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## WOMEN'S PHYSICAL CULTURE IN POLAND FROM THE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY UNTIL THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

ABSTRACT. Mathur Nameeta, *Women's physical culture in Poland from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the collapse of communism* [Kultura fizyczna kobiet w Polsce od końca XIX wieku do upadku komunizmu] edited by H. Jakubowska – „Człowiek i Społeczeństwo”, vol. XXXVI, iss. 1, Poznań 2013, pp. 15-38. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2671-0. ISSN 0239-3271.

Women's physical culture in Poland from the late nineteenth century until the collapse of communism was dramatically influenced by the dual forces of nationalism and feminism. This article deconstructs the press reportage as contained in sports newspapers and women's periodicals and magazines to examine the motivations and opportunities that enabled women to develop their physicality and the challenges they confronted in enriching their physical culture. The varied struggles for national independence and women's concerns to achieve greater equity with men created significant spaces for sportswomen to build their physical culture, and in so doing, they made significant contributions to the feminist goals of self-awareness and self-authorization, albeit within the boundaries of a still patriarchal, nationalist agenda.

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Women's participation in sports, physical education, mass cultural parades, and military marches, all collectively referred to as physical culture, was dramatically influenced by the dual forces of nationalism and feminism, however varied their definitions in the history of Poland. Accordingly, this article deconstructs the press reportage as contained in the leading sports newspapers and popular women's periodicals and magazines to examine the motivations and opportunities that enabled Polish women to develop their physicality and the challenges they confronted in enriching their physical culture from the late nineteenth century until the collapse of communism in 1989. The evaluation of sports from its distaff side informs how sportswomen were imagined, understood, and propagandized by the state

and society during the late partitioned era, the interwar years, and in the communist period.<sup>1</sup>

The secondary English language literature on Polish sportswomen is virtually non-existent. The secondary literature in the Polish language on this subject is also limited. However, while the secondary literature on women's sports is scarce, gender or women's studies has begun to refashion Polish historiography. Several Polish and western scholars are examining the "woman question" in Poland more closely. This scholarship, together with the more extensive Polish language secondary information on the development of sport at large, provides a useful context for understanding women's sporting experiences in Poland. The combined study of the history of Poland, Polish women's history, and the history of sport in Poland bring forth contexts of foreign rule, nationalist and communist ideologies, socio-economic transformations, patriarchal constraints, and struggles for women's emancipation, all of which, when combined with the study of a primary source base of sports newspapers such as "Sport," "Tempo," and "Przegląd Sportowy" and women's magazines and periodicals such as "Przyjaciółka," "Moda i Życie Praktyczne," "Kobieta i Życie," "Kobieta Wiejska," and "Kobieta Dzisiejsza," allows one to not only deconstruct the official images of Polish sportswomen but also provide a uniquely different platform for investigating and interpreting themes of modernization, imperialism, nationalism, and feminism.

## 1. LATE PARTITIONED POLAND

From the late nineteenth century until the outbreak of the First World War Poland lay partitioned between the empires of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Women's physical culture in the annexed territories of the dismembered country evolved during this time period when national priorities were juxtaposed with the newly reformulated women's identities. The arduous struggles for national liberation created sufficient space for women to integrate their fledgling physical culture with the predominantly mascu-

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<sup>1</sup> This research was first written as my doctoral dissertation *Women and Physical Culture in Modern Poland*, Morgantown 2001. Thereafter, the dissertation was revised and published in the form of three articles and a book: *Women's Sports in Late Partitioned Poland*, "Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism" 2002, no. 9, pp. 51-64; *The New Sportswoman: Nationalism, Feminism, and Women's Physical Culture in Interwar Poland*, "The Polish Review" 2003, no. 4, pp. 441-462; *Images of Women's Physical Culture in Communist Poland: A Critique of Press Reports*, "European Studies in Sports History" 2010, no. 3, pp. 79-95; and *A Sportive Matka Polka: Nationalism and Feminism in Women's Physical Culture in Modern Poland*, Saarbrücken 2009.

line and largely clandestine sporting culture and jointly facilitate with their male counterparts the quest for national awakening and independence. Where opportunities permitted, women developed separate foundations in sports. But the recognition of sport of a significant cultural tool to build national consciousness and contribute to the making of a civil society meant that female sports enthusiasts served as patriotic co-resisters with men against the tripartite imperial subjugation. At the same time, the emerging discourse on women's roles in a modernizing society, economy, and polity, as well as the changing perceptions on women's sexuality and physicality, challenged traditional epistemology on women's proper morality. Such ideological and theoretical re-imaginings in gender relations which matured in response to the modernizing processes of industrialization and urbanization and increased women's visibility in varied political, cultural, intellectual, and economic realms provided a more liberating environment in which women could strengthen their health and physical fitness. With the support of both the "National Question" that endorsed women's athleticism for the betterment of national health to overcome Poland's divided and colonial status and the "Woman Question" that advocated physical fitness for women's improved health and projecting images of a more independent womanhood, women began to partake in sports and other forms of physical culture in late partitioned Poland.<sup>2</sup>

Among the "suitable" sports, women in Gdańsk formed a cyclist club called *Violetta* in 1895 and Karolina Kocięcka won the first Polish women's bicycle race in 1897. In Russian Poland advertisements for women's bicycles and tricycles became increasingly popular. However, the names of female cyclists were often concealed so as not to "prejudice or injure the good opin-

<sup>2</sup> For the various manifestations of the "Woman Question" see: W. Hojnacki, *Hygiena Kobiety*, Warszawa 1903; J.P. Muller, *Mój system dla kobiet: jedyna droga do utrwalenia zdrowia oraz rozwoju i zachowania piękności*, Warszawa 1912; E. Kaczkowska-Duda, *Problematyka wychowania fizycznego i sportu kobiet na łamach tygodnika "Bluszcz" w okresie 1865-1939*, master's thesis, Warszawa 1980; K. Kwiatosińska, *Problematyka higieny i wychowania fizycznego kobiet na łamach miesięcznika "Zdrowie" (1885-1933) i "Zdrowie Publiczne" 1934-1939*, master's thesis, Warszawa 1980; J. Budzińska-Tylicka, *Hygiena kobiety i kwestje społeczne z nią związane*, Warsaw 1909; T. Meczowska, *Ruch kobiecy. Ideały etyczno-społeczne ruchu kobiecego*, Warszawa 1907; *Głos kobiet w kwestji kobiecej*, eds. M. Turzyna, Kazimiera Bujwidowa, Kraków 1903; S. Walczewska, *Damy, ryccerze, i feministki: kobiecy dyskurs emancypacyjny w Polsce*, Kraków 1999; N. Stegmann, *Die Tochter der geschlagenen Helden: "Frauenfrage," Feminismus und Frauenbewegung in Polen, 1863-1919*, Wiesbaden 2000; and several edited volumes of A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc: *Kobieta i świat polityki: Polska na tle porównawczym w XIX i w początkach XX wieku*, Warszawa 1994; *Kobieta i społeczeństwo na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 1990 and 1995; *Kobieta i kultura życia codziennego*, Warszawa 1997; *Kobieta i edukacja na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX w., Cz. I and Cz. II*, Warszawa 1992; and *Kobieta i kultura, kobiety wśród twórców kultury, intelektualnej i artystycznej w dobie rozbiorów i w niepodległym państwie polskim*, Warszawa 1996.

ion of ladies.”<sup>3</sup> In other pursuits, female mountain-climbers such as Łucja z Giedroyciów-Rautenstrauchowa inspired women’s physical culture. But these “legends” of sport were forced to mountain-climb wearing long skirts!<sup>4</sup> Women of elite stature participated in horse-riding, lawn tennis, automotive sports, and fencing. Once again, their names were rarely revealed to avoid scandals in social circles! When young women played tennis, ostensibly to find suitable partners in matrimony, their long white skirt and wide straw hat were to remain in an immaculate condition throughout the game.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, while skating was imagined as healthy, relaxing, and excellent for women, and a sport where even the male dominated Kraków Skating Society admitted women into its organization, the skating rink served more as a place for fashion, music, social intrigue, and locating men for matrimonial purpose.<sup>6</sup> Women also participated in skiing, sledding, field hockey, oaring, and *hazena* in the early twentieth century. Despite financial and political difficulties, the membership list of the “important” Warsaw Women’s Oaring Club became longer, a reflection of its extensive sports, educational, cultural, and social programs. Even women’s wrestling made an appearance, although it was quickly dubbed as “sensational.”<sup>7</sup>

