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## MODEL OF ATHLETES' POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN "PRZEGLĄD SPORTOWY" (1948-1956)

### Introduction

This paper examines the coverage of the athletes political commitment in Polish largest sport newspaper – "Przeгляд Sportowy" ("PS") in the years 1948-1956. The analysis is based on newspaper's articles which present sportsmen's profiles and their political and social activity. All issues of "PS" from this period were included in the research. "PS" was at that time one of the most important newspapers devoted to physical education. Its history dates back to pre-war years - the first issue was published on May 1921.<sup>1</sup> Initially "PS" was issued as the "Official Organ of the Krakow, Warsaw and Lviv Football Association".<sup>2</sup> The newspaper was resumed after the Second World War in 1945 in Lodz.<sup>3</sup> In the first number in 1945, editors stated that they would not announce any "programs or thesis" for their newspaper.<sup>4</sup> However, after a few months, the newspaper was politicized by adapting its content to the current pattern. It was a result of the first resolution on sport adopted by the Politburo of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), which ordered sporty journalism to promote socialism.<sup>5</sup> In communistic concept physical education was perceived not only as "an abstract pleasure" but as an important factor in creating "a new personality of socialism system".<sup>6</sup> In line with ideological assumption, "new human" should be active in many areas. This model dictated organizational affiliation as well as participation in "meetings [...] demonstrations, rallies, elections".<sup>7</sup> For party-state propaganda, which was responsible for this project, athletes became a "tasty morsel", due to the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> *Nasz rekord – 15 lat*, "Przeгляд Sportowy" (further: "PS"), no. 46, June 2, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "PS", no. 5, June 18, 1921, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> In 1948 it was the biggest sport newspaper.; Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw (further: AAN), KC PPR Wydział Propagandy – Referat Prasowy, sygn. 295/X-25 (MF 2152/4), Nakłady czasopism – zestawienie, pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Przystępujemy do reaktywowania piśmiennictwa sportowego, "PS", no. 1, July 12, 1945, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> AAN, Główny Urząd Kultury Fizycznej, sig. 57, Zjazd dziennikarzy. Rola Kultury Fizycznej w Polsce Ludowej, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, pp. 125, 127-128.

<sup>7</sup> M. Mazur, *O człowieku tendencyjnym... Obraz nowego człowieka w propagandzie komunistycznej w okresie Polski Ludowej i PRL 1944-1956*, Lublin 2009, p. 347.

their performances attracted a large audience, and they gained popularity and social recognition.<sup>8</sup>

The monitored period is the interval between December 1948, when the PZPR was established, and the seizure of power by Władysław Gomułka in the October 1956. The Stalinism in Poland was the subject of many papers and articles, including such issues as propaganda. However, the connections between sport and propaganda were not the object of wider scholars' reflections.<sup>9</sup>

### **“Socialist athlete” pattern as a basis for commitment in the politics**

“PS”, as well as other Polish magazines devoted to physical culture, was during Stalinism period forced by a top-down instructions to create a specific pattern of athlete. Properly selected and commented news about sportsmen's achievements constructed a specific scheme of their careers. An important media image element of “socialist athlete” was to draw attention to their social origin. In line with communistic ideology, athletes derived primarily from the working class or peasantry. For example when the press was describing the profile of successful female gymnast Helena Rakoczy, it underlined that she was a daughter of “trolley driver”,<sup>10</sup> and when they were presenting Paweł Gaca's achievements, they emphasized that he “comes from an old mining family”.<sup>11</sup> Sport stars' social origins affect their attitude to communistic state. Articles describing individual careers concluded gratitude for the changes which enabled practicing sports by representatives of the working class and peasants. Such persons were shown as beneficiaries of changes. This approach was usually illustrated by quoting players' statements. Typically in such situations authors of the articles praised sportsmens work and predisposition, but also quoted athletes who pointed out that the basis of their success were the action taken by the socialist state. This scheme was used for example in the presentation of Janina Korecka's achievements in swimming. Journalists characterized her as a “genuine talent”, but Korecka herself stressed that the most important was “great conditions” created by communistic government.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, athletes who glorified new sport realities established by communists,

<sup>8</sup> In the first years after the war in Poland, “sport attracted thousands of spectators to the stadiums and huge crowds listened to radio broadcasts”; M. Ordyłowski, L. Szymański, *Sport w polityce – polityka w sporcie*, “Człowiek i Ruch”, no. 2, 2000, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g.: P. Godlewski, *Sport w Polsce na tle politycznej rzeczywistości lat 1944-1956*, Poznań 2006; *Sport i polityka w dwudziestowiecznych państwach totalitarnych*, eds. T. Gąsowski and S. Bielański, Cracow 2009; M. Ordyłowski, Z. Schwarzer, L. Szymański, *50 lat wrocławskiego sportu 1945-1995*, Wrocław 2007; L. Szymański, *Kultura fizyczna i turystyka w polityce Polski Ludowej 1944-1989*, Wrocław 2004; M. Ordyłowski, L. Szymański, *Sport w polityce – polityka w sporcie*, “Człowiek i Ruch”, no. 2, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> *Śława, która wyrosła z mas Polski Ludowej, żyje i walczy dla mas ludowych całego świata*, “PS”, no. 90, November 13, 1950, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Pracowite dni Pawła Gacy*, “PS”, no. 103, December 3, 1951, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Janina Korecka: Odrabiamy wielkie zaniechania dzięki wspomnianym warunkom stworzonym przez Rząd Ludowy*, “PS”, no. 19, March 8, 1951, p. 3.

