastic Falcon Societies in the Austrian Empire was formed, encompassing all falcon nests active on the Polish territory under the Austrian partition. Tadeusz Romanowicz (and after him, Ksawery Fiszer) became its chairman, and Antoni Durski was elected its head. Almost a year later, on 29 November 1893, the Association of Greater Poland Gymnastic Falcon Societies, which in 1895 was transformed into the Association of Polish Gymnastic Falcon Societies in the German State, was established. Józef Krzymiński (followed by Bernard Chrzanowski) was its chairman. The function of its head was given to Wiktor Gładysz. As late as in 1906, the Association of Polish Gymnastic Falcon Societies in the Russian partition was created, with Lucjan Kobyłecki as its chairman and Karol Noskiewicz as its head. However, merely two years later, the Russian authorities revoked their earlier permission for "Sokol's" activity and it had to operate clandestinely since then. In fear of the dispersal of activity in particular associations and in order to maintain the uniform ideal-programme approach of the falcon movement on the Polish territory, during a rally of falcon associations' delegates from the three partitions in 1907, in Cracow, an informal Consensus Committee of the Polish Falcon Associations with its office in Cracow was created. Since then, the Committee coordinated all most important activities of the Polish falcon movement. Once Poland became independent again, during the interwar period, one state Association of Gymnastic Societies "Sokol" in Poland²¹ took over the role and duties of both the Committee and particular associations coming from different partitions.

Maintaining the unity and tightening of bonds in society scattered by the partitioning states was of utmost importance for preserving the national community and bridging the gaps of divisions caused by the Polish partitions. To remedy the consequences of such a situation, numerous gatherings of association members were organized, initially at the local and regional lever and finally national ones that with time turned into huge political manifestations. The first gathering of the Polish Falcon Movement was organized in 1892, in Lviv, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of "Sokol" Macierz, but an exceptional example was the "Sokol" gathering in Grunwald in the days 14–17 July 1910, at the time of the 500th anniversary of the victorious battle of Grunwald. Falcon activists organized not only gymnastics shows, but also demonstrated the military readiness of Regular Falcon Teams, Field Teams and scout teams, which via outdoor training, shooting practice, marches and drill presented their readiness to participate

²¹ K. Toporowicz, *Zarys dziejów "Sokoła" na ziemiach polskich w latach 1867–1947...*, pp. 9–11.

in the battle for Polish independence.²² The lyrics of “Rota” written by Maria Konopnicka took on a special meaning then, becoming a kind of signal, a call to act, “[...] the deepest shock to the soul and national consciousness, [...] a call to act and liberate.”²³

The words of the appeal issued by the Department of “Sokol” Association to the participants of the gathering in Grunwald, published in “Przewodnik Gimnastyczny «Sokół»”, in January 1910, were not less meaningful: “Dear Scouts! The time of Grunwald is coming... Not an hour, not a day, not a year but a long, maybe a century-long battle... We have known it for long. No battle trumpets are blown, no kings lead, no victorious flags flap in the wind [...] More than one soul shall be defeated, more than one heart shall be broken, and those heroes shall not be victorious, crowned with wreaths, noted in history. This is a silent battle, a battle of self-sacrifice, martyrdom, a long one and – with no allies. [...] The enemy is the same, only the weapons and signs have changed! [...] And our army is different than ...in the past. Its name is: Nation.”²⁴ That Nation undertook a unique task initiated by the GS “Sokol”, i.e. building the Grunwald Mound in Niepołomice to commemorate the triumphant return of king Ladislaus Jagiello to Cracow after his victorious battle of Grunwald. The mound construction was commenced on 3 March 1910, on Sunday, after vespers, and terminated in 1915. The participation in the mound construction, with soil brought from the most remote parts of the world, was regarded at that time as a patriotic duty and became a symbol of unity for the partitioned state.²⁵