Physical education instructors Jadwiga Mayówna and Maria Germanówna helped to popularize women’s basketball in Cracow and Lviv respectively. The first public competition in this “best” sport for young women was held on 29th April 1909. Unsurprising, women were required

<sup>3</sup> For women’s cycling see: “Cyklista” September 1896, no. 7/19, p. 5; “Cyklista”, September 1896, no. 31/12, p. 13; “Kolarz, Wioślarz i Łyżwiarz” (hereafter: KWŁ) 1901, no. 26, p. 7; KWŁ 1900, no. 72, p. 8; KWŁ 1901, no. 16, pp. 4-5; “Echo Płockie i Włocławskie” 1904, no. 43, p. 1; “Sport”, 23 June 1922, p. 251; “Kurjer Sportowy” 1933, no. 44, p. 2; M. Rotkiewicz, *Geneza i początki sportu kobiecego w Polsce*, “Sport Wyczynowy” 1978, no. 6-7, p. 17, 20; A. Janiak-Jasińska, *Kobieta jako adresat ogłoszeń prasowych w Królestwie Polskim na początku XX wieku*, [in:] *Kobieta i kultura*, eds A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc, Warszawa 1996, pp. 173-174; B. Szymański, *Początki oraz rozwój sportu kobiecego w Płocku i we Włocławku do 1939 roku – analiza porównawcza*, master’s thesis, Warszawa 1979, p. 38; W. Lipoński, *Dzieje sportu polskiego*, Poznań 1997, pp. 20-25; and Personal Archives of Maria Rotkiewicz (hereafter: AMR, notes).

<sup>4</sup> “Bluszcz”, 3 September 1927, p. 11; M. Rotkiewicz, *Pionierki górskich szlaków turystycznych w Polsce*, “Kultura Fizyczna” 1995, no. 7-8, pp. 1-10; and AMR, notes.

<sup>5</sup> W. Hojnacki, *Z dziedziny sportu: kobieta a sport i sport jazdy konnej*, Warszawa 1905; W. Lipoński, op. cit., pp. 20-25; M. Rotkiewicz, *Geneza...*, pp. 17, 20; M. Rotkiewicz, *Początki szermierki kobiet w Polsce, do 1939 roku*, “Sport Wyczynowy” 1988, no. 2-3, pp. 57-73.

<sup>6</sup> R. Wasztyl, *Wychowanie fizyczne i sport w Krakowie w latach 1773-1890*, Kraków 1993, pp. 196, 302; J. Gaj, K. Hądzelek, *Dzieje kultury fizycznej w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku*, Poznań 1991, pp. 48, 82; W. Lipoński, op. cit., pp. 20-25; M. Rotkiewicz, *Geneza...*, pp. 17-20.

<sup>7</sup> For all these sports see: “Ruch”, 11 January 1914, p. 12; “Ster”, 10-25 May 1913, p. 67; “Start”, January 1935, p. 7; “Trybuna” 1993, no. 280, p. 12; and AMR, notes.

to play in constrictive long skirts.<sup>8</sup> Helena Prawdzic-Kuczalska's Institute of Swedish Gymnastics and Massage in Russian Poland and Jadwiga Mayówna's gymnastic institution in Austrian Poland sought to develop the intellectual, moral, and physical strengths of women.<sup>9</sup>

The "National Question" in late partitioned Poland particularly legitimized the participation of women in rifle-shooting. Both the Polish Riflemen's Company and the Sharpshooters Union in Kraków formed women's departments.<sup>10</sup> Some of the women in the Sharpshooters Union were well acquainted with the use of firearms (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych 1913). Women's scouting, also in service of the national struggles in Austrian Poland and Russian Poland, sponsored activities to promote the health and education of its members.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, women joined Sokół (Falcon) units that were established in all three partitioned zones. However, such women found themselves cloistered in the support services and sanitary units.<sup>12</sup>

Notwithstanding the policies of the imperial powers that sought to squelch all forms of Polish national resurgence, women engaged in physical culture, more so in Russian Poland where sports especially enabled the occupied nation to articulate its national consciousness. At the same time, however, the omnipresent image of *Matka-Polka*, that is, of a conservative Catholic mother struggling to defend and promote Polish national identity at home, caused sportswomen to moderate their athleticism to the exigent demands of nationalism. In other words, the forces of nationalism and feminism enabled women to become sportive, but not too much. Accord-

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<sup>8</sup> M. Rotkiewicz, A. Latek, *Maria Germanówna i początki koszykówki kobiet w Polsce (do 1939 r.)*, "Sport Wyczynowy" 1995, no. 3-4, pp. 71-86; "Przegląd Sportowy" (hereafter: PzS), 13 April 1999, p. 5; "Trybuna" 1993, no. 280, p. 12; and AMR, notes.

<sup>9</sup> T. Ziółkowska, *Rozwój sportu wśród kobiet polskich w okresie zaborów*, "Roczniki Naukowe AWF w Poznaniu" 1990, no. 29, p. 202; M. Rotkiewicz, *The Scandinavian Influence on Women's Physical Education in Poland (till 1939)*, [in:] *Proceedings of the Jyväskylä Congress on Movement and Sport in Women's Life*, ed. M. Raivio, Jyväskylä 1989, pp. 152, 157; "Ruch", 26 May 1909, p. 233; "Ruch", 26 March 1909, pp. 71-72; "Ruch", 26 December 1907, pp. 260-263; "Bluszcz", 27 October 1907, p. 491; "Bluszcz", 23 May 1909, p. 235; "Bluszcz", 6 April 1912, p. 165; and AMR, notes.

<sup>10</sup> T. Nałęcz, *Kobiety w walce o niepodległość w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, [in:] *Kobieta i świat polityki*, eds A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc, Warszawa 1994, pp. 75-76; A. Chojnowski, *Aktywność kobiet w życiu politycznym*, [in:] *Równe prawa i nierówne szanse: kobiety w Polsce międzywojennej*, eds A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc, Warszawa 2000, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> A. Zawadzka, *Harcerstwo żeńskie w Warszawie w latach 1911-1949*, Warszawa 1995, pp. 11, 14-15, 21; "Bluszcz", 18 January 1913, pp. 1-2; "Bluszcz", 25 January 1913, p. 34; "Ster", 10-25 May 1913, pp. 72-74.

<sup>12</sup> *Czołom Ojczyźnie, Szponem Wrogowi. Historia Sokolstwa Polskiego 1867-1939*. Wystawa Muzeum Niepodległości i Muzeum Sportu i Turystyki, Warszawa 1998.

ingly, the “sports-ladies” remained “proper,” modest, and elegant when playing the game.<sup>13</sup> The national and patriarchal agendas of late partitioned Poland triumphed over the “Woman Question” and forced women to maintain their primary identities as mothers and wives who kept alive “Polishness” at home and remained less truculent in challenging the conventional proscriptions against participation in sports. The athletically conscious women conditioned their physical culture not according to the specifics of competitive sports or for any real feminist cause, but primarily to serve the national cause, however interpreted by its multiple proponents. But even though women’s physical culture remained largely elitist and non-competitive, Poland’s triple enslavement and the use of women’s sports as a veritable source of sub-alternism that questioned the tutelage of the partitioning powers, affected women’s self-consciousness toward greater self-independence. Their courageous participation in sports, however limited in its athletic outcomes, was not a short-lived vanity affair but a nascent physical culture that cast a modern image of women and served as an important foundation toward a more vibrant sporting culture in the interwar years.