negatively assessed this aspect of social life in pre-war Poland. Accordingly, readers could learn from Jadwiga Jedrzejowska that she “was born about ten years too early”, because today she could be a much more successful tennis player due to “endless opportunities for athletes” created by People’s Poland.<sup>13</sup> State care over the athletes which were pointed out in “PS” pertained to overall propaganda image of socialist. An important communistic propaganda element was to indicate that the “new system” provides working class upward social mobility. This scheme were also used to demonstrate the new role of women in socialist state. At that time, mass media in Poland were spreading female laborer pattern. This campaign was mainly focused on heavy industry<sup>14</sup> but the same pattern was used for the sport. “PS” readers could learn about female athletes who were absolute pioneers in the field, so far dominated by men. Once again articles were filled with political slogans about “wonderful opportunities opened by the Polish People’s Republic” and ensuring about “women inclusion into the mainstream of social and political life”.<sup>15</sup>

Emphasizing “proper” athletes social origins was a propaganda surgery. It suggested upward social mobility, comprehensive care and protection for working class. However, it was also an obligation for players to show support to the transformation and political force that had lead them.

### **The use of athletes in the national propaganda**

Physical education model introduced in the late forties in Poland, completely rejected the idea of professional sports. It was closely associated with the assignment of specific political functions to this area of social life. The goal of participation in sport was to prepare workers to highly productive work and maintain Poles’ readiness in case of war.<sup>16</sup> It had to develop citizens physical vigor to achieve objectives of the communist regime and not distract them from so accented by ideology aspects such as the need for rapid country industrialization.<sup>17</sup> Therefore press often emphasized the fact that the players themselves were economically active in industries especially valued by the communistic government. The most significant example of such athletes presentation, was an article showing miners as excellent football players. It created a scheme where two theoretically, almost contradictory societal roles – outstanding

<sup>13</sup> *Jedrzejowska w pierwszym szeregu walczących o pokój*, “PS”, no. 19, March 8, 1951, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> E.g.: Polish Film Chronicle (Polska Kronika Filmowa), Episode 10, 1951.

<sup>15</sup> *Irena Kempówna wzywa kobiety*, “PS”, no. 19, March 8, 1951, p. 1; K. Około-Kułak, *Kobiety w żeglarstwie*, “PS”, no. 19, March 8, 1951, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> The role of physical education in preparing young people for military service has been exposed to one of the first sports-related organizational meetings at the forum of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party.; AAN, KC PPR Wydział Propagandy, sig. 295/10-2 (MF CA 2152/1), Sprawozdanie z narady sportowej, pp. 29-32.

<sup>17</sup> According to the opinion presented by the activists of the Central Office of Physical Culture, one of the main objectives of the pre-war sports model was to “divert public attention from the issues of social injustice and the class struggle”; AAN, Główny Urząd Kultury Fizycznej, sig. 57, 5 lat sportu polskiego, p. 63.

footballer, playing in the top division and working on the forefront miner harmoniously co-exist. The article also described soccer match between “Górnik Radlin” and “Gwardia Warszawa”. According to “PS” game report the team from Radlin almost did not come to the match because their players were earlier working in the mine.<sup>18</sup> The match had a special importance because “Gwardia Warszawa” could after the victory win the football first division. However, newspapers reported that players from Radlin did not want to take a day off because the work was more important for them. “Górnik Radlin” won the game but the conclusion of the article was that they were “double winners”, both athletes and workers.<sup>19</sup>

This type of articles emphasized the benefits to the economy and physical culture from the amateur sport model. The advantages of this approach, were also pointed out by the players. Tadeusz Prywer, famous Polish shot-putter stated in the press that young athletes should implement the slogan “every athlete – a model employee”.<sup>20</sup> Prywer himself, marked that he is trying to deploy this clue, citing as evidence the fact that so far he has been four times awarded for sporting achievements but also four times received a diploma for a win in the “work contest”.<sup>21</sup>

Polish People’s Republic economy was based on the plans set by political authorities. One important element of economic propaganda was to mobilize citizens to achieve outlined goals. In this context, mass media were often using metaphors derived from a sport such as a “work race” or “labor competition”. On the other hand the propagandas athlete-worker figure was appropriate to stimulate people for faster work. Therefore, newspapers solemnly reported on athletes work performance. One of the representative examples was an article presenting speedway rider Stanisław Górny. He was the first from “many thousands of athletes” who performed tasks drawn by governmental “Six-year Plan”.<sup>22</sup> Górny stressed that sports definitely helps him to perform heavy duties of the worker. As he argued in “PS” – physical activity makes “that he feels always full of energy, full of enthusiastic zeal for creative work”.<sup>23</sup> The reportage protagonists were also miners, who worked and played as a basketball team in the same group. According to press reports they were performing from 160% to 180% norm for employees, which allowed them to carry out an annual plan in September.<sup>24</sup> Slogans involving players to popularize the idea of fulfilling production objectives were also published in the press besides the sport articles or reports. “PS” even placed slogans prepared by Central Committee of Physical Culture for political activists.

<sup>18</sup> *Przodownicy*, “PS”, no. 103, December 3, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> T. Prywer, *Otrzymałem 4 dyplomy za pchnięcie kulą... i 4 dyplomy za pracę*, “PS”, no. 88, October 23, 1952, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> E. Olechowski, *Pierwszy sportowiec w Polsce wykonał zadania planu 6-cio letniego*, “PS”, no. 29, March 20, 1952, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> *Koszykarze i siatkarze górnika wyrabiają 180 proc. normy*, “PS”, no. 103, December 3, 1951, p. 3.