The gathering of the Polish Falcon Societies organised in Lviv, in 1913, was of an utmost importance for the awakening of patriotic feelings. It was due to three reasons: the 50th anniversary of the last Polish national liberation uprising, i.e. the January Uprising of 1863, the gathering’s location – Lviv, the cradle of Polish “Sokol”, and time – 1913, when no one doubted any more that a much-awaited moment of fighting for the country’s independence had come. “The previous gatherings were nice and beneficial national events, festive shows of well-rehearsed gymnastic evolutions, the latter one had no traits of a celebration or a show but it was in fact practical exercise of physical fitness, strength of will, fortitude, respect and discipline. The atmosphere was less festive, not so colourful and showy, but it was filled with profound thoughts that made the

²² J. Gaj, K. Hądzelek, *Dzieje kultury fizycznej w Polsce...*, pp. 27; B. Gruszczyńska, *Działalność i rozwój Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego “Sokół” w Inowrocławiu...*, pp. 41–42.

²³ E. Kubalski, *Z przeżyć i wspomnień sokolich*, Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół” w Krakowie, Kraków 1997, p. 57.

²⁴ *Odezwą Wydziału (prezydium) Związku „Sokoła” ogłoszona w “Przewodniku Gimnastycznym” (Lwów, styczeń 1910) przed Złotem Grunwaldzkim w Krakowie w 1910 r.*, reprint in: “Przegląd Sokoli” 1999, no 3, p. 6.

²⁵ H. Setner, A. Siwek, “Sokół” w Niepołomicach 1902–1944, “Przegląd Sokoli” 1999, no 3, pp. 4–5.

ambience more serious, giving a deeper and long-lasting impression.”²⁶ The participation of falcons in WWI military operations confirmed the pertinence of the Society’s adopted approach, and falcon troops tested their combat readiness in the very first days of the war, proving their courage, sacrifice and dedication.

There are two periods that should be distinguished both in the organizational structure and the programme-ideal activity of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol”. The first one covers the Society’s activity in the time of the partitions and WWI (1867–1918), whereas the latter one covered the interwar period and the time right after the end of WWII till 1947, i.e. the time when “Sokol” was officially disbanded by the authorities of the People’s Republic of Poland. The first period was characterized by various forms of patriotic-national and religious activity such as evenings with lectures on historical events and patriotic songs singing, participation in the celebration of national events’ anniversaries and public events, e.g. funerals of distinguished Poles or religious celebrations, where falcons marked their presence with their uniforms and military formation. Gatherings also played an important role. At that time, eight general or national rallies were organised, together with several regional and local ones, not to mention several gatherings, especially in the years 1910–1914, directly concerning military preparation to WWI. The gatherings – apart from realizing a certain agenda – strengthened the solidarity of the nation divided by three partitioning states, uplifted patriotic and national sentiments and mobilized to stay active.²⁷

The range and character of patriotic and religious activity of the GS “Sokol” can be defined best by *National Commandments (Przykazania narodowe)* published by 1913, in “Sokół” journal, the organ of The Association of Polish Gymnastic Falcon Societies in the German State.²⁸ Their very name and number demonstrated falcons’ profound religiousness.

1. Love your Homeland truly, respect its past and believe in its future.
2. Honour our national poets, heroes and martyrs, commemorate them by national holidays.
3. Know the history of your country so that you can protect it effectively against strangers’ calumny.
4. Follow moral and religious education, teach your children how to pray in their mother tongue.
5. Speak Polish accurately and guard the purity of the Polish language, read good Polish books, cultivate Polish songs and customs, look for Polish games and plays for children.

²⁶ *Złot doraźny Sokolstwa polskiego we Lwowie*, “«Sokół» Organ Związku Sokołów Polskich w Państwie Niemieckim” 1913, no 15, p. 131.

²⁷ K. Toporowicz, *Zarys dziejów “Sokoła” na ziemiach polskich w latach 1867–1947...*, pp. 11–12.

