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THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN POLAND IN THE 1970S

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Wpływ kontaktów międzynarodowych na rozwój sportu osób niewidomych i niedowidzących w Polsce w latach siedemdziesiątych XX wieku

Streszczenie

W latach siedemdziesiątych XX wieku sport osób niewidomych i niedowidzących stał się pełnoprawnym uczestnikiem międzynarodowego ruchu sportowego osób niepełnosprawnych. W okresie tym sportowcy niewidomi i niedowidzący zadebiutowali na Igrzyskach Paralimpijskich (Toronto 1976 r.) a w strukturach Światowej Rady Pomocy Niewidomym oraz Europejskiego Komitetu Regionalnego Światowej Rady Pomocy Niewidomym powołano specjalistyczne komisje zajmujące się rozwojem sportu wśród osób niewidomych. W Polsce w omawianym okresie organizacją koordynującą i nadzorującą rozwój sportu osób niewidomych i niedowidzących było Zrzeszenie Sportowe Spółdzielczości Pracy „Start", w strukturach którego działała Podkomisja ds. Sportu Osób Niewidomych. Zrzeszenie „Start" było organizacją reprezentującą środowisko niewidomych i niedowidzących sportowców w kontaktach międzynarodowych, które były realizowane na dwóch płaszczyznach. Pierwszą z nich była współpraca na kanwie organizacyjnej, legislacyjnej oraz edukacyjnej realizowana przez działaczy i trenerów. Przedstawiciele Polski brali czynny udział w pracach komisji sportowych działających przy ww. międzynarodowych organizacjach, jak również nawiązywali kontakty z organizacjami krajowymi zajmującymi się tematyką sportu osób niewidomych i niedowidzących. Natomiast drugą płaszczyznę stanowiły kontakty sportowców realizowane poprzez współzawodnictwo sportowe. W omawianym okresie reprezentanci Polski brali czynny udział

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w najważniejszych międzynarodowych imprezach sportowych przeznaczonych dla osób niewidomych i niedowidzących, m.in.: Igrzyskach Paralimpijskich, Igrzyskach Inwalidów Różnych Schorzeń czy Europejskich Igrzyskach Sportowych Niewidomych, których Polska była gospodarzem.

Słowa kluczowe: niewidomi, niedowidzący, sport osób niepełnosprawnych, Igrzyska Paralimpijskie.

Abstract

In the 1970s, sport for the blind and visually impaired became a full participant in the international sports movement of people with disabilities. During this period, blind and visually impaired athletes made their debut at the Paralympic Games (Toronto 1976) and specialist committees were established within the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind and the European Regional Committee of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind to develop sport among blind people. In Poland, in the period discussed, the organization coordinating and supervising the development of sport for the blind and visually impaired was the Sports Association of the Workers' Cooperative "Start", in the structures of which the Subcommittee for Sport for the Blind operated. The "Start" Association was an organization representing the community of blind and visually impaired athletes in international contacts, which were maintained on two levels. The first one was organizational, legislative and educational cooperation pursued by activists and coaches. Representatives of Poland took an active part in the work of sports committees operating at the above-mentioned international organizations, as well as established contacts with national organizations dealing with sport for the blind and visually impaired. In turn, the second level consisted in the contacts of athletes maintained through sports competition. In the period discussed the representatives of Poland took an active part in the most important sports events dedicated to the blind and visually impaired, including: the Paralympic Games, the Games of the Disabled with Various Conditions or the European Sports Games of the Blind, which Poland hosted.

Keywords: blind, visually impaired, disabled sports, Paralympic Games.

Introduction

The aim of this study is to present the role and importance of international contacts in the development of sport for the blind and visually impaired in Poland in the 1970s. The chronological scope of the work is the 1970s – the period in which the Polish community of blind and visually impaired people joined and actively participated in the international sports movement.