One of them were calling "Athletes to the front lines fighting for the early implementation of the Six-year Plan – the foundations of the prosperity and culture of our nation!".<sup>25</sup> These types of slogans were published in the "PS" since 1950.<sup>26</sup>

Athletes' approach to work promoted as exemplary was manifested in "PS" not only by their activity at work but also in their involvement in the cities reconstruction after the war. An example of such behavior was the Park of Culture in Warsaw rebuilding campaign, the Polish representatives in athletics took part with their opponents from East Germany, who came to the capital for special international sporting event. As press coverage they spent several hours on the construction of a "socialist Warsaw", despite the fact that the day before they had played important game.<sup>27</sup> In addition to their normal, daily work athletes worked mostly for the creation of sportive base. In Krakow's Nowa Huta, for example they – as reported in September 1950 – built "sports equipment valued at over 50 million zlotys".<sup>28</sup>

This kind of reports portrayed athletes as "common people" engaged in every day work for the Polish People's Republic. They emphasized that they should achieve better results in sport but also indicated other important duties in "factories, mines, schools, colleges and universities".<sup>29</sup> A symbol of this duality can be the banner carried by the players during political demonstration, with inscription "in sport: faster, further – at work: more, cheaper, better".<sup>30</sup> "Socialist athlete" was not only admired for his achievements on the sport field but also for the fact that he was able to combine sport with their duties to the "socialist homeland". The pattern popularized by the press left no doubt which duties were top priorities.

### Manifesting political beliefs

"Socialist athlete" should not only achieve adequate performance at work and the discipline, which he was practicing. Demonstrated pattern required him to be "politically aware" and declared his choices. Accordingly, "PS" reported the political events, attended by "socialist sport stars". In the Stalinism period in Poland, several propaganda campaigns were performed with the participation of popular athletes. A harbinger of such practices was the sports newspapers reaction to the emergence of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). Although, this political event was glorified in the media, not jet by the athletes but by the sport activists, who were portrayed as representatives of Polish sport. In their statements they emphasized the creation of one labor

<sup>25</sup> *Hasła Głównego Komitetu Kultury Fizycznej na otwarcie wiosenno-letniego sezonu sportowego 1953 roku*, "PS", no. 21, March 12, 1953, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Hasło zamieszczone na górze strony – *Sportowcy polscy na pierwszej linii walk o Plan 6-letni*, "PS", no. 70, September 4, 1950, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> *W poniedziałek 8*, "PS", no. 88, October 11, 1951, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Nowa huta będzie wzorowym ośrodkiem kultury fizycznej. Postanowienia Plenum WKKF w Krakowie*, "PS", no. 70, September 4, 1950, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Sława, która wyrosła...*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> *5000 uczestników w IV Igrzyskach Szkół Zawodowych. Defilada jedności, siły i sprawności fizycznej*, "PS", no. 46, June 12, 1950, p. 1.

party with substantial changes in the organization of sport life. As Lucjan Motyka – General Secretary of Polish Youth Union (Związek Młodzieży Polskiej – ZMP) quoted “Congress of the Working Class Unity [...] can not be considered without influence on the development of Polish sport”.<sup>31</sup> In his opinion it created “huge prospects for the development of physical culture, not possible in pre-war period”.<sup>32</sup> At this same newspaper issue another ZMP activist concluded “that sport can not be apolitical and never was. We had a bourgeois sport that either provides entertainment for small bourgeois elite or created circuses for the masses [...] but it has always [...] spread bourgeois ideas and opinions”.<sup>33</sup> The adoption of such strategy for physical culture enforced active players commitment in political campaigns.

As well as other social groups Athletes were involved in the celebration of the socialist anniversaries. The major manifestations in Poland organized by communists government were: “Labor Day” and July 22 – the anniversary of the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN).<sup>34</sup> During the Stalinism period “PS” always related the share of athletes in these celebrations. The dominant form was to report about thousands of marching players. They were always dressed in sports clothes and set in separate columns as well as representatives of workers or peasants. Like other professions, they were handling red and national flags, banners with socialistic slogans and huge portraits of Joseph Stalin and Boleslaw Bierut.<sup>35</sup> Press coverage

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<sup>31</sup> L. Motyka, *Polski sport wita Kongres Jedności Klasy Robotniczej*, “PS”, no. 16, February 23, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> J. Zarzycki, *O właściwe drogi rozwoju polskiego sportu*, “PS”, no. 16, February 23, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> P. Osęka, *Rytuály stalinizmu. Oficjalne święta i uroczystości rocznicowe w Polsce 1944-1956*, Warsaw 2006, p. 104.