²⁸ Another version of these commandments (of 1906) was given by the authors of the publication by A. Łopata (ed.), *Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół” w Krakowie. Jubileusz 120-lecia*, Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne “Sokół” w Krakowie, Kraków 2005, p. 7; although different words were used, the sense remained the same

6. Bring your children up focusing on the development of their strong will, fortitude and fitness.
7. Support everything that is native even though it may require effort or material sacrifice.
8. Participate actively in community service and complete undertaken tasks diligently.
9. Your property and savings shall be placed in Polish enterprises only, be economical and donate readily and systematically to national causes.
10. Remember that the woman is the nation's carer, creator of Polish thought and spirit.²⁹

The commandments were juxtaposed with national sins (reference to *the Seven Deadly Sins*), according to which each falcon, Pole was guilty of sin when:

1. You introduce foreign customs and language under your roof.
2. You renounce the name of a righteous Pole and you do not always and everywhere protect Polish honour.
3. You annihilate national spirit in children by foreign upbringing.
4. You steal from your own society, not complying with the rule "Each to their own."
5. You buy in foreign shops, get medical treatment from foreign doctors, seek advice from foreign lawyers, commission work to foreign enterprises, craftsmen and workers, you employ foreign servants and you make use of foreign brokers!
6. You make loan purchases and put yourself into debt knowing you will not pay back.
7. You make yourself rich by wicked means, seek help and profit in foreign enterprises, banks and associations belonging to enemies.³⁰

Once Poland regained independence, the situation of the falcon movement changed. Some even doubted if its functioning still made sense in these new circumstances when the status of our state was not threatened any more, we could act freely, the Polish army protected our borders and the care for physical education of young people was taken over by the school educational system. The movement members proved the need of their existence in numerous publications, but above all, they proved it by their actions, participating in the Greater Poland Uprising, Silesian uprisings, fighting for Lviv and the Eastern Lesser Poland, for Vilnius, for our access to the sea, participating in Polish-Bolshevik war, taking active part in the plebiscite action in Silesia, Warmia and Masuria region, engaging in the matters concerning the incorporation of frontier areas inhabited by Polish citizens into the borders of the Polish state, e.g. in Dąbrówka Wielkopolska.³¹

There was no doubt that new reality meant the need to reorganize the Society, develop and approve its new statute, determine new directions of activity.

²⁹ *Przykazania narodowe*, "Sokół" Organ Związku Sokołów Polskich w Państwie Niemieckim" 1913, no 5, p. 42.

³⁰ *Grzech narodowy*, "«Sokół» Organ Związku Sokołów Polskich w Państwie Niemieckim" 1913, no 5, p. 42.

³¹ M. Hamerliński, *Działalność Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego "Sokół" w Dąbrówce Wielkopolskiej*, M. A. printout, Gorzów Wlkp. 1980, pp. 28, 43.

On 13 April 1919, Warsaw hosted a rally of delegates from three still functioning falcon associations. The Inter-association Branch with Bernard Chrzanowski as its leader was created. On 19 April, it was transformed into the Society Temporary Board. Finally, the three falcon associations created the Association of Gymnastic Societies "Sokol" in Poland, and on 29 November 1920, a new statute of the association was approved. "Sokol" was active on the territory of six districts in Poland: Lesser Poland, Cracow, Pomerania, Mazovia, Greater Poland, Silesia, and the seventh one encompassing Polish falcon nests in northern France, and later on in Belgium and Holland as well. "Sokol" members actively participated in the development of sports movement in Poland, enjoying a lot of success on the international arena, e.g. in gymnastics (e.g. Janina Skirlińska, Jerzy Lewicki), athletics (e.g. Stanisława Walasiewicz), archery and fencing. The programme of civic education defined its goals in the following way: "[...] the feeling of obligation towards one's country and all civic virtues constituting the foundation of love for one's Homeland, developing citizens' national and personal dignity, and the need to fulfil their social and civic duties eagerly and selflessly."³²