In the period discussed, the organization coordinating and supervising the development of physical culture of people with disabilities in Poland was the Sports Association "Start", later transformed into the Sports Association of the Workers' Cooperative "Start" (SAWC "Start"). In the structures of the Association, the organizational unit performing tasks in the field of physical activity of the disabled was the Committee for Physical Education and Sport of the Disabled. In order to improve the work in the structures of the above-mentioned committee some subcommittees were established. One of them was the Subcommittee for Sport for the Blind. The directions of the committee's activities

were determined by a trilateral agreement concluded between: the Sports Association of the Workers' Cooperative "Start", the Polish Association of the Blind and the Association of Cooperatives of the Blind. According to the agreement, it was SAWC "Start" that took over the role of the main coordinator of programming sport for blind people. In particular, the Association was tasked with: organizing sports events for blind and visually impaired people on a national and international scale; representing blind and visually impaired athletes in foreign contacts; organizing and conducting central trainings for coaches and instructors; securing funds needed for the implementation of sports tasks for blind and visually impaired people; securing the needs of blind and visually impaired people as regards sports equipment and developing and publishing textbooks, scripts, instructions, sets of exercises required in individual sports disciplines practised by athletes with visual impairments. In addition, SAWC "Start" field structures: Provincial Inter-cooperative Centres of Physical Culture for the Disabled and sports and tourist clubs (operating at Cooperatives of the Disabled) were included in the system of sport for the blind and visually impaired. The Provincial Inter-cooperative Centres of Physical Culture for the Disabled were to organize sports activities, competitions and sports and rehabilitation camps. In turn, sports and tourist clubs were obliged to organize and promote gymnastic and recreational activities during breaks at work[1].

As far as the present state of research is concerned there are no studies on the subject of the importance of international contacts in the development of sport for the blind and visually impaired in Poland in the 1970s.

The preliminary research into archival source materials was carried out in the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw. The following turned out to be particularly valuable: the Set of Records on the Cooperative Sports Association "Start" and the Set of Records on the Central Association of Cooperatives of the Blind. In addition, this paper has been prepared with the use of printed sources, press sources and reference books.

Research problems and methods

The study uses the following research methods: analysis of historical sources, induction, deduction, synthesis and a comparative method.

The following research questions have been formulated in the paper:

1. What forms of international contacts in the field of sport were undertaken by the Polish community of blind and visually impaired people in the 1970s?

[1] Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (further: AAN), Centralny Związek Spółdzielni Niewidomych (further: CZSN), file no 2/60, Porozumienie o współpracy zawarte pomiędzy Zrzeszeniem Sportowym Spółdzielczości Pracy "Start", Polski Związkiem Niewidomych oraz Związkiem Spółdzielni Niewidomych, no pagination.

2. What international organizations did Polish representatives of sport for the blind and visually impaired cooperate with in the 1970s?
3. What international sports events were attended by blind and visually impaired representatives of Poland in the 1970s?

Results and discussion

In the 1970s, SAWC "Start" was an organization representing the community of blind and visually impaired athletes in international contacts. These contacts were maintained on two complementary levels. The first one was organizational, legislative and educational cooperation pursued by activists and coaches. In turn, the second level consisted in the contacts of athletes maintained through sports competition.

Cooperation on the first level was mainly based on participation in the work of the Commission for Sport of the Blind (CSB), operating at the European Regional Committee of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind. The members of the Commission were representatives of most European countries both from the so-called "Eastern bloc" and from Western Europe. For the first time, Poland participated in the deliberations of CSB in Sofia (4-5 March 1975), being represented by Prof. Jan Dziedzic – Director of the Special Institute of Physical Education, University of Physical Education in Poznań[2]. The Commission for Sport of the Blind, through its reach and scope of activities was the most important body for the organization and codification of sport for the blind and visually impaired in Europe. As part of its operation the Commission, among others organized scientific symposia, established sports competition regulations, established rules and criteria for competition in individual disciplines (it sought to unify the rules of competition in tournaments at all levels), developed exercise plans and ways of recording them, granted the right to organize pan-European sports events and established contacts and cooperation with representatives of other continents[3]. In addition, during the deliberations, members of CSB (in particular, representatives of the "Eastern Bloc" countries) had the opportunity to become acquainted with technological innovations facilitating daily life of blind and visually impaired people and the opportunity to meet with and talk to representatives of companies manufacturing equipment used by the above-mentioned groups. Participation in CSB meetings also provided an opportunity to

[2] AAN, CZSN, file no 2/60, Sprawozdanie z udziału w posiedzeniu Komisji Sportu Niewidomych Europejskiego Komitetu Regionalnego w dniach 4-5.III.1975 r. w Sofii, no pagination.

[3] AAN, Spółdzielcze Zrzeszenie Sportowe "Start" (further: SZSS), file no 39/13 Załącznik do sprawozdania z wyjazdu delegatów na posiedzenie Komisji Sportu Niewidomych Europejskiego Komitetu Regionalnego Światowej Rady Pomocy Niewidomym (1977 r.), no pagination.

establish direct contacts with representatives of national organizations dealing with sport of visually impaired people in their countries. These contacts resulted in an exchange of experience in organising sporting events and numerous bilateral sporting duels in which Polish representatives participated. Strong commitment of Polish representatives to the work of CSB was recognized by European partners which in September 1975 resulted in the appointment of Włodzimierz Kopydłowski (Director General of the Polish Association of the Blind) as chairman of the Commission[4].