<sup>35</sup> *Imponujący udział sportowców w potężnych manifestacjach 1-go Maja*, “PS”, no. 35, May 2, 1949, p. 1; *Sportowcy w dniu święta odrodzenia*, “PS”, no. 59, July 25, 1949, p. 3; *Sportowcy na czele 300 tysięcy pochodzie 1 Maja*, “PS”, no. 34, May 2, 1950, p. 1; *Zobowiązania zostały wykonane. Meldunki sportowców na centralnej akademii*, “PS”, no. 58, July 24, 1950, p. 1; *Silę, zdrowie i radość pokazali sportowcy w dniu 1 Maja*, “PS”, no. 35, May 3, 1951, p. 1; *W radosnym dniu Święta Odrodzenia. Potężna manifestacja siły i sprawności Wojska Polskiego, Brygad SP i sportu ludowego*, “PS”, no. 58, July 23, 1951, p. 1; *Wspaniała defilada i piękny pokaz w dniu rozpoczęcia wyścigu*, “PS”, no. 35, May 1, 1952, p. 1; *Uroczystą akademią uczcili olimpijczycy Święto Odrodzenia*, “PS”, no. 62, July 24, 1952, p. 1; *Jesteśmy sprawni do pracy i obrony. Wspaniała defilada sportowców podczas manifestacji 1 Maja w Stolicy*, “PS”, no. 36, May 4, 1953, p. 1; *Wspaniała defilada sportowców stolicy obrazem tężyzny i masowości ludowego sportu*, “PS”, no. 63, July 23, 1953, p. 1; *Idą sportowcy*, “PS”, no. 35, May 5, 1954, p. 2; *1-majowa Akademia sportowców stolicy*, “PS”, no. 37, April 29, 1955, p. 2; *Wspaniała defilada przeszła po raz pierwszy przez plac im. J. Stalina*, “PS”, no. 73, July 23, 1955, p. 1; *83 000 widzów na inauguracji. Stadion Dziesięciolecia otwarty. Najwyżsi dostojnicy naszego państwa oraz kierownicy delegacji zagranicznych zasiedli na trybunie honorowej*, “PS”, no. 73, July 23, 1955, pp. 1 and 3; *W dniu święta 1 Maja. Radosna, barwna, piękna defilada polskich sportowców*, “PS”, no. 38, May 2, 1955, p. 1; *90 tysięcy na Stadionie Dziesięciolecia, setki tysięcy na trasie powitało uczestników X Wyścigu Pokoju*, “PS”, no. 52, May 3, 1956, p. 1; Press releases contrasted with the official reports. For example in the year 1952, during 22 July – in six cities,

always drew attention to individual figures emerging from the crowd, symbolizing the unity of the sport environment. In the analyzed period, twice in 1950 and 1951, the group of athletes during the "Labor Day" parade in Warsaw were led by wrestler Zbigniew Szajewski. This fact has also been exposed by the "PS" in the form of images posted on the front page.<sup>36</sup> In later years, individual athlete, who presides over the rest of the column took on the "PS" form of fictional characters drawn by graphic designers.<sup>37</sup> These illustrations, as well as photos of the athletes in columns had to demonstrate the features of "socialist sportsman", which in the context of articles on public celebrations are often referenced in the titles – strength, health, joy and vigor. All of these properties – as emphasized – was to be the result of a mass sport system in Polish People's Republic.

Since 1953, in the "PS" reports about the celebration of "Labor Day" and July 22 were gradually reduced as compared to the earlier period, although they were still one of the main topics. More important became sporting events associated with both political events. During "Labor Day" celebrations press were mainly focused on cycling "Peace Race", performed in socialistic states. While, July 22 became the occasion for new sport base inaugurations.<sup>38</sup>

The model of athletes' political commitment in politics also assumed their participation in the parliamentary election campaign.<sup>39</sup> A few days before the voting, "PS" launched an initiative to support the National Front candidates. Press coverage included interviews with individual players and reports from mass meetings attended by the athletes. Interviews were mainly conducted with young sportsmen and with players from small rural clubs, established after communistic reforms. One of the quoted young sportswomen was Halina Chrzęszczówna – 19 year-old Polish national champion in swimming.<sup>40</sup> In her statement she praised the government for expanding young people access to sport and education. A similar opinion was expressed by Maria Ciachówna, 19 year-old javelin thrower.<sup>41</sup> In this type of arguments used by teenage athletes, participation in sports was just one element of a new youth-friendly reality created by PZPR. The main message was young peoples' upward social mobility.

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the athletes' involvement were describe as insufficient. According to the report – athletes refused to carry flags, they were not chanting slogans and they were speaking loudly; AAN, KC PZPR Wydział Propagandy i Agitacji, sig. 237/VIII-83, Notatka informacyjna o udziale sportowców w obchodzie Święta Odrodzenia – 22 July 1953 roku, pp. 61-68.

<sup>36</sup> Picture – *Zapaśnik Szajewski na czele kolumny sportowców, podczas defilady 1-Majowej niesie symbol pokoju – czerwony sztandar*, "PS", no. 34, May 2, 1950, p. 1; Picture – *Czołówka kolumny sportowej na manifestacji 1 Majowej w Stolicy*, "PS", no. 35, May 3, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Draft – *1 maj*, "PS", no. 35, May 1, 1952, p. 1; Draft – *Niech żyje 1 Maj, dzień międzynarodowej solidarności mas pracujących, dzień braterstwa wszystkich ludów walczących o pokój, niepodległość i socjalizm*, "PS", no. 35, April 30, 1953, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> E.g.: *83 000 widzów na inauguracji...*, pp. 1 and 3.

<sup>39</sup> During analyzed period elections were in 1952.

<sup>40</sup> *26 października będziemy głosować na kandydatów Frontu Narodowego mówią sportowcy*, "PS", no. 86, October 16, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

The same scheme was used to gain support from residents of rural areas. To that end “PS” were quoting, amateur athletes from Folk Sports Clubs (LZS), who talked about governmental care over rural sport.<sup>42</sup>