"Sokol" movement kept presenting its achievements during its regional and district gatherings, but above all during nationwide rallies. A rally in Poznań from 28 June to 1 July 1929 deserves our special attention as it constituted a very important element, apart from the General National Exhibition in Poznań, of celebrating the 10th anniversary of Polish independence (Photo 1). "[...] Poznań rally was to be a great peaceful manifestation of Slavism, which sees the guarantee of immunity to all temptations in working on the development of physical and moral force of future generations. It was also to demonstrate clearly that the falcon ideology was still alive and to show its achievements it wouldn't have enjoyed without it [...], it was also to be a difficult national test for the falcon movement taken on an international stage and thus being a valuable, sound argument in favour of Poland."³³ Indeed, the rally enjoyed great interest, it was attended not only by falcon representatives from all Polish districts, but also by Polish falcon movement members from western Europe and the United States. The stadium in Poznań hosted a solemn concelebrated holy mass, accompanied by flag-bearers from numerous falcon nests, attended by thousands of falcon movement delegates present at the Rally.³⁴

³² K. Toporowicz, *Zarys dziejów "Sokoła" na ziemiach polskich w latach 1867–1947...*, pp. 14–15.

³³ M. Sławiński, *Zasługi osobiste, jako czynnik powodzenia Złotu Poznańskiego*, "Stanica". A one-off issue devoted to the chairman of the Association of Polish Falcon Movement, scout Adam Zamoyski on his nameday", Katowice 1929, p. 39.

³⁴ National Digital Archive (henceforth: NAC), Zespół: Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archive of Images (henceforth: IKC–AI), the Gymnastic Society "Sokol" – All-Slavic rally in Poznań, sygn. 3/1/0/5/440/2.

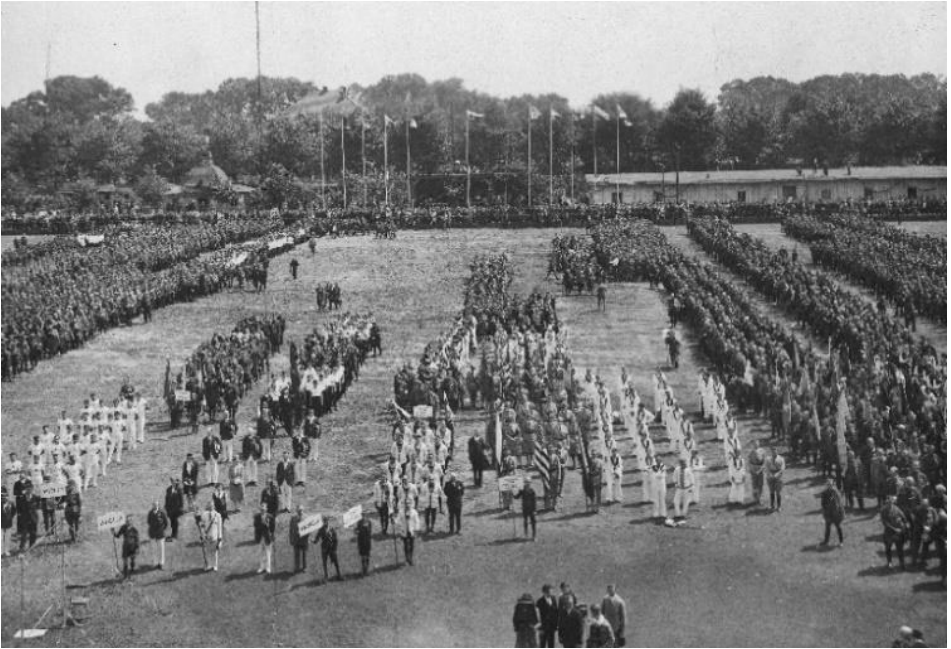


Photo 1. All-Slavic Rally of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” celebrating the 10th anniversary of independence, Poznań, June 1929

Source: NAC, sygn. 3/1/0/5/440/3.