Poland was also one of the initiators of the establishment of the Sport Commission at the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, the first meeting of which was held at the turn of November and December 1977 in East Berlin. In accordance with programme objectives as part of the Commission three technical teams operated for: track and field events, swimming, water sports and winter sports. For the Polish community of the blind and visually impaired, participation in the work of the Commission was of great importance due to the attendance of representatives from different continents. In addition to Europeans, the meeting of the Commission was attended by representatives of, among others: India, Kenya and the USA. Such a wide range of countries provided the opportunity to become acquainted with new methods and forms of work with blind and visually impaired people and to apply them to be used in work in Poland[5].

Contacts and established international relations also resulted in invitations for activists and coaches (as observers) to sports events organized by European partners. For example: in 1974 three representatives of SAWC "Start" (including two coaches) participated in Ghent (Belgium) in international competitions of rolling ball and goal ball (named by the organizers as the 1st European Championships). The competition participants included 78 players from Austria, Belgium, France, the FRG and Switzerland. During the competition, the "Start" delegates had the opportunity to learn about the rules of the game and general conditions needed to organize duels in both disciplines, which (as they themselves reported) were unknown in Poland. In addition, as part of the cooperation, the organizers handed over specialised balls to the Polish delegation for competitions in rolling ball and goal ball[6]. Another example is the participation of two SAWC "Start" activists in the Nordic Championships for the Blind and Visually Impaired in athletics and swimming. The event was organized in 1977 in

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[4] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/14, Pismo Sekretarza Generalnego Europejskiego Komitetu Regionalnego Światowej Rady Pomocy Niewidomym do Dyrektor Generalny Polskiego Związku Niewidomych z dnia 24.X.1975 r., no pagination.

[5] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/14, Załącznik do sprawozdania z wyjazdu delegatów ZSSP "Start" na posiedzenie ERK sportu niewidomych (1978 r.), no pagination.

[6] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/43, Sprawozdanie z Międzynarodowych Zawodów Niewidomych w Gandawie (1974 r,), no pagination.

Oslo and was attended by competitors from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. It was the tenth edition of the Championships already, which had been organized since 1961. In accordance with the trip objectives, the Polish delegation focused mainly on technical issues related to the organization of the event. However, one of the main observations that applied to whole Scandinavia was close integration that existed between regular sports clubs (as reported by the delegates) and sports unions and clubs associating the blind. This integration was manifested through the joint use of sports facilities and trainings carried out under the care of non-disabled athletes[7]. All observations and comments from the trips were included in the reports and then discussed and analysed during the meetings of the Subcommittee for Sport for the Blind operating within the structures of SAWC "Start".

The second level of international contacts of the Polish community of the blind and visually impaired was sports competition. For blind and visually impaired athletes representing Poland it was the most important form of cooperation. Among the numerous international events in which they participated, the Paralympic Games were of the highest rank. In the period discussed, two editions of the Games were held. In 1972, the Games were held in Heidelberg (the FRG), and four years later in 1976 in Toronto (Canada)[8]. Blind and visually impaired athletes had the opportunity to compete in Toronto only as it was the first Games to which they were invited[9]. In order to achieve the best possible result during the Games, Polish representatives in the second half of July participated in the preparatory training camp organised at the SAWC "Start" Olympic Preparations Centre in Wisła. The training camp was attended by eight athletes divided into two groups. Group A – completely blind (5 people) and group B – partially blind (3 people). The objectives of the training camp included: improving the technique in throwing competitions, developing speed, developing jumping skills, developing endurance and improving take-offs from blocks[10]. The Games in Toronto started on 3rd August and lasted 9 days until 11th August. For the visually impaired, there were such competitions as swimming at a distance of 100 m (freestyle, classic, butterfly stroke and backstroke), pentathlon (discus throw, swimming, shot put, long jump, running) and track and field events (dis-

[7] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/43, Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu delegacji ZSSP "Start" na Nordyckie Mistrzostwa Niewidomych i Niedowidzących w lekkiej atletyce i pływaniu do Oslo (1977 r.), no pagination.

[8] *Vademecum. Sport Niepełnosprawnych*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Aba, Warszawa, no publication date, p. 11.