Separate category of articles devoted to elections were reports from sports competitions accompanied by political events. In the pre-election period sport games were often preceded by manifestations, marches and political speeches, during which athletes also encouraged people to vote.<sup>43</sup> In this context, sport competition was aimed primarily at attracting local people to the place of the political meeting, where sport idols could present not only their physical skills but also their positive attitude to the government. Pre-election propaganda campaign was not completed after the voting. This was due to the fact that its main aim was not soliciting for voters, but creating an image of national unity. For this reason an integral part of this action was to show appropriate behavior of citizens during elections day. This meant that also press stories about athletes had to confirm their earlier attitude. The first “PS” issue after the voting perused on the front page – elections were a “huge demonstration of unity of all Poles gathered in the National Front”. Athletes collectively turned up at the polls.<sup>44</sup> The descriptions on the athletes behavior from different parts of the country suggested that they were one of the groups that voted with the greatest enthusiasm. Accordingly, readers may find from press that one of the electoral group of athletes representing the Academy of Physical Education (AWF) were singing songs while voting, and players of the Central Military Sports Club (CWKS) were not able to control their impatience and wanted to go to the polls at 5 am.<sup>45</sup> The press coverage were dominated by reports of mass voting by the whole teams, who were always dressed in the uniforms to identify their club membership.<sup>46</sup> “PS” also reported about the individual participation of the most famous characters, including the popular trainers.<sup>47</sup> Articles devoted to elections day included pictures from polling places. Many newspapers provide a photographs of Boleslaw Bierut. “PS” besides the picture presenting Secretary-General of the Communist Party also added photographs showing famous athletes during the voting.<sup>48</sup>

One of the most extensive media campaigns, actively using “socialist athletes” was “Nationwide discussion of the draft Constitution of the People’s Republic”. It was to be held in Poland on the basis of the Parliamentary resolution, which set that the citizens will be able to submit their comments to the regulations between January and April 1952.

<sup>42</sup> *Wyberzmy na posłów najlepszych spośród nas*, “PS”, no. 87, October 20, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Głosując na kandydatów Frontu Narodowego głosujemy również za rozkwitem ludowego sportu*, “PS”, no. 87, October 20, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Wybory do Sejmu przebiegły pod znakiem potężnej manifestacji jedności wszystkich Polaków skupionych we Froncie Narodowym. Sportowcy gremialnie stawili się przy urnach wyborczych*, “PS”, no. 89, October 27, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> *Z radością i dumą głosowali polscy sportowcy*, “PS”, no. 89, October 27, 1952, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>48</sup> *Do urny wyborczej w lokalu 172 w Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego w Warszawie podchodzi koszykarka R. Gruszczyńska, lekkoatleta Z. Ważny i gimnastyczka H. Rakoczy*, “PS”, no. 89, October 27, 1952, p. 1.



Accordingly, "PS" opened a special column "Voices in the discussions on the draft of the Constitution". As a first quoted Helena Rakoczy, who extolled the Constitution from the "women and sportswomen" point of view.<sup>49</sup> Her comments were not related to specific articles of the draft, rather praising contemporary reality. As Rakoczy argued – we should realize our "fortunate position, getting all the goods, all the achievements for which working class and progressive women were fighting for decades".<sup>50</sup> Post-war, communist Poland was also praised by Wojciech Szuppe – national team volleyball player, who spoke as the last in the newspaper cycle. He compared his situation and his parents from the time when they were his age. As he stated referring to the period of the Second Republic – "I see my father, who had been working since he was 16. I see the hunger and deprivation in the workers family. I see my dying brother, for which there was no medical care and medications".<sup>51</sup> In conclusion, he noted however, that these times have already "thankfully gone. I live in a happy, free country that builds socialism".<sup>52</sup> Since the announcement of the Constitution draw until the closing of the "discussion" about its records nineteen issues of "PS" were published. Only two of them did not include articles praising the proposed solutions by representatives of the socialist sport. There were no critical comments.

Athletes were also involved in non-recurring propaganda actions intended to show the support for specific authorities decisions. One example of such actions was athletes endorsement for "National Development Loan".<sup>53</sup> For this initiative "PS" devoted four articles published in June 1951, including three on the front page. Two of them were propagandist presentation of the idea of a loan,<sup>54</sup> and the others were consisted mainly of statements declaring payment by athletes and extolling the virtues of the essence of the action. The articles used, inter alia, the authority of Maksymilian Grzywocz – Polish champion in boxing, European champion in the same discipline Zygmunt Chychła, world champion in gymnastics Helena Rakoczy, Polish champion in foil Jerzy Twardokens and national team volleyball player – Halina Tomaszewska.<sup>55</sup> Players explaining the motives of their actions marked that by signing loan they "fulfill their civic duty", "help to speed up the construction of new factories, railways, schools, libraries and sports facilities", "enhance the strength of our country"

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<sup>49</sup> *Głosy w dyskusji nad projektem Konstytucji*, "PS", no. 9, January 31, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> *Głosy w dyskusji nad projektem Konstytucji. Dobrze mi jest w Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego*, "PS", no. 28, April 7, 1952, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> National Development Loan was ordered by Decree of 18 June 1951. The State Treasury issued "bearer bonds" for the sum of 1 200 000 000 zł. It was to be repaid by the State within 20 years; *Dekret z dnia 18 czerwca 1951 r. o rozpisaniu Narodowej Pożyczki Rozwoju Sił Polski*, "Dziennik Ustaw", no. 33, pos. 256, 257, 268.

<sup>54</sup> *Dla zwiększenia siły naszej Ojczyzny*, "PS", no. 49, June 22, 1951, p. 1; *Dziś konieczne jest spotęgowanie naszego wysiłku*, "PS", no. 49, June 22, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Sportowcy polscy masowo podpisują Narodową Pożyczkę Rozwoju Sił Polski*, "PS", no. 49, June 22, 1951, p. 1; *Dlaczego podpisują Narodową Pożyczkę Rozwoju Sił Polski*, "PS", no. 49, June 22, 1951, p. 2.

and “stand in the ranks of the builders of a the new future”. As recognizable, popular people are better able to seek support action by all Poles.<sup>56</sup> As recognizable, popular people athletes were more effective in seeking support by all Poles.