All the rallies devoted to consecrating “Sokol” banners in parish churches, e.g. in Kałusz³⁵ or those celebrating anniversaries of particular nests were also outstanding. A rally celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Gymnastic Society in Cracow took place from 27 to 30 June 1935, a bit more than a month after the death of Polish Marshal Józef Piłsudski. His remnants were buried in St. Leonard’s crypt at Wawel castle. The funeral was attended by “Sokol” troops from many nests.³⁶

To commemorate the Marshal, falcon movement members undertook an initiative to erect a mound on top of Sowiniec and give it His name. The mound consisted of soil from all the battlefields of WWI, where Polish soldiers fought, including the summit of Krzemieniucha (Photo2). “Sokol” members from Zakopane brought a boulder from Mała Łąka in the Tatra Mountains, which was transported to the mound.³⁷ To show how greatly the initiative and “Sokol|”

³⁵ NAC, IKC–AI, Regional Rally of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Kałusz, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1074.

³⁶ E. Kubalski, *Z przeżyć i wspomnień sokolich...*, p. 107; NAC, IKC–AI, Commemorating Polish Marshal Józef Piłsudski in Cracow, sygn. 3/1/0/2/299.

³⁷ NAC, IKC–AI, Rally of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” celebrating the 50th anniversary of Cracow Society, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1031.

achievements were appreciated, the members were addressed by, among all, mayor of Cracow, Rudolf Radzyński. The anniversary celebration was a great religious event. It took place in the Wawel castle cathedral. "Sokol" members arrived in procession, with their banners, walking through the streets of the city. The Chairman of the Cracow District of the Polish Association of Gymnastic Societies "Sokol", Stanisław Rowiński, unveiled a commemorative plaque devoted to falcon movement members – legionnaires who sacrificed their lives fighting for Poland's independence. The plaque was set in the wall of the building which served as the office of Cracow Society.³⁸



Photo 2. "Sokol" members at work during the construction of Józef Piłsudski mound, Cracow, 27–30 June 1935

Source: NAC, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1031/3.

The Eighth National Rally of The Gymnastic Society "Sokol", organised from 26 to 29 June 1937, in Katowice was also symbolic in its character. The rally was held under the auspices of Polish cardinal August Hlond and Polish marshal, brigadier general Edward Śmigły-Rydz. The rally was organized to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the falcon movement in Poland and the 15th anniversary of Silesia's return to the Motherland. Taking into account a long and difficult way of Silesian insurgents who sacrificed a lot to bring their region back to Poland, and

³⁸ NAC, IKC-AI, Rally of the Gymnastic Society "Sokol" celebrating the 50th anniversary of Cracow Society, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1031/33, 89, 98, 116, 129.

growing new conflicts, the Rally became a huge falcon and national manifestation. A ceremonial field mass was concelebrated by Silesian bishop Stanisław Adamski, with the participation of the Speaker of the Silesian Parliament Karol Grzesik, Silesian voivode Michał Grażyński, major-general Leon Berbecki, the chairman of the Association of the Polish Falcon Movement, lieutenant Franciszek Arciszewski. The Rally was one of the last events of this type before the outbreak of WWII.³⁹



Photo 3. Members of GS “Sokol” after laying the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw; in the centre – chairman of the GS „Sokol” count Adam Zamoyski

Source: NAC, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1029/1.

Defenders of the homeland – known and unknown – remained in falcons’ memory forever. During national celebrations, anniversaries of particular nests or those commemorating tragic battles of Polish soldiers, “Sokol” delegates always laid wreaths on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw (Photo 3),⁴⁰ Grudziądz (Photo 4),⁴¹ or Żółkiew, whose inhabitants founded a plaque with the

³⁹ E. Kubalski, *Z przeżyć i wspomnień sokolich...*, p. 114; NAC, IKC–AI, The Eighth National Rally of The Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Katowice organised to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the falcon movement in Poland and the 15th anniversary of Silesia’s return to the Motherland, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1032/7, 8.

⁴⁰ NAC, IKC–AI, The rally’s delegation after laying the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1029.