## 2. INTERWAR POLAND

After the Great War, Poland regained its lost independence and reappeared on the territorial map of Europe. Interwar Poland encouraged women’s participation in physical culture to build military preparedness and propagandize the achievements of an independent country. Particularly following Józef Piłsudski’s military coup in 1926, the political interests of the authoritarian state, with its increasing militaristic underpinnings, developed a systematic national sports apparatus that patronized a military-oriented and nation-centred physical culture for women. The military impulses of the state sought to enlarge the sporting horizons of women for a healthy physicality that would militarily defend the country from external threats and eschew internal unrest by fostering social solidarity. Women’s sports were thus valued for their national contributions in re-uniting the society from its prior partitioned existence, encouraging the formation of healthy families to improve the nation’s physical fitness and military defence, and fostering national pride and glory.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> “Sport”, 10/23 May 1903, pp. 4-5; and “Sport”, 9/22 April 1905, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> H. Młodzianowska, *Rozwój wychowania fizycznego i sportu w Polsce w latach 1914-1949*, [in:] *Z dziejów kultury fizycznej w Polsce. Materiały na plenum GKKFiT z okazji 100-lecia sportu polskiego*, Warszawa 1967, pp. 63-140; “Sport”, 19 May 1922, pp. 151-152; “Bluszcz”, 7 Febru-

Mentored by a state that was keen on nurturing a militarily fit citizenry and building national patriotism, several women's sports associations, along with a plethora of political, civil, military, and medical institutions, promoted women's physical culture to improve their health and physical fitness. The State Office for Physical Education and Military Training, the Ministry for Military Affairs, the Ministry of National Education and Social Welfare, and the Polish Olympic Committee, regulated physical education and sports. The State Office was bestowed with the principal responsibility of organizing sports for women, and one of its accomplishments was the creation of the Society for the Propagation of Physical Culture for Women in March 1933 with the ambitious objective of promoting physical education for women as a healthy and rational engagement that would have significant cultural and moral benefits for them personally, as well as for the development of the nation at large.<sup>15</sup>

The development of women's physical culture in interwar Poland was also intrinsically related to the emergence of the "New Woman" in the resurrected state. While the first wave of feminism in late partitioned Poland had provided the initial impetus for a discussion on the physical emancipation of women, the discourse on women's liberation in the interwar years provided both old and new stimuli for developing women's physical culture. Women's participation in sports increased as a consequence of their greater access to higher education, their increased visibility in economic, social, and cultural activities, and their demands for and achievement of voting rights. Simultaneously, increasing numbers of doctors, pedagogues, and psychologists iterated the benefits of systematic physical education for women in enhancing qualities of attentiveness, solidarity, perseverance, and discipline. Dr. Eugenia Lewicka, a member of the Scientific Council of

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ary 1925, pp. 130-131; "Bluszcz", 27 February 1937, pp. 3/195-6/198; "Kobieta w Świecie i w Domu" (hereafter: KSD), vol. 3, no. 12 (June 1927), p. 12; "Start", 1 March 1928, p. 3; "Kobieta Współczesna", 14 April 1929, pp. 5-6; PzS, 30 August 1930, p. 4; "Moja Przyjaciółka", 10 February 1936, pp. 35-36; "Sport Polski", 15 September 1937, p. 11; "Kobiety w Pracy", vol. 1, no. 3 (April 1938), pp. 10-15, 28.

<sup>15</sup> M. Jobda, *Działalność stowarzyszenia "Rodzina Wojskowa" w zakresie kultury fizycznej kobiet*, master's thesis, Warszawa 1980; E. Zawacka, *Czekając na rozkaz: Pogotowie społeczne organizacji Przystosowania Wojskowego Kobiet w przededniu II wojny światowej*. Lublin 1992, pp. 77-99; Z. Moraczewska, *Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet*, Warszawa 1932, pp. 21, 39; M. Rotkiewicz, *Rozwój sportu kobiet w Polsce okresu międzywojennego*, "Sport Wyczynowy" 1979, no. 3-4/171-172, pp. 3-21; "Kobieta w Sejmie", 10 January 1919, pp. 1-2; "Kobieta Współczesna", 29 January 1928, pp. 5-6, 16; "Kobieta Obywatelka", 11 November 1930, pp. 1, 3; "Bluszcz", 13 May 1933, pp. 10-11; "Moja Przyjaciółka", 10 December 1936, p. 488; "Kobieta Polska", 20 December 1936, p. 7; "Kobiety w Pracy" 1938, vol. 1, no. 3 (April), p. 28; KSD, 15 February 1938, p. 2.

Physical Education, particularly made significant contributions in sports medicine for women. The emancipatory discourses on women's morality and sexuality, the increasing number of professional and trade schools for girls, and women's larger enrolments in universities to study a wide range of subjects, including physical education, not only symbolized women's progressive liberation, but also marked a positive step toward the overall modernization of interwar Poland. This heightened involvement of women in the public realm resulted in the efflorescence of a more sophisticated women's internal consciousness, the external expression of which came in the form of women's eagerness to create a modern national culture that was more professional, democratic, and "sportive" in nature.<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, women participated in many sports and won national and international accolades. Halina Konopacka won Poland's first Olympic gold medal in 1928 in discus throw. The accomplishments of Stanisława Walsiewiczówna and Jadwiga Wajsówna in track and field events increased Poland's Olympic medal count. Women's tennis celebrated the international successes of Jadwiga Jędrzejowska and Wiera Richterówna. Women's oaring thrived under the aegis of the Warsaw Oarswomen Club and the oaring clubs of Bydgoszcz, Kalisz, and Poznań. Silesian female fencers performed extraordinarily well, as did Janina Kurkowska-Spychajowa, the world's best archer. The best female swimmers came from Warsaw and Cracow, and from the Jewish *Makkabi*. Women in gliding and parachuting were referred to as "queens of the air" and were commended for their rational reasoning, physical strength, and confidence. Gymnastics, volleyball, basketball, skating, and skiing were all considered character-building sports for women. The Riflewomen's Union as well as scouting and Sokół groups advocated physical culture for women for reasons of national patriotism, unity, and

<sup>16</sup> Women's periodicals such as "Bluszcz," "Kobieta w Świecie i w Domu," "Kobieta Współczesna," "Moja Przyjaciółka," "Kobieta Polska," "Kobiety w Pracy," "Kobieta Pracy," and "Start" are important sources for understanding women's identities in interwar Poland. For examples see: "Bluszcz", 19 May 1923, pp. 158-159; "Bluszcz", 1925, pp. 961-963; "Bluszcz", 12 May 1934, p. 580; "Bluszcz", 20 August 1938, p. 19/811; "Świat Kobiety", 1 November 1925, p. 489; "Kobieta Współczesna", 10 February 1929, p. 3; "Kobieta Współczesna", 14 April 1929, pp. 5-6; "Kobieta Polska", 15 February 1937, pp. 3-4; "Kobieta w Sejmie", 25 January 1919, p. 3; "Kobieta Pracy", 9 April 1933, p. 6; "Kobieta Polska", 1-15 March 1937, p. 21; "Stadion" 1931, no. 25, p. 7; and "Start" 1931, no. 13, p. 2. See also: R. Wroczyński, K. Hądzelek, *Development of Sciences on Physical Education and Sport in the Academy of Physical Education*, "Wychowanie Fizyczne i Sport" 1978, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 87-104; M. Rotkiewicz, *Rozwój sportu...*, p. 20; and *Sprawozdanie z Drugiego Kongresu Kultury Fizycznej Kobiet odbytego w Dn. 28 i 29 Kwietnia 1934 r. w Warszawie* (Nakładem Towarzystwa Krzewienia Kultury Fizycznej Kobiet), pp. 5-10, 21-30, 39-47.

militarism. Finally, interwar Poland also saw a developing interest in women's automobile racing and football.<sup>17</sup>

Sportswomen were well-received in popular opinion, glorified in the press, and honoured by the country. For example, the prestigious *Państwowa Nagroda Sportowa* (State Sports Award) was awarded to Halina Konopacka in 1927 and 1928, to Stanisława Wałasiewiczówna in 1932 and 1933, to Jadwiga Waysówna in 1934 and 1936, and to Jadwiga Jędrzejowska in 1937. In eight of the fourteen years between 1926 and 1938 a woman was voted as Poland's top athlete in the annual plebiscites organized by the leading sports-newspaper "Przegląd Sportowy". This is suggestive of a popular social opinion that made no gender differentiation in awarding the nation's highest honours to women. At the same time, female athletes were also portrayed as good mothers and wives, and the press often showed pictures of sportswomen with their children. In the press imagery, female sports champions successfully balanced their training regimen with family obligations and continued their professional service as pedagogues, trainers, and journalists in their post-athletic careers.<sup>18</sup>