Athletes’ political commitment during Stalinist period concerned not only symbolic realm. Media also present those athletes who held specific political functions. This allows readers to learn that the cyclist Stanislaw Królak and javelin thrower Andrzej Walczak were also members of National Metropolitan Council and National Councilor District and both were active members of the ZMP and were appointed as delegates to the Congress of the organization in 1955.<sup>57</sup> Karolak even had the opportunity to speak to the assemble of Congress, like the bronze medalist at the Olympic Games in Helsinki, rower Theodore Kocerka. As press covered, the reward for good athletic performance and appropriate political attitude was also the opportunity to sing in ZMP Board Honor Book. During analyzed period only five athletes signed the Book. As reported in the press – their signature “found next to the names of the young labor leaders”.<sup>58</sup>

“Socialistic athlete”, political activity could have a dual dimension. First, it could be personal commitment like leading political functions, supporting the government by uttering statements, taking part in political meetings etc. The second way was to demonstrate commitment to communistic Poland in the group, for example, during socialist events. Pattern, creating a “Sport Review” included both the first and the second solution. Pattern created by “PS” included both the first and the second solution.

## International Affairs

“Socialist athlete” pattern was characterized not only by “relevant” views on domestic policy. It also had a “proper” understanding of the international situation and their opinions expressed publicly. The most mild form of showing affection to other countries was to convey greetings to the players who represented them. The main criterion was the political system of the country. The greetings passed through the press could be expected by the athletes from the socialist countries but the most frequent recipient were players from the Soviet Union. Soviet athletes sign of sympathy from their counterparts in Poland could experience both, for no reason, for example, before the start of the international tournament<sup>59</sup> or because of the anniversary of the October Revolution.<sup>60</sup> A characteristic feature of Polish athletes statements about Soviet players, building a positive image of their country was also expressing admiration for their achievements but above all for their attitude not connected with sport.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>57</sup> *Czołowi sportowcy delegatami na Zjazd ZMP*, “PS”, no. 8, June 27, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Sportowcy wpisane do honorowej księgi ZMP*, “PS”, no. 117, November 2, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Tenisści węgierscy, rumuńscy i polscy zgromadzenie na kortach Sopotu, przesyłają serdeczne pozdrowienia tenisistom radzieckim*, “PS”, no. 59, July 27, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Sportowcy polscy przesyłają płomienne, braterskie pozdrowienia sportowcom radzieckim*, “PS”, no. 88, November 6, 1950, p. 1.

It was characterized by soviet athletes "great camaraderie", which is "unusual for players from capitalistic countries".<sup>61</sup> Polish players spoke admiringly of the execution by Soviet athletes political agenda set by their government, describing them as an example to follow.

"Socialist athlete" also commented various countries leaders' speeches. For example, the statements of players from Czechowice and Kraków related to the interview with Joseph Stalin about nuclear weapons tests in the USSR. They fully supported Stalin's ensures that the purpose of this undertaking was only to strengthen Soviet defense potential as the USSR was still the main guarantor of world peace.<sup>62</sup> The figure of the dictator of the USSR enjoyed special favor of Polish athletes. The most typical example was the campaign associated with the celebration of the seventieth birthday of Joseph Stalin led also by "PS". Athletes like other professions were forced by the propaganda to take a variety of obligations. They had sporting character – players promised to improve their results, but also ideological – for example – one sportsmen committed himself to study "Stalin's life history".<sup>63</sup> This action was carried out according to instructions issued by the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.<sup>64</sup> Specific for this community form of Stalin's birthday celebrations was participation in special sport games. The most important event was nationwide relay-race competition organized by the Union of Polish Youth (ZMP). In this competition were involved athletes and people not normally associated with the sport. "PS" coverage that relay-race was attended by more than two million Poles.<sup>65</sup> Ideologically correct attitude of the "socialist athletes" in international affairs required not only to identify their true friends but also to recognize and stigmatise enemies. "Socialist sportsmen" did not speak negatively about athletes from capitalist countries but denounced the actions made by western states governments.<sup>66</sup> The most characteristic examples were athletes statements related with The Korean War. They were in line with the propaganda model, according to which Americans attacked Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It contained a lot of explicit wording, defining Americans as "imperialists" and "fascists" who use biological weapons against the civilian population.<sup>67</sup> In addition to preparing and voicing resolution athletes also

<sup>61</sup> *Sportowcy polscy o sporcie ZSRR*, "PS", no. 89, November 7, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Sportowcy polscy mówią o wywiadzie ze Stalinem*, "PS", no. 87, October 8, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> *Sportowcy polscy przyjmują zobowiązania dla uczczenia rocznicy urodzin Józefa Stalina*, "PS", no. 95, November 28, 1949, p. 1; *Nowe rekordy zapowiada Smoczyk dla uczczenia urodzin J. Stalina*, "PS", no. 99, December 12, 1949, p. 1; *Rosną zobowiązania polskich sportowców dla uczczenia 70 rocznicy urodzin J. Stalina*, "PS", no. 100, December 15, 1949, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Sports commitments were highlighted in the instructions next to "production, training and education issues", AAN, KC PZPR Wydział Propagandy i Agitacji, sig. 237/VIII/190, Instrukcja w sprawie obchodu 70-lecia urodzin tow. Józefa Stalina, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> *Sztafeta Gwiazdzista ZMP dla uczczenia 70-lecia urodzin J. Stalina*, "PS", no. 101, December 19, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Only journalists wrote negative opinions about capitalist sport and athletes.