[9] I. Brittain, *From Stoke Mandeville to Sochi: A history of the summer and winter Paralympic Games,* Common Ground Publishing, 2014, p. 118.

[10] AAN, CZSN, file no 2/60, Notatka służbowa z wyjazdu na zgrupowanie inwalidów przed Igrzyskami Olimpijskimi w Toronto do Wisły w dniach 19-29. VII. 1976 r., no pagination.

cus throw, javelin throw, shot put, high jump, long jump, runs at a distance of 60 m, 100 m and 1500 m)[11]. Among 38 representatives of Poland, 10 competitors were blind and visually impaired. Despite the withdrawal of the Polish national team from the Games on August 8th as a result of the protest lodged caused by the participation of the South African national team, the debut at the Games for the visually impaired was a great success[12]. In the sports competition, medals for Poland were won by: gold – Ryszard Kożuch (60-m run, pentathlon), Irena Bąk-Prokopiuk (60-m run, shot put), Bożena Kwiatkowska (discus throw), Jan Brzegowski (discus throw), Andrzej Pawlik (pentathlon), Helena Zajączkowska (swimming: freestyle and butterfly stroke), silver – Bożena Kwiatkowska (shot put), Ryszard Reszczyński (butterfly stroke swimming), bronze – Andrzej Pawlik (shot put) and Tadeusz Milewski (discus throw)[13].

Since the late 1940s, at the initiative of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, sports competitions for paraplegics were organized in Stoke Mandeville. The first competition held in 1948 (on the day of the opening of the 14th Olympic Games in London) was attended by 16 wheelchair athletes who competed in archery. In the following years, the idea of a competition for paraplegics developed into an event of an international scope. First as the Stoke Mandeville Games, then the International Stoke Mandeville Games, and finally it became the Paralympic Games[14]. Great interest in and sports and organizational successes of sporting competitions organized by Sir Ludwig Guttmann were an inspiration for the organization of the second parallel event with an extended format. The first edition of a new event under the name of the Games of the Disabled with Various Conditions was held in 1974 in Stoke Mandeville. For the first time, the Games were an arena of competition for athletes with three types of conditions: the blind, the disabled with amputations of the lower and upper limbs and paraplegics. The Games were attended by 250 athletes representing 17 countries including, among others, Indonesia and Japan. The Games were formally opened by the British Prime Minister James Harold Wilson and its highlight was a sports show broadcast on television. The Polish national team consisted of 20 people, 6 of whom were blind athletes. Participation in the event turned out to be a great success. In the unofficial score, Poland was ranked first, winning 48 medals (16 gold, 20 silver,

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[11] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/32, Informacja Rady Głównej Zrzeszenia Sportowego Spółdzielczości Pracy "Start" nt. Igrzysk Olimpijskich Inwalidów w Toronto, no pagination.

[12] I. Brittain, op. cit., p. 121, 122.

[13] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/13, Protokół z posiedzenia podkomisji ds. sportu niewidomych odbytego w dniu 25.X.1976 r., no pagination; W. Duński, *Od Paryża 1924 do Sydney 2000: polscy medaliści olimpijscy i paraolimpijscy: encyklopedia ilustrowana*, Polski Związek Sportu Niepełnosprawnych Start, Warszawa 2000, p. 44–1061.

[14] J.R. Gold, M.M. Gold, *Access for all: the rise of the Paralympic Games*, "Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health" 2007, 127(3), p. 134–136.

12 bronze ones). Blind athletes won 8 medals in their competitions, 2 gold, 4 silver and 2 bronze ones. The multi-medallist was Ryszard Kożuch, winner of 6 medals: 2 gold (60-m run, pentathlon), 3 silver (classic style swimming, discus throw, bowls), 1 bronze (freestyle swimming). The other two medals were won by: Zbigniew Nastaj, silver in the 60-m run and Krzysztof Zapęcki, brown medal in backstroke swimming[15].

The great success of the Games, in particular the organizational one, was the basis for the organization of the next edition of the event. From 30th June to 7th July 1975, the Second World Summer Games for the Disabled were held in Saint Etienne (France). The Games were attended by the 25-member Polish national team, of whom 8 athletes were blind. Blind athletes won a total of 14 medals: 7 gold medals, 5 silver medals and 2 bronze medals[16]. The conflict between two French organizations involved in sport for disabled people: Federation Francaise Omnisports Des Handicapes Physiques and Federation Francaise De Sports Pour Handicapes Physiques cast a shadow over the Games and their future. The first one was the organizer of the Games and invited to participation. The other one, in turn, with the support of ISOD, urged a boycott of the event[17].