The fact that female athletes served as glorified models of nationalism and as powerful vanguards of feminism suggests a double victory for sportswomen. However, while the "New Woman" demonstrated an energetic physicality, she was not guilty of feminist insubordination to national

<sup>17</sup> For a sample coverage on these sports and female athletes see: "Gazeta Kaliska", 9 June 1920; PzS, 17 September 1921, pp. 12-13; PzS, 21 July 1922, p. 5; "Sport", 9 June 1922, p. 225; "Bluszcz", 27 September 1924, p. 691; "Bluszcz", 9 June 1934, pp. 711-712; "Bluszcz", 1 January 1939, p. 16; "Świat Kobiety", 5 April 1925, p. 148; "Świat Kobiety", 15 April 1927, p. 160; "Start" March 1928, p. 10; "Kobieta Współczesna", 17 February 1929, pp. 15-17; "Kobieta Współczesna", 14 April 1929, pp. 5-6; "Moja Przyjaciółka", 25 August 1936, p. 321; "Moja Przyjaciółka", 10 February 1937, pp. 54-55; KSD, 1 November 1938, pp. 11-12; KSD, May 1932, pp. 26-27; "Kobieta Polska", 20 December 1936, p. 17; "Kobiety w Pracy" 1938, vol. 1, no. 3 (April), pp. 10, 11, 23; A. Młodzianowska, *Początki i rozwój sportu szermierczego kobiet w Polsce do roku 1980*, master's thesis, Warszawa 1982, p. 96; T. Karuga, *Rozwój sportu szermierczego kobiet na Górnym Śląsku do r. 1939*, "Kultura Fizyczna" 1977, no. 2, pp. 79-82; *Statut Warszawskiego Klubu Wioślarek*, Warszawa 1927; *Warszawski Klub Wioślarek*, Regulamin Wioślarski, Warszawa 1933; *Warszawski Klub wioślarek swej prezesce członkini honorowej Dr. Zofii Zabawskiej-Domostawskiej w dowód wdzięczności i uznania dla jej pracy dla klubu w ciągu 10-letniej prezesury* Warszawa 1934, pp. 8, 14, 15; Z. Pawluczuk, *Miejsce sokolic w polskiej lekkoatletyce kobiecej w latach 1919-1939*, [in:] *Z najnowszej historii kultury fizycznej w Polsce*, ed. B. Woltmann, Gorzów Wlkp. 1998, pp. 25-33; D. Rosenberg, *Teoretyczne podstawy ćwiczeń cielesnych dla kobiet ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem gimnastyki Bertram*, Warszawa 1931; M. Rotkiewicz, A. Latek, op. cit., pp. 78-86; E. Piasecki, *Dzieje wychowanie fizycznego*, Lwów-Warszawa-Kraków 1925, p. 230; and *Regulaminy Organizacji Sokolic - Związek Towarzystw Gimnastycznych "Sokół" w Polsce*, Warszawa 1927, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> "Bluszcz", 7 August 1937, pp. 12/728, 13/729; PzS, 3 January 1938, p. 1; "Bluszcz", 26 February 1938, p. 13/205; and H. Konopacka, *Wznosiłam świat miłością*, Łomianki 1994.

politics. Women's greater independence and mobility, as exemplified by the word feminism, did not devalue the importance of the family as the pivotal social institution that performed critical functions in safeguarding traditional public morality. Interwar Poland was not dubious in its commitment to strengthening the family institution. The fundamental view of women as wives and mothers was not altered and the fulfilment of these roles was propagated as their national duty. The traditional image of the Catholic self-sacrificing *Matka Polka* remained the ideal by which women's role in the nation was valued and judged worthy of citizenship.<sup>19</sup> Thus women in the interwar period, as in the partitioned era, used their professionalism to further the interests of the state and less to pursue their personal goals of individual emancipation. This dichotomy between the rhetorical political, economic, cultural, and sexual equality of women and the omnipresent patriarchal vigilance that underscored feminist attempts to radicalize the interwar women's movement was reflected in the projected image of the female athlete as an exemplar of moderated feminism. Women could become sportive but the weight of tradition kept their athleticism submerged in the contested waters of interwar patriarchy. Polish "national feminism" was designed to nationalize feminism and not feminize the nation.

The persistence of social patriarchy mitigated the development of women's physical culture, as did the scarcity of financial and infrastructural resources, availability of few female trainers, and the continued perception of women's sports as unethical, harmful, brutal, barbaric, manly, crazy, and wasteful.<sup>20</sup> For example, female skiers in Warsaw and Lwów often lacked the necessary support to participate in the more distant Zakopane. Female tennis players remained few and far between, while female fencers were required to maintain elegance in dress and play.<sup>21</sup> The male-dominated sports organizations often treated women as subordinates or guest members without meaningful opportunities to participate in sports.<sup>22</sup> Women's

<sup>19</sup> "Bluszcz", 12 November 1938, p. 12/1116. For a gendered discourse on citizenship in interwar Poland see: D. Kalwa, *Kobieta aktywna w Polsce międzywojennej: dylematy środowisk kobiecych*, Kraków 2001.

<sup>20</sup> "Kobieta Współczesna", 23 October 1927, p. 3; "Sport Polski", 22 September 1937, pp. 12-13; "Sport Polski", 20 October 1937, p. 3; "Sport Polski", 27 July 1938, p. 6; KSD, August 1928, p. 18; "Bluszcz", 1 December 1923, p. 477; "Bluszcz", 14 February 1925, pp. 154-155; "Bluszcz", 28 March 1925, pp. 298-299; "Bluszcz", 15 December 1928, p. 11; "Bluszcz", 15 May 1937, p. 11/427; PzS, 31 March 1928, p. 4; PzS, 17 March 1934, p. 6; PzS, 10 November 1938, p. 2; KSD, 1927, vol. 3, no. 12 (June), p. 12; and "Start", December 1927, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> H. Laskiewicz, *Rozwój organizacyjny ruchu sportowego województwa śląskiego w latach 1922-1939*, [in:] *Z dziejów kultury fizycznej na Śląsku i w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim*, ed. H. Rechowicz, Katowice 1989, pp. 117-191; "Bluszcz", 20 October 1923, p. 405.

<sup>22</sup> "Bluszcz", 21 March 1925, p. 274; and PzS, 15 February 1930, p. 4.

physical culture also remained elitist. Most female athletes came mainly from the intelligentsia, less so from the working-class, and least from families of peasant background. Their urban-based membership pattern was in contrast to the male athletes who mostly came from peasant and workers' communities, and least of all from the intelligentsia.<sup>23</sup>

But still, even though sportswomen remained obedient players in a sporting culture refereed by the interwar custodians of social patriarchy and political authoritarianism, their engagement in sports within the enclosed spaces of female athleticism positively influenced their personal and professional development in the direction toward greater physical emancipation. Their identification as defenders of families and the nation earned them far more expressions of gratitude and heroism than those that may have been awarded to sportswomen of other interwar societies.

### 3. COMMUNIST POLAND

In the period after the Second World War, sports and physical education were awarded a position of paramount importance in the construction of socialism in Poland. The communist leadership sought to demonstrate significant popular participation in sport without gender discrimination. Similar to their superiors in Moscow, Warsaw used women's sports to project an image of gender equity, broadcast the superiority of communism over capitalism, and build socialist solidarity within the country. Successive regimes pledged to strengthen women's athleticism with engagement in a variety of sports. The communist party verbiage emphasized continuously the importance of physical culture to create happy and healthy families, foster social integration, proudly narrate women's equality and liberation, and recognize sportswomen not merely as patriots but super-patriots who played a critical role in valorizing the supposed accomplishments of socialism.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, women's periodicals such as "Przyjaciółka," "Moda i Życie Praktyczne," "Kobieta i Życie," "Kobieta Wiejska," and "Kobieta Dzisiejsza," as well as sports newspapers such as "Przegląd Sportowy," "Sport," and "Tempo," glorified and honored women's participation in sports. Women's sporting achievements were a source of immense national pride and female

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<sup>23</sup> A. Pawlak, *Miniatury, czyli filigranowe portrety wielkich dam polskiego sportu: Polskie olimpijki z lat 1924-1994*, Warszawa 1995; "Sport Polski", 20 October 1937, p. 3; "Bluszcz", 11 February 1922, p. 53; "Bluszcz", 21 March 1925, p. 274; and PzS, 15 February 1930, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Główny Komitet Kultury Fizycznej i Sportu. *Materiały informacyjne*, Warszawa, marzec 1984, pp. 3-7, 16, 17, 22, 31, 45.

athletes were projected as “strong and happy heroines” who were worthy of respect, praise, and gratitude of the state and society.