<sup>67</sup> *Sportowcy polscy potępiają nowe zbrodnie imperialistów w Korei*, "PS", no. 26, March 31, 1952, p. 1; *Budując sport budujemy trwałą pokój*, "PS", no. 66, August 7, 1950, p. 2.

conducted and organized a series of fund-raising. Income from them were transmitted to – what has always been emphasized in press – “Children of Korea”. Using this definition additionally strengthened the message, indicating that the victims of U.S. aggression are the youngest, defenseless citizens of this country.<sup>68</sup> “PS” in their reports particularly emphasized the commitment of individual players. An example of such action was declaration made by Helena Rakoczy to pay 100 thousand zlotys from her award received from the state, to the “fund of US aggression victims in Korea”.<sup>69</sup> Rakoczy also appealed to other athletes who received awards to “manifest our solidarity with the heroic Korean people in their victorious battle with the American torturers”.<sup>70</sup> Answer to the call was immediate. At this same issue “PS” informed that Stefania Reindlowa – world championship medalist in gymnastics joins the Rakoczy’s appeal.<sup>71</sup>

Another related to the tensions between the countries of the Eastern bloc and the capitalist states involving athletes project was campaign called “struggle for peace”. Seemingly it urged to take action preventing the outbreak of a new world war, in fact, had been targeted at the west country, which was presented as aggressive and seeking to fight. “Athlete socialist” as “conscious citizen of Polish People’s Republic” also in this case was presented as a participant in the project. He could be active in two ways. First, it was the presence at ceremonies devoted to this subject, which were arranged by other professionals. Press covered, for example, two athletes’ participation in the Conference of Young Patriots, Fighters for Peace. As “PS” reported both players were called speeches on behalf of the whole Polish sports people.<sup>72</sup> In the same way “PS” covered the presence at the Second World Congress of the Defenders of Peace several well-known Polish athletes, including Helena Rakoczy.<sup>73</sup>

Another way to indicate the athletes’ commitment in “struggle for peace” were presenting demonstrations accompanying sporting events. This was due to the fact that some sport games were given the motto “fight for peace”. For example, it was the main theme of the fourth Vocational Schools Olympic, which became – in the “PS” reports – “a great peace manifestation”.<sup>74</sup> However, one of the biggest sporting events

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<sup>68</sup> *Sportowcy całej Polski entuzjastycznie składają podarki i datki pieniężne dla dzieci koreańskich*, “PS”, no. 9, February 1, 1951, p. 1; *Sportowcy Krakowa śpieszą z pomocą dzieciom Korei*, “PS”, no. 4, January 15, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Helena Rakoczy – bohaterkiej Korei*, “PS”, no. 58, July 24, 1950, p. 1. *Była to dokładnie połowa kwoty, którą jej przyznano Nagrody dla przodujących zawodników, działaczy i trenerów przyznał GKKF w dniu 22 lipca*, “PS”, no. 58, July 24, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem; *10.000 na pomoc dla ludności Korei*, “PS”, no. 59, July 27, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Sportowcy solidaryzują się z całą młodzieżą polską w walce o sprawiedliwy pokój*, “PS”, no. 79, October 3, 1949, p. 1; *Powszechne wychowanie fizyczne to pomnożenie sił budownicznych socjalizmu. Przemówienie T. Kocerki na konferencji bojowników o pokój*, “PS”, no. 79, October 3, 1949, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Z Warszawy buchnął płomień nieustępliwiej walki o pokój świata*, “PS”, no. 92, November 20, 1950, s. 1; *Sportowcy mówią*, “PS”, no. 92, November 20, 1950, p. 3; *Polska mistrzyni sportu entuzjastką walki o pokój*, “PS”, no. 92, November 20, 1950, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> *5000 uczestników...*, p. 1.

of this nature was the World Festival of Youth and Students held in Berlin on 5-19 August 1951. Polish People's Republic sent a hundred and seventy four players, who in addition to participation in individual events were also a "struggling for peace and friendship between nations".<sup>75</sup> The primacy of the ideological dimension of the sporting events testified quoted in the newspaper statements of Polish participants. For example, Theodore Kocerka commenting the end of the festival emphasized that "I am touched and at the same time confident of the victory of our cause, the final and near-defeat of the capitalist warmongers".<sup>76</sup>

Athletes participation in "struggle for peace" campaign were also emphasized by press during communistic anniversary mass celebrations. One of the most characteristic examples were "Labor Day" celebrations in 1952. "PS" covered course of this event posted on the front page photography of athletes carried a banner reading "Progressive athletes of the world unite in the struggle for peace". In this way, the players had given a specific role to play, as well as others professions.

### Summary

#### MODEL OF ATHLETES' POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN "PRZEGLĄD SPORTOWY" (1948-1956)

In Poland during Stalinism period physical culture was given political functions. The organization of sport in Poland has been changing by adapting Soviet model. Communists viewed physical culture as a form of activity that can help build a "socialist personality". For this reason, this form of social life became an ideological weapon in communistic propaganda.

Such understanding of sport also affected the way of reporting about events by sportive newspapers, including "PS". Information relating to the political commitment of athletes were formed by using the same schemes as for other professional groups. They were created according to the instructions of party-state propaganda. In Polish press system, centralized and controlled by the censorship, sports journalists had to fulfill these orders.