An international sporting event of particular importance for the Polish sports community of the visually impaired was the first European Sports Games of the Blind. These Games were the first sporting event of such high rank dedicated to the visually impaired only. In addition, the event held on 25–30 August 1977, was hosted by the city of Poznań. Granting Poland such an important event meant recognition of the contribution and commitment to the development of the international sports movement of blind and visually impaired athletes[18]. The European Regional Committee of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind took patronage over the Games, and the main organizers of the event were: Sports Association of the Workers' Cooperative "Start", Polish Association of the Blind and the Association of Cooperatives of the Blind. Sports competitions were held in three disciplines: track and field events (60-m run, run-up long jump, shot put, palant [Polish game similar to rounders] ball throw, standing triple jump); swimming (freestyle and classic style at distances of 50 and 100 m, 4×50 m relay

[15] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/125, Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu polskiej ekipy sportowców inwalidów i działaczy do Stoke Mandeville w Anglii w dniach 14-22.09.1974 r., no pagination.

[16] AAN, CZSN, file no 2/60, Informacja z realizacji centralnego kalendarza imprez i preliminarza budżetowego w zakresie wychowania fizycznego, sportu i turystyki niewidomych w 1975 roku, no pagination.

[17] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/53, Korespondencja Rady Głównej Zrzeszenia Sportowego Spółdzielczości Pracy "Start" z Federation Francaise Omnisports Des Handicapes (1974/1975 r.), no pagination.; Pismo Federation Francaise De Sports Pour Handicapes Physiques do Rady Głównej Zrzeszenia Sportowego Spółdzielczości Pracy "Start" z dnia 4 lutego 1975 r., no pagination.

[18] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/13, Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu przedstawicieli ZSSP "Start" na posiedzenie Komisji Sportu Niewidomych 6.04.1976 r., no pagination.

in freestyle) and rolling ball. In addition, the competitors were divided into three groups: A – 100% blind; B – persons with vision within 1/20 according to Snellen, after lens correction in the better eye or with the field of vision limited to the space contained in 20°; C – persons with vision within 1/10 according to Snellen, after lens correction in the better eye /0.06-0.10[19]. In addition to the hosts, national teams from the following countries participated in the Games: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, Spain, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Luxembourg, the GDR, Norway, Portugal, the FRG, Romania, Sweden, Hungary, the United Kingdom and the USSR. As part of the preparations for the Games, Polish representatives took part in the central sports training camp in Wisła. The training camp lasted two weeks and ended on August 24th, the day before the start of the Games[20]. The Polish team of 25 players and 5 coaches ended their participation in the event having won 25 medals: 9 gold medals, 8 silver medals and 8 bronze medals. In the general score taking into account athletics and swimming, it was ranked in the 2nd place. It also took the 2nd place in team scoring in athletics competitions. In turn, the rolling ball team ended the competition in the 3rd place. In addition, 7 new Polish records were set in both athletics and swimming competitions[21].

The next edition of the Games, in accordance with the decision taken by the Commission for Sport of the Blind, operating at the European Regional Committee of the World Council for the Welfare (meeting at the turn of November and December 1977), was to be held in 1979 in Yugoslavia[22]. However, in the next meeting of the committee (March 1978), the organization of the event was entrusted to Norway, which planned to organize the Games in the capital of the country – Oslo[23]. Norway's resignation caused another search for a host. In November 1978, the proposal to organize the Games was submitted to Bulgaria, but despite the best efforts of the members of the Commission for Sport of the Blind, the second edition of the Games could not be organized until the end of the period in question[24].

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[19] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/35, Regulamin I Europejskich Igrzysk Sportowych Niewidomych 1977 rok, no pagination.

[20] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/35, Zarządzenie organizacyjne dot. Centralnego Zgrupowania Sportowego Niewidomych w Wiśle przed I Europejskimi Igrzyskami Sportowymi Niewidomych, no pagination.

[21] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/14, Protokół z posiedzenia podkomisji ds. Sportu Niewidomych odbytego w dniu 20.X.1977 r., no pagination; "Głos Wielkopolski" 1977, nr 196, p. 4.

[22] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/13, Załącznik do sprawozdania z wyjazdu delegatów ZSSP "Start" na posiedzenie ERK sportu niewidomych odbytego w dniach 30.11-2.12 1977 r., no pagination.