However, a closer reading of press reports allows one to ferret out instances of hardship and disillusionment for sportswomen. The state-led and male-dominated organization of women’s physical culture was injured by discriminatory practices, the lack of feminist solidarity to collectively improve women’s physicality, and the multiple systemic failures with the concomitant daily hardships of living under communism that forced ordinary Poles to think less about sports and more about formulating their civil society to circumvent the ineffective structures of state socialism. Women’s desire to improve their physical well-being was particularly undermined by Poland’s status as a colony of the hegemonic Soviet empire. Nationalist overtones insisted on gender cooperation and, once again, women’s identities were shaped by the national and patriarchal agendas. Thus while the objective of increasing women’s participation in sports was worthwhile, Poland lacked the required wherewithal to render this noble cause into reality. The vast gap between rhetoric and reality in women’s physical culture will now be delineated for the communist period.

In the years right after the war and throughout the 1950s, women were expected to assist in reconstituting the lost family networks and contribute to rebuilding the war-devastated country by effectively using their recently acquired or promised educational and technical qualifications. The state used the increasing numbers of women working to build socialism to propagandize the message that only socialism provided women with complete gender equality. Women were described as mother-citizens who were inculcating socialist patriotism in their children, homes, and at places of work.<sup>25</sup> The image of women bestowed with the supreme responsibility of building the socialist morality of their children was especially pronounced in the late 1950s, a time that was also marked by the construction of more sports facilities and by the founding of more sports societies and unions.<sup>26</sup> But also in these years women expressed dismay over a multitude of problems such as the limited numbers of preschools and childcare centers, the primitive living conditions without electricity and gas, the ghetto-

<sup>25</sup> “Kobieta Dzisiejsza”, 1946, no. 1 (February-March), p. 2; „Moda i Życie Praktyczne” (hereafter: MiZP), 1946, no. 6 (June), p. 4; MiZP, 1948, no. 15 (63) (May), p. 2; MiZP, 1948, no. 36 (84) (December), p. 3; MiZP, 1949, no. 1 (85) (January), p. 3; MiZP, 1949, no. 2 (86) (January), p. 15; MiZP, 20 October 1952, pp. 2-3; “Przyjaciółka”, 3 September 1950, pp. 5, 7; “Przyjaciółka”, 16 March 1952, p. 3; Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereafter: AAN), 237/XV-8, pp. 1, 2, 6, 7, 23; AAN, 237/XV-37, pp. 34, 38; and AAN, 237/XV-38, pp. 106, 165, 167.

<sup>26</sup> “Przyjaciółka”, 18 November 1956, p. 5; “Przyjaciółka”, 16 March 1958, p. 5; “Kobieta i Życie” (hereafter: KiZ), 1 January 1956, pp. 10-11; KiZ, 1 September 1958, pp. 2-3; KiZ, 1 April 1959, p. 3; and KiZ, 1 July 1959, pp. 2-3.

ization of women at the lower levels of workplace, the combined obligatory burden of motherhood and employment, and issues of alimony, divorce, alcoholism, prostitution, and domestic violence. The hardships of daily life and the combined duties of professional work and household management left women fatigued and without strong motivation to participate in sports.<sup>27</sup>

During the 1960s, despite the official rhetoric of gender equality, the limited state assistance in provisioning women with the emancipatory keys to happiness worsened their double-burden. Women were in distress over a number of issues, including the patriarchal family with alcoholic husbands and fathers, daily struggles for consumer and food products, and the feminization of low paid occupations.<sup>28</sup> Some women, disillusioned with "socialist feminism," began to revive the dormant "Woman Question." They inquired "What is feminism?"<sup>29</sup> However, such inquisitive glances at feminism did not result in the formation of a feminist movement. The widespread economic hardships forced women to place the needs of their families before their own personal interests. Yet despite the exhaustion of living under a communist system marked by shortages, women began to participate in sports in increasing numbers in the 1960s.

In the early 1970s, the state expressed an equal interest in women's professional work and their efforts to maintain a socialistic, harmonious family life.<sup>30</sup> But as before, women complained about the lack of daily essentials

<sup>27</sup> MiZP, 1948, no. 15/63 (May), p. 2; MiZP, 20 July 1950, p. 3; MiZP, 20 January 1952, p. 2; "Przyjaciółka", 6 February 1949, p. 12; "Przyjaciółka", 12 March 1950, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 27 August 1950, p. 5; "Przyjaciółka", 15 April 1951, p. 12; "Przyjaciółka", 15 June 1952, p. 10; "Przyjaciółka", 1 July 1956, p. 7; "Przyjaciółka", 19 August 1956, p. 12; "Przyjaciółka", 30 September 1956, p. 12; "Przyjaciółka", 18 November 1956, p. 5; "Przyjaciółka", 29 December 1957, p. 11; "Przyjaciółka", 10 May 1959, p. 12; KiZ, 1 April 1954, p. 3; KiZ, 10 January 1957, p. 4; KiZ, 20 March 1957, p. 2, 11; KiZ, 10 March 1957, pp. 2-3; KiZ, 10 September 1957, pp. 2-3; KiZ, 1 October 1957, p. 2; KiZ, 10 November 1957, pp. 3, 11; KiZ, 1 January 1958, pp. 2-3; KiZ, 20 May 1959, pp. 2-3; AAN, 237/XV-1, p. 1; and AAN, 237/XV-36, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 2 July 1961, pp. 3, 5, 8-9; "Przyjaciółka", 22 March 1964, p. 7; "Przyjaciółka", 24 May 1964, p. 5; "Przyjaciółka", 30 May 1965, p. 5; "Przyjaciółka", 24 March 1968, pp. 5, 12; "Przyjaciółka", 24 November 1968, p. 4; "Przyjaciółka", 9 March 1969, p. 7; KiZ, 4 June 1961, pp. 2-3; KiZ, 23 July 1961, p. 10; KiZ, 7 January 1962, pp. 1-2; KiZ, 15 July 1962, p. 11; KiZ, 28 October 1962, p. 11; KiZ, 2 December 1962, p. 3; KiZ, 12 May 1963, p. 3; KiZ, 30 June 1963, p. 3; KiZ, 27 October 1963, p. 3; KiZ, 1 November 1964, pp. 2-3; KiZ, 10 January 1965, p. 14; KiZ, 17 January 1965, p. 11; KiZ, 14 November 1965, p. 3; KiZ, 5 December 1965, p. 10; KiZ, 27 March 1966, p. 3; KiZ, 19 June 1966, p. 3; KiZ, 13 November 1966, p. 3; and KiZ, 2 June 1968, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> KiZ, 6 October 1968, pp. 2-3; and KiZ, 10 November 1968, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 26 April 1970, p. 7; "Przyjaciółka", 14 June 1970, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 9 January 1972, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka" 21 January 1973, p. 12; "Przyjaciółka", 18 March 1973, p. 3; KiZ, 21 February 1971, p. 3; KiZ, 11 April 1971, p. 3; KiZ, 19 December 1971, p. 2; KiZ, 20 May 1973, pp. 6-7; KiZ, 10 June 1973, pp. 6-7; and KiZ, 28 October 1973, p. 3.

and difficulty in balancing their work with home life.<sup>31</sup> Their plight deteriorated significantly in the late 1970s when the state placed an even greater emphasis on women's obligations as good mothers and wives. The theme of motherhood overwhelmed the women's press, with several images of mothers nursing their babies splashed in the magazines.<sup>32</sup> With its credibility increasingly questioned by a frustrated society, the communist state repeatedly used the international victories of female athletes to remind the nation of the supposed advantages of living under communism. Yet several women's sports such as gymnastics, volleyball, swimming, and skating reported a regression in the 1970s.<sup>33</sup>