⁴¹ NAC, IKC–AI, The event participants laying the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1072.

following inscription: “Our tribute to the Unknown Soldier fighting for his Homeland and this town, on 12.01.1919, the town of Żółkiew.” The plaque is located in front of the office of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in that town.⁴² Silesian falcon movement members commemorated the sacrifice and tragic death of the insurgents, paying tribute to them in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Insurgent at Wolności Square in Katowice.⁴³ Similarly, the members of the Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol” from the United States and Yugoslavia⁴⁴ paid tribute to their dead brothers in arms during their visits in Poland, e.g. in 1932 and 1935.⁴⁵



Photo 4. Participants of the event celebrating the 40th anniversary of the GS “Sokol” in Pomerania laying their wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Grudziądz, 11 June 1934.

Source: NAC, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1072/2.

Falcon movement members followed their traditions deriving from the partition times to honour national heroes and all the figures permanently inscribed

⁴² NAC, IKC–AI, The event of consecrating the plaque commemorating the Unknown Soldier located in front of the office of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Żółkiew, sygn. 3/1/0/9/8303.

⁴³ NAC, IKC–AI, Delegates of the GS “Sokol” laying the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Insurgent in Katowice, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1081/2; 3/1/0/6/1083/2, 3, 4, 5.

⁴⁴ NAC, IKC–AI, The Gymnastic Society “Sokol” from Yugoslavia in Poland, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1044/1, 2.

⁴⁵ NAC, IKC–AI, Delegates of the Society from Detroit laying the wreath of on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1054/1; Female delegates of the Society “Sokol” from the United States of America laying the wreath of on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1055/1.

in the history of Poland and Polish nation. In 1931, during the celebrations devoted to the 40th anniversary of the Gymnastic Society in Cieszyn, a monument of Mieszko I, the first ruler of Poland, was unveiled.⁴⁶ The Society members cultivated the memory of our national poet Adam Mickiewicz, whose works had played a crucial role in strengthening our patriotic feelings during the time of national slavery (Photo 5). The monument of the poet in Cracow bears the following inscription: “To Adam Mickiewicz – the People,” which demonstrates high esteem for the poet.⁴⁷ The event of putting the wreath at the monument of Tadeusz Kościuszko at the main market square in Rzeszów became a patriotic demonstration. It took place during the rally of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” members in this town.⁴⁸ Tadeusz Kościuszko was a distinguished figure for falcon movement members. They chose him to be their patron and spiritual leader, regarding him as the first man who not only fought for Polish independence but also implemented the rules of the Constitution of 3 May 1791.⁴⁹



Photo 5. Delegates of the GS “Sokol” after laying the wreath at the monument of A. Mickiewicz, Cracow 1929 r.

Source: NAC, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1038/1.

⁴⁶ NAC, IKC–AI, The 40th anniversary of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Cieszyn, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1065/1, 21.

⁴⁷ NAC, IKC–AI, Delegation members laying the wreath at the monument of A. Mickiewicz, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1038/1.

⁴⁸ NAC, IKC–AI, The rally of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” members in Rzeszów, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1136/1.

⁴⁹ M. Wolańczyk, *Macierz Sokola w 60-letnim rozwoju...*, p. 9.

Adopting the Constitution of 3 May 1791 became a national holiday already on May 5 1791. Each anniversary of this event was celebrated with great solemnity, even when the partitioning states forbade to celebrate it officially. For falcon movement members this day became special – at the time of the partitions it motivated them to act and it constituted an occasion to organize solemn religious-patriotic evenings. Once Poland regained independence and the Legislative Assembly of 1919 proclaimed that day a national holiday, falcon movement members used that opportunity to demonstrate their constant readiness to defend our Homeland during parades, processions and celebrations. It is worth mentioning that the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” members from Beaulieu⁵⁰ in France also celebrated anniversaries of the Constitution of 3 May.