[23] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/13, Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu do NRD przedstawicieli ZSSP "Start" na posiedzenie komisji sportu ERK z dnia 20.03.1978 r., no pagination.

[24] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/15, Sprawozdanie z posiedzenia Egzekutywy ISOD w dniach 24-25 listopada 1978 r. no pagination.

Competition at the international level, in which representatives of Poland participated, was not limited only to events of the highest rank, which brought together representatives of several or several dozen countries with the competition being multidisciplinary. Blind and visually impaired athletes also competed, among other things, in regional tournaments, competitions of people's democratic states and in direct sports duels with representatives of selected countries. During the period discussed, visually impaired people annually competed in several events of this type, the most important of which in terms of sport were: Athletics Games of People's Democratic States – Varna, Bulgaria 1974 (the Polish national team, which included students of the Polish Association of the Blind patronage schools, took the 3rd place in the team scoring, winning 5 medals – 1 gold and 4 bronze ones)[25]; International Rolling Ball Tournament – Mechelen, Belgium 1977 (the debut of the Polish national team at international competitions in this sport ended with winning the 2nd place)[26]; International Chess Tournament – Prague, Czechoslovakia 1977 (the Polish national team took the 4th place)[27]. In addition, in bilateral sporting duels, the representatives of Poland most often competed with the contestants of "people's democratic states". In swimming competitions, a cyclical opponent was the GDR national team, with which the Polish national team competed in Poznań and Magdeburg alternately. With representatives of Hungary Polish athletes competed in track and field events competitions and also chess matches were played. In chess duels there were also competitions against players from Yugoslavia[28].

Conclusion

In the 1970s, the Polish sports community of blind and visually impaired athletes pursued international cooperation in two ways. The first one was organizational, legislative and educational cooperation pursued by activists and coaches. The second one consisted in the contacts of athletes maintained through sports competition. Representatives of Poland in the period discussed cooperated with two most important international organizations operating in

[25] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/14, Protokół z posiedzenia podkomisji ds. Sportu Niewidomych odbytego w dniu 28.X.1974 r., no pagination.

[26] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/69, Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu niewidomych sportowców na Międzynarodowy Turniej Piłki Toczonej do Belgii, 1977 r., no pagination.

[27] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/77, Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu ekipy szachowej inwalidów niewidomych na międzynarodowy turniej do Czechosłowacji w 1977 r., no pagination.

[28] AAN, SZSS, file no 39/12, Kontakty sportowe z Krajami Demokracji Ludowej (1974 r.), no pagination; file no 39/13, Protokół z posiedzenia podkomisji ds. sportu niewidomych odbytego w dniu 25.X.1976 r., no pagination; file no 39/54, Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu niewidomych sportowców do Magdeburga na zawody pływackie, no pagination.

the field of sport for the blind and visually impaired: the European Regional Committee of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (through participation in the work of one of its commissions – the Commission for Sport of the Blind) and the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (also through participation in the work of one of its commissions – the Sport Commission). In addition, cooperation was maintained with national organizations that were organizers of sport for the blind and visually impaired in their respective countries. Blind and visually impaired athletes representing Poland took an active part in the largest sports events organized during the period in question, including: the Paralympic Games, the Games of the Disabled with Various Conditions and the European Games of the Blind. They competed, also in regional tournaments, in the competitions of the so-called people's democratic states and in bilateral international sports duels. All these activities had a direct impact on the development of sport for the blind and visually impaired in Poland. The contacts of activists and coaches allowed to learn about new trends and innovations in sport of the blind and visually impaired athletes applied in other countries. They made it possible to become acquainted with sports disciplines unknown in Poland and to transfer them for practice at home. They also provided the opportunity to organize international sports events with athletes participating from all over Europe. In turn, sports contacts allowed to determine the sporting level of Polish athletes compared to representatives of other countries, which made it possible to diagnose the level of sport of the blind and visually impaired in Poland and to set directions for its development. Sports competition had another important dimension. It directly concerned the competitors themselves. Taking into account the economic and political situation of Poland in the 1970s, daily life of blind and visually impaired people was not the easiest. For most of them, it was virtually impossible to go abroad due to economic, health-related and legal barriers. It was the achieved sports results that provided them with an opportunity to travel abroad and at the same time to participate in competitions with representatives of other countries, to experience the atmosphere of a great sporting event and to learn about the culture and customs of the country being visited. All of these aspects were a motivation for athletes to raise their sporting level and to overcome barriers, which also influenced the development of sport for the blind and visually impaired in Poland in the 1970s.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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