The state's emphasis on motherhood continued to dominate the official press throughout the 1980s and left women overworked because of the under-development of social services and shortages of kindergartens. As women stood in the long lines for food, some wondered "what is social welfare as far as women were concerned?"<sup>34</sup> These embittered and disillusioned women were simply too tired of the omnipresent food shortages, the agonizing shopping burden, and the other monotonous hardships of daily life. They questioned the definitions of "women's emancipation" and *równoprawnienia* (equal rights) and called for the organization of a genuine women's movement that would defend the interests of women and affect a true women's liberation.<sup>35</sup> Such voices of dissent resounded in the realm of women's sports as well, despite the state's projected images of women's strong physical culture. Press reports discussed the need to organize motivated commissions to oversee women's sports affairs and explore new sources of financial support.<sup>36</sup> Comments such as "women's participation in

<sup>31</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 7 March 1971, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 12 December 1971, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 22 October 1972, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 25 February 1973, p. 5; KiZ, 7 March 1971, p. 6; KiZ, 18 April 1971, p. 2; KiZ, 5 December 1971, pp. 10-11; KiZ, 11 February 1973, p. 3; KiZ, 8 July 1973, p. 5; and KiZ, 6 January, 1974, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 29 June 1975; "Przyjaciółka", 7 December 1975; KiZ, 25 January 1976, p. 5; and KiZ, 29 February 1976, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> PzS, 12 June 1971, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 24 April 1986, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 6 April 1980, p. 4; "Przyjaciółka", 8 February 1981, p. 10; "Przyjaciółka", 22 February 1981, p. 11; "Przyjaciółka", 29 March 1981, p. 7; "Przyjaciółka", 17 May 1981, p. 12; "Przyjaciółka", 17 September 1981, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 27 May 1982, p. 4; "Przyjaciółka", 8 March, 1984, pp. 2-3; "Przyjaciółka", 26 May 1988, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 27 April 1989, p. 5; KiZ, 3 February 1980, p. 2; KiZ, 1 February 1981, pp. 6-8; KiZ, 14 June 1981, p. 3; KiZ, 8 October 1981, pp. 2, 4, 7, 10, 14; KiZ, 7 July 1982, p. 17; KiZ, 22 December 1982, p. 11; KiZ, 14 March, 1984, p. 2; KiZ, 12 September 1984, p. 17; KiZ, 19 December 1984, p. 11; KiZ, 15 October 1986, p. 2; and KiZ, 10 August 1988, pp. 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> PzS, 18 January 1984, p. 4.

sport is extravagant" highlighted the gender prejudices.<sup>37</sup> There were concerns about physical education programs for school girls. The number of girls engaged in sports in 1973 was 77,000 but in 1982 only 54,000. This decline was suggestive of the "bad shape" of women's physical culture.<sup>38</sup>

In the final years of communist rule, with the worsening socio-economic crisis, only "superwomen" could skillfully balance their professional interests with the numerous hardships that challenged the survival of families and the nation as a whole. As the tug-of-war between the state and society increased, sports and physical education for women became increasingly marginalized. Thereafter, while the collapse of communism in 1989 was a momentous and joyful occasion, the increased fascination with beauty pageants and female nudity suggested the plight of women in the free market economy. Women's periodicals now displayed an excessive pre-occupation with female nudity and *seksoholism*.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, the earlier images of patriotic women constructing a rational, socialist morality had been completely discarded. Similarly, women's physical culture was adversely affected by the processes of political democratization and economic modernization. Images of female nudity appeared in the sports press in 1990.<sup>40</sup>

Thus women throughout the communist period were denied the real experience of their personal and professional equality. Despite the state's repeated emphasis in encouraging women's dynamic participation in all aspects of life, the failings of the communist system undermined the celebrated gender equality under state socialism. The ideological constructions of women's emancipation in official socialist discourse remained artificial and quite distant from the daily reality experienced by women. However, when opportunities permitted, what kinds of sports did women play, and with what limitations and/or achievements?

Female athletes generally excelled in track and field events, gymnastics, archery, fencing, volleyball, and oaring. By the end of the 1960s, Poland was ranked third in the world in women's track and field, behind the Soviet Union and East Germany. The press especially celebrated the international accomplishments of Irena Szewińska, the "First Woman" in the world of Polish sports. Women and girls also participated in the home-style *spartakiads* and mass races organized by local authorities. Based on the accom-

<sup>37</sup> KiZ, 8 October 1981, pp. 10-11.

<sup>38</sup> PzS, 10 May 1984, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> KiZ, 29 March 1989, pp. 4-5; KiZ, 23 May 1990, several pictures throughout this issue; KiZ, 13 June 1990, p. 10; KiZ, 30 January 1991, pp. 6-7; KiZ, 1 May 1991, p. 6; KiZ, 21 August 1991, cover page; KiZ, 4 December 1991, pp. 2-3; KiZ, 26 August 1992, pp. 8-9; KiZ, 22 May 1993, pp. 8-9; and "Przyjaciółka", 11 April 1991, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> PzS, 10 May 1990, p. 4; and PzS, 13 December 1990, p. 6.

plishments of women, which on many occasions were better than the men's results, the state reinforced the idea that women faced no discrimination, irrespective of the limited numbers of female competitors in this sport.<sup>41</sup>

Women's gymnastics (both artistic and acrobatic) received extensive press coverage. World champion Helena Rakoczy was referred to as the "best among the best" and a model citizen-sportswoman.<sup>42</sup> But the many female gymnasts who were anemic and the insufficient funding of gymnastic centers also created an "alarming" situation in women's gymnastics.<sup>43</sup>

Women's archery enjoyed increasing popularity and the press reported the achievements of the "strong and ambitious" Janina Kurkowska-Spychajowa, a recipient of the title of Distinguished Master of Sport as well. Another champion Maria Mączyńska was lauded for her ambition, dedication, and congeniality.<sup>44</sup> The victories of female fencers such as Barbara Piotrowska, Elżbieta Pawlasowa, Jolanta Rzymowska, and Irena Szydłowska attracted a following, especially between the years 1964-1972.<sup>45</sup>

In other sports, women's oaring, despite the lack of equipment and poor training facilities, retained its popularity in cities such as Warsaw and Cra-

<sup>41</sup> J. Drabik, *Analiza rozwoju wyników w rzutach lekkoatletycznych mężczyzn i kobiet w Polsce w latach 1965-1974*, "Zeszyty Naukowe WSWF w Gdańsku" 1978, no. 2, pp. 139-145; W. Lipiński, op. cit., p. 53; PzS, 26 October 1950, p. 4; PzS, 3 June 1951, p. 1; PzS, 19 June 1952, p. 4; PzS, 31 August 1953, p. 4; PzS, 8 February 1958, p. 2; PzS, 14 July 1959, p. 4; PzS, 11 April 1961, p. 4; PzS, 20 September 1969, p. 4; PzS, 5 December 1970, p. 1; PzS, 13 December 1971, p. 4; PzS, 1 September 1975, p. 3; PzS, 30 May 1980, p. 3; PzS, 26 July 1985, p. 1; PzS, 17 September - 2 October 1988, p. 9; "Przyjaciółka", 26 March 1950, p. 7; "Przyjaciółka", 25 May 1952, p. 14; "Przyjaciółka", 20 January 1957, p. 14; "Przyjaciółka", 2 October 1960, p. 9; "Przyjaciółka", 13 July 1969, p. 2; "Przyjaciółka", 6 February 1972, pp. 8-9; "Przyjaciółka", 18 July 1976, pp. 8-9; KiZ, 1 December 1954, p. 11; KiZ, 20 November 1956, p. 3; KiZ, 6 September 1964, p. 14; KiZ, 15 August 1976, p. 4; KiZ, 19 March 1978, p. 14; KiZ, 20 July 1980, pp. 12-13; KiZ, 18 January 1981, pp. 14-15; "Tempo", 18 May 1959, pp. 5-6; Biuletyn PKOl, no. 5/8, 1974, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> PzS, 20 November 1950, p. 6; PzS, 8 February 1951, p. 1; PzS, 20 March 1952, p. 3; PzS, 29 December 1952, p. 3; PzS, 1 July 1954, p. 4; PzS, 6 November 1969, p. 2; PzS, 20 May 1985, p. 6; PzS, 13 April 1988, p. 1; PzS, 5 October 1989, p. 1; "Przyjaciółka", 13 August 1950, p. 10; "Przyjaciółka", 2 November 1952, p. 14; "Przyjaciółka", 17 November 1963, p. 2; MiZP, 20 August 1950, p. 6; MiZP, 10 July 1951, p. 11; MiZP, 1 October 1951, cover, p. 11; KiZ, 20 November 1953, p. 12; KiZ, 9 June 1982, p. 20; KiZ, 30 December 1987, pp. 13-14; KiZ, 22 February 1989, p. 16; Tempo, 20 April 1959, p. 6; *Biuletyn Informacyjny Głównego Komitetu Kultury Fizycznej i Turystyki*, Warszawa 1975, p. 11; and AMR, notes.