It should be underlined that the whole falcon movement was deeply religious in its character not only due to genuine faith of its members but because of the movement’s ideology. In tragic moments in the history of national slavery, in God they trusted, they sought help in Him, they found solace in prayer. All falcon celebrations were of a religious character, there were masses with the participation of the most distinguished Church representatives, priests took part in rallies, anniversaries, consecrated new falcon nests, water marines, boats (Photo 6).⁵¹ The falcon movement members actively engaged in Church life, e.g. in 1934, the premises of “Sokol” in Cracow hosted the event celebrating the 25th priesthood anniversary of Bogdan Niemczyński, attended by the wife of the mayor of Cracow Mieczysław Kaplicki, countess Róża Łubieńska, senator Edward Raczyński, MP Marian Dąbrowski.⁵²

Bringing the relics of St Andrew Bobola to Poland in June 1938 was a religious event of special significance. Andrew Bobola, Jesuit priest, missionary, preacher was the author of Lviv vows of John II Casimir Vasa and contributed to recognizing Our Lady as the Queen of Poland, which was confirmed by John II Casimir Vasa in Lviv on 1 April 1656. Priest Bobola died a martyr death murdered by Cossacks during the Khmelnytsky uprising in 1657. In 1853, he was beatified, and in 1938 canonised by the Pope Pius XI. Having brought his remnants from Rome to Poznań, the representatives of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” participated in the procession during which the coffin was transported from St. John’s Cathedral to the Jesuit chapel, which was followed by the guard of honour at the Saint’s coffin (Photo 7.).⁵³

⁵⁰ NAC, IKC–AI, 3 May celebrations in Cracow; sygn. 3/1/0/6/2898/12; 3 May celebrations in Beaulieu, sygn.3/1/0/16/652/7.

⁵¹ NAC, IKC–AI, The consecration of the boat belonging to the Rowing Branch of the GS “Sokol” in Cracow, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1100.

⁵² NAC, IKC–AI, The 25th priesthood anniversary of Bogdan Niemczyński, sygn. 3/1/0/15/227.

⁵³ NAC, IKC–AI, Bringing the relics of St. Andrew Bobola to Poland, sygn. 3/1/0/15/431.



Photo 6. The consecration of the boat belonging to the Rowing Branch of the GS "Sokol" in Cracow, Cracow 24 May 1930

Source: NAC, sygn. 3/1/0/6/1100/1.



Photo 7. The guard of honour formed by the representatives of the GS "Sokol" at the coffin with the relics of St Andrew Bobola, the Jesuit church in Poznań, June 1938

Source: NAC, sygn. 3/1/0/15/431/5.

Conclusion

The outbreak of WWII put an end to the organizational-programme activity of the Gymnastic Society "Sokol". However, it did not make falcon movement members idle. A definite majority of "Sokol" movement members took part in the defensive struggle of Poland in September 1939. After the Polish army surrender, they engaged in conspirational activities, both in the country and abroad, in order to join the military struggle in the ranks of ally armies in the West and during the Warsaw Uprising. Due to their membership and previous activity, the members of the Gymnastic Society "Sokol" and their families were identified, persecuted, imprisoned in concentration camps, and often shot in massive street executions. Many of them died in the Nazi concentration camps and Soviet forced-labour camps.⁵⁴ Despite the fact that over 70 years have already passed since the end of WWII, their patriotic activity and martyrdom during that time still remains poorly researched and is waiting for scientific studies that it certainly deserves.

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⁵⁴ M. Gizowski, *Sokolstwo polskie w czasie II wojny światowej (1939–1945)*, [in:] E. Małolepszy, Z. Pawluczuk (eds.), *Zarys dziejów Sokolstwa Polskiego w latach 1867–1997...*, pp. 194–199; Z. Pawluczuk, *100 lat Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego "Sokol" w Gdańsku (1894–1994)...*, pp. 28–29; K. Toporowicz, *Zarys dziejów "Sokoła" na ziemiach polskich w latach 1867–1947...*, p. 16.

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