Athletes were presented in press as recipients of system changes. Therefore, in the description of famous players profiles, "PS" highlighted their social origins. It was a kind of obligation for players to show their support to the political transformation. Athletes in press coverage regularly declared their loyalty for the state and Communist Party. Created image of "socialist sportsman" contained participation in propaganda campaigns related to domestic policy and foreign affairs. As a idols for large part of society athletes had to present a competent political beliefs, support government and their actions, perform in party structures or its subordinate organizations,

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<sup>75</sup> *174 młodych sportowców polskich wyjeżdża na Igrzyska do Berlina*, "PS", no. 61, June 29, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> *8 godzin trwała defilada dwu milionów młodych Niemców*, "PS", no. 64, August 13, 1951, p. 1.

persuaded to participate in elections, serve as example in professional work. They were also supposed to had “correct” perception of external world. “Socialistic athlete” should achieve the best sportive results but according to press coverage, first of all it should to fulfill the goals set by the communistic State.

**Keywords:** sport, propaganda, press, model, article

### **Riassunto**

#### **IL MODELLO DEL COINVOLGIMENTO POLITICO DEI SPORTIVI SUL “PRZEGLĄD SPORTOWY” (1948-1956)**

Durante il periodo di Stalinismo in Polonia la cultura fisica condusse la funzione politica. L’organizzazione dello sport in Polonia cambiava pian piano seguendo il modello sovietico.

I comunisti percepivano la cultura fisica come una forma dell’attività che era capace di aiutare a creare “il carattere socialistico”. Perciò quella forma della vita sociale diventò un tipo d’arma ideologica nelle mani della propaganda comunista.

Quel percepire dello sport influì anche il modo di presentare gli eventi sportivi nelle riviste sportive, includendo “PS”. Le informazioni riguardanti le attività politiche degli alleati furono create con l’aiuto degli stessi schemi come nel caso del resto degli altri ambienti professionali. Furono create a seconda delle istruzioni della propaganda statale.

Nel sistema della stampa in Polonia, centralizzato e controllato dalla censura, i giornalisti sportivi doverono eseguire gli ordini. Gli alleati furono presentati nella stampa come i beneficienti dei cambiamenti del sistema. Così nelle descrizioni dei giocatori famosi, “PS” sottolineava le loro origini sociali e gli sportivi doverono mostrare il loro appoggio per la trasformazione politica. Per quello gli alleati parlarono molto spesso della loro fedeltà di fronte allo stato e al Partito Comunista. Quel creato immagine dello “sportivo socialistico” conteneva la partecipazione in varie campagne propagandistiche, collegate alla politica interna ed estera.

Essendo idoli per la gran parte della società gli alleati doverono presentare forti opinioni politiche, sostenere il governo e le sue azioni, prendere parte nelle strutture del partito e delle strutture alleate, incoraggiare a votare nelle elezioni, essere modelli nel lavoro professionale. Si aspettava che avessero un punto di vista “corretto” sul mondo estero. Un atleta socialistico avrebbe dovuto raggiungere i risultati sportive migliori ma, secondo la stampa, al primo posto avrebbe dovuto riempire gli scopi sottoposti dallo Stato comunista.

**Parole chiavi:** sport, propaganda, stampa, modello, articolo

### Streszczenie

## MODEL POLITYCZNEGO ZAANGAŻOWANIA SPORTOWCÓW NA ŁAMACH "PRZEGLĄDU SPORTOWEGO" (1948-1956)

W okresie stalinizmu w Polsce, wzorując się na rozwiązaniach radzieckich, kulturze fizycznej nadano funkcje polityczne. Miała ona między innymi wspomagać kreowanie nowej "socjalistycznej osobowości" sportowców, stając się tym samym narzędziem oficjalnej propagandy. Założenia te wpływały również na sposób prezentowania sportu na łamach gazet.

Informacje odnoszące się do zaangażowania politycznego sportowców wpisywały się w uniwersalne schematy propagandowe konstruowane w tym okresie w mediach. Były one tworzone na podstawie instrukcji wydawanych przez partyjno-państwową propagandę. W polskim systemie prasowym, ściśle scentralizowanym i kontrolowanym przez aparat cenzury, dziennikarze sportowi byli zobowiązani do wypełniania przedkładanych im założeń.

Z treści artykułów przedstawiających sylwetki sportowców zamieszczanych w "Przeglądzie Sportowym" wyróżnić można powtarzające się motywy. Zawodników prezentowano jako beneficjentów zmian systemowych. Podkreślano ich pochodzenie, wskazujące na społeczny awans, który obligował ich do formułowania poparcia względem nowego systemu. Model "socjalistycznego sportowca", który konstruowano w prasie zakładał aktywne uczestnictwo zawodników w kampaniach propagandowych dotyczących zarówno polityki wewnętrznej jak i zagranicznej. Sportowcy, jako grupa podziwiana przez dużą część społeczeństwa, była zobligowana do wyrażania na łamach prasy swoich "właściwych" poglądów politycznych, wspierania władzy, aktywnej działalności w partii i podlegających jej organizacjach. W relacjach prasowych konstruowano przekazy, w których zawodnicy nawoływali do udziału w wyborach i akcjach inicjowanych przez władze. Prezentowano ich również jako przykład umiejętnego łączenia roli sportowca i pracownika, podkreślając zgodnie z założeniami sportu amatorskiego, że ma on przede wszystkim przygotować obywateli do bardziej wydajnej pracy zawodowej. "Socjalistyczny sportowiec" miał również według relacji prasowych wyrażać swoje poglądy dotyczące sytuacji międzynarodowej, zgadzając się w pełni w tym względzie z oficjalnymi przekazami. Wyłaniający się z treści artykułów przekaz wskazywał, że jednym z najważniejszych celów stawianych przed sportowcami w okresie stalinowskim w Polsce, oprócz osiągnięcia dobrych rezultatów było aktywne uczestnictwo w realizacji zadań wyznaczonych przez władze partyjno-państwowe.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sport, propaganda, prasa, model, artykuł

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