<sup>43</sup> PzS, 13 June 1970, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> PzS, 7 August 1952, p. 4; PzS, 20 August 1953, p. 5; PzS, 24 September 1957, p. 2; PzS, 27 August 1962, p. 1; PzS, 12 July 1969, p. 1; PzS, 3 August 1971, p. 3; PzS, 1 September 1981, p. 1; "Przyjaciółka", 17 August 1952, p. 10; "Przyjaciółka", 23 August 1970, p. 15; and KiZ, 31 August 1983, pp. 6-7.

<sup>45</sup> PzS, 24 October 1959, p. 3; PzS, 23 December 1963, p. 3; PzS, 25 July 1970, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 17 September 1972, p. 3; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 13.

cow.<sup>46</sup> Skating, especially figure-skating, was identified as an ideal and healthy sport for women.<sup>47</sup> In 1958 Poland was positioned second in the world after the Soviet Union in women's parachuting. The sports press proudly reported that these "friendly, nice and happy" women had taken the pilot's seat.<sup>48</sup>

Tennis remained elitist, with the small participation of women.<sup>49</sup> Similar to tennis, rifle-shooting remained a sport for the privileged. Despite the accomplishments of Eulalia Zakrzewska-Rolińska and Wiesława Salwicka, few women indulged in this eclectic sport.<sup>50</sup> On this same note, few women participated in field hockey, table tennis, chess, cycling, judo and karate. Traditional stereotypes limited women's athleticism in boxing, wrestling, and weightlifting. Both men and women expressed an early animosity to women's boxing.<sup>51</sup>

Women's interest in swimming began to wane from 1975 onward. Reports on the poor performance and the "deplorable" situation of female swimmers exceeded the celebratory coverage.<sup>52</sup> While women's swimming remained problematic, recreational water sports enjoyed popularity as a form of family entertainment. There are many references in the press to women's recreational sailing, sea-bathing, yachting, and kayaking. The

<sup>46</sup> "Sport", 9 November 1976, p. 4; PzS, 19 September 1949, p. 3; PzS, 20 August 1953, p. 3; PzS, 11 September 1969, p. 1; PzS, 8 March 1979, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 11 June 1950, p. 10; KiZ, 29 June 1969, cover; and "Tempo", 11 May 1959.

<sup>47</sup> PzS, 3 February 1947, p. 4; PzS, 26 January 1950, p. 6; PzS, 6 March 1950, p. 3; PzS, 6 December 1951, p. 1; PzS, 7 February 1952, p. 6; PzS, 26 November 1962, p. 1; PzS, 24 January 1970, p. 3; PzS, 6 November 1989, p. 6; "Przyjaciółka", 26 February 1950, p. 7; "Przyjaciółka", 17 December 1950, p. 10; "Przyjaciółka", 10 March 1983, 5; MiZP, 10 February 1952, p. 11; "Tempo", 2 March 1959, p. 3; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> PzS, 19 July 1952, p. 2; PzS, 15 August 1958, p. 1; PzS, 24 August 1958, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 26 April 1953, p. 12; "Przyjaciółka", 20 August 1972, cover page; "Przyjaciółka", 27 May 1973, p. 4; "Przyjaciółka", 26 August 1973, cover; KiZ, 19 June 1985, p. 11; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> PzS, 20 December 1948, p. 5; and PzS, 2 July 1951, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> PzS, 6 July 1955, p. 1; KiZ, 8 September 1968, pp. 2-3; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> PzS, 15 April 1946, p. 3; PzS, 26 September 1949, p. 5; PzS, 17 April 1950, p. 3; PzS, 22 May 1950, p. 3; PzS, 18 February 1955, p. 5; PzS, 11 May 1955, p. 3; PzS, 13 July 1957, p. 3; PzS, 29 April 1981, p. 4; PzS, 10 April 1984, p. 5; PzS, 30 April 1986, p. 4; PzS, 14 January 1987, p. 4; PzS, 27 May 1987, pp. 1, 4; PzS, 26 July 1988, pp. 1-2; PzS, 13 January 1989, p. 1; KiZ, 11 March 1979, pp. 18-19; KiZ, 11 June 1986, pp. 12-13; "Przyjaciółka", 25 June 1950, p. 10; "Przyjaciółka", 24 June 1982, p. 11; "Przyjaciółka", 10 March 1988, pp. 6-7; MiZP, July 1948; MiZP, 10 February 1950, p. 6; and "Tempo", 20 April 1959, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> M. Tuliszka, *Rozwój wyników pływackich w Wielkopolsce w okresie 40-lecia PRL*, [in:] *Wychowanie fizyczne i sport w 40-leciu PRL. Konferencja popularno-naukowa*, Poznań 1987, pp. 43-57; PzS, 13 January 1959, p. 2; PzS, 21 August 1961, p. 1; PzS, 16 July 1962, p. 2; PzS, 18 August 1969, p. 2; PzS, 23 January 1986, p. 1; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 13.

press provided coverage on the “First Lady” of kayaking, Izabela Dylewska.<sup>53</sup>

In the ball-games, women excelled in volleyball, a sport that was perceived as the biggest and best women’s sport in Poland. Women competed in inter-city, national, and international volleyball competitions with honors. In the 1950s, Polish women’s volleyball was second only to the Soviet Union in the world.<sup>54</sup> While women’s volleyball was popular, handball received little attention.<sup>55</sup> Female footballers achieved popularity in the press and in fan enthusiasm, and they played this game without gendered taunts.<sup>56</sup> Halina Wyka was named the “First Lady” in basketball. But the general lack of interest in women’s basketball was “disturbing,” as was the greater popularity awarded to men’s basketball.<sup>57</sup>

Women were particularly good skiers. Skiing was looked upon as hygienic for women and good for family entertainment.<sup>58</sup> But one press report exclaimed: “Relay race without girls! Why have the competitions in a skiing relay for girls been canceled?”<sup>59</sup> In other winter sports, Barbara Piecha won Poland’s first gold medal in sledding in 1970.<sup>60</sup> Halina Kanasz was regarded as the best tobogganer.<sup>61</sup> However, one press article confirmed a “crisis” in women’s tobogganing.<sup>62</sup> Also, the press narrated the “heroic” accomplish-

<sup>53</sup> Z. Szot, *Rozwój kultury fizycznej w aglomeracji Gdańskiej. Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot w latach 1945-1980*. Gdańsk 1986, p. 145; MiZP, 10 July 1951, p. 11; PzS, 9 April 1951, p. 6; PzS, 30 July 1953, p. 3; PzS, 26 July 1985, p. 3; PzS, 28 August 1989, p. 6; “Przyjaciółka”, 9 July 1950, p. 10; “Przyjaciółka”, 10 March 1988, pp. 6-7; AMR, notes; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> MiZP, 10 May 1952, p. 11; MiZP, 20 September 1952, p. 11; PzS, 16 August 1951, p. 1; PzS, 29 September 1952, p. 4; PzS, 31 October 1963, p. 4; “Przyjaciółka”, 23 April 1950, p. 10; “Tempo”, 27 April 1959, p. 3; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> PzS, 2 November 1951, p. 3; PzS, 14 February 1952, p. 5; PzS, 2 December 1954, p. 2; and PzS, 10 October 1961, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> M. Guttmejer, *Początki w Polsce rozwoju piłki nożnej kobiet w Polsce*, master’s thesis, Warszawa 1984, pp. 67, 104; C. Rocki, *Rozwój piłki nożnej kobiet w Polsce w latach 1981-1991*, master’s thesis, Warszawa 1992, pp. 7, 9; KiZ, 22 August 1976, p. 6;

<sup>57</sup> PzS, 18 March 1948, p. 3; PzS, 27 March 1950, pp. 1, 6; PzS, 8 November 1951, p. 2; PzS, 5 October 1953, p. 3; PzS, 14 January 1954, p. 3; PzS, 10 May 1958, p. 3; PzS, 18 September 1975, p. 4; PzS, 18 November 1981, p. 1; “Przyjaciółka”, 28 May 1950, p. 10; “Przyjaciółka”, 3 August 1975, p. 8; MiZP, 10 July 1952, p. 11; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> PzS, 1 January 1948, p. 1; PzS, 18 March 1948, p. 1; PzS, 6 March 1950, p. 3; PzS, 13 January 1955, p. 1; PzS, 20 March 1981, p. 2; PzS, 21-24 December 1989, p. 6; “Kobieta Dzisiejsza”, May 1947, p. 16; “Tempo”, 19 January 1959, p. 7; MiZP, January 1949, p. 10; MiZP, February 1949, p. 2; MiZP, 20 December 1950, p. 11; MiZP, 10 December 1951, p. 11; MiZP, 1 January 1952, p. 4; MiZP, 10 January 1952, p. 11; and *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>59</sup> PzS, 3 March 1981, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> PzS, 23 April 1970, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> PzS, 29 December 1975, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> PzS, 20 February 1969, p. 3.

ments of its adept female mountain-climbers such as Anna Teresa Pietraszek, Wanda Rutkiewicz (the first European climber of Mount Everest), and Ewa Czarniecka.<sup>63</sup>

All the leading sportswomen were identified as "sports heroines." When the sports newspaper "Przegląd Sportowy" organized annual popular plebiscites to select the ten best sports-persons of the year, it was significant that with the exception of two years 1949 and 1973 (no plebiscite was held in 1953) female athletes were always nominated in the top ten, including that of the first place! But such glorious accolades were confined at home. In the international sporting arena, East European women's physicality was questioned by their Cold War rivals. For example, in the case of naturalized American citizen from Poland Stella Wałasiewiczówna, there were frequent insinuations that she was actually a man masquerading as a woman. Another Polish athlete, Ewa Kłobukowska, was the first of about a dozen athletes to be banned from competition after the chromosome test was employed at the European Track and Field Championships in 1967.<sup>64</sup>

A number of sportswomen not only participated in sports but also pursued a host of other professional activities during their active engagement in physical culture and in their post-sports careers. Female athletes served as sports and social activists, pedagogues, sports trainers and instructors, journalists, nurses, and other health advocates. Barbara Laniewska became the Secretary-General of the Polish Union of Fast Skating. Janina Maria Mieczysłowska-Lewakowska authored many articles. Wacława Postawianka-Wilczyńska was a sports-referee. In 1981 she received a medal for her service in developing physical culture through the Department of Physical Culture and Tourism in Bydgoszcz province.<sup>65</sup> However, female athletes had few opportunities to assume positions of top leadership in the male-dominated sports organizational structure.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the overwhelming numbers of male instructors and trainers for women's sports aroused dismay. While almost half the graduates of the Academies of Physical Educa-

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<sup>63</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 5 November 1972, p. 9; "Przyjaciółka", 24 September 1978, p. 5; "Przyjaciółka", 26 September 1985, pp. 6-7; PzS, 6 March 1981, p. 3; KiZ, 15 April 1987, pp. 8-9; *Biuletyn Informacyjny...*, p. 13; Wanda Rutkiewicz, [in:] *Udział kobiet w rozwoju, upowszechnianiu i odbiorze kultury*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 42-43; and Wanda Rutkiewicz, *First European woman to climb Everest, "Climber and Rambler"* 1979, vol. 18, no. 5 (May), p. 41.

<sup>64</sup> M.D. Davis, *Black American Women in Olympic Track and Field: A Complete Illustrated Reference*, Jefferson 1992, pp. 157-161.

<sup>65</sup> For biographical descriptions on 363 Polish female athletes, see A. Pawlak, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup> E. Bilińska-Pilawska, *Z problematyki sportu kobiecego*, "Kultura Fizyczna" 1978, no. 10, pp. 465-467; PzS, 25 June 1986, p. 3.

tion were women, few assumed professional careers in this field.<sup>67</sup> Male physical education instructors had to be reminded of the need to respect their female students and provide them with the necessary intellectual motivation.<sup>68</sup>

A good number of female athletes were urban-based intellectuals or workers who successfully managed their sports careers with family life.<sup>69</sup> There are many images of happy and energetic sports-mothers and wives in the press.<sup>70</sup> Fencing champion Barbara Wysoczańska acknowledged her family's support for enabling her to combine sports with her family obligations.<sup>71</sup> For javelin champion Daniela Jaworska, sport was a "narcotic" which would not allow her to resign, despite having children.<sup>72</sup> According to athlete Jadwiga Wajsówna, "physical fitness is our strength and strength is important for us in planning for the future."<sup>73</sup> The press praised Irena Szewińska's determination to return back to training after the birth of her child. Szewińska, referred to as a phenomenal star, the queen of queens, super-athlete, and the first lady of world sprints, trained with her husband and coach Janusz Szewiński.<sup>74</sup> Eventually, Szewińska would retire from an active sports career to work in the Polish Olympic Committee and the Polish Track and Field Association.<sup>75</sup> Modern pentathlon champion Barbara Kotowska's family always supported her sporting endeavors.<sup>76</sup> Rifle-shooters Dorota Chytrowska-Mika and Ilona Glyda were both influenced by their fathers.<sup>77</sup> A mother and daughter team (Hanna and Jolanta Brzezińska) represented Poland in international archery competitions.<sup>78</sup> Swimmer Agnieszka Czopkówna acknowledged the assistance of her parents in her sporting career.<sup>79</sup> According to Ewa Pruska, the only female jockey in Poland, her mother did not like this un-womanlike profession. But she received

<sup>67</sup> PzS, 5 June 1984, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Z. Żukowska, *Der Frauensport in polnischen Untersuchungen*, "Weltrat für Sportwissenschaft und Körpererziehung" 1984, no. 7, pp. 48-57.

<sup>69</sup> A. Pawlak, op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> For happy images of sportswomen see: PzS, 22-27 December 1971, p. 14; PzS, 13 October 1989, p. 3; "Przyjaciółka", 9 December 1956, p. 5; and "Przyjaciółka", 15 September 1988, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> KiZ, 24 September 1978, p. 15; and PzS, 15 February 1983, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> KiZ, 21 May 1978, pp. 14-15.

<sup>73</sup> PzS, 30 December 1951, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 3 September 1972, p. 8; KiZ, 8 October 1981, pp. 10-11; PzS, 7 March 1970, p. 1; PzS, 13 July 1970, p. 1; PzS, 16 July 1970, pp. 1, 4; and PzS, 10 July 1971, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 2 December 1982, p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 10 March 1988, pp. 6-7.

<sup>77</sup> PzS, 5 July 1985, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 8 July 1973, p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> PzS, 17 August 1988, p. 1.

the support of her husband who also loved horses.<sup>80</sup> Skating Olympian Elwira Seroczyńska did admit that although sport provided immense satisfaction and a healthy life, her husband looked sullen, and she felt like a guest in her own home. Many a time, she thought about ending her sports career to take care of her children.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, there is no denying that women's domestic responsibilities functioned as a veritable barrier to their active engagement in sports. While the state made efforts to popularize a family-oriented physical culture, women rarely had the opportunity to participate in sport and physical recreation. Some complained of "anti-feminist" sentiments in the sports organization and appealed to other women to "wake up!"<sup>82</sup> While women could participate in international competitions such as the Olympic Games, their opportunity to win gold was rare.<sup>83</sup> And if the real creation of happy and sportive families in the urban centers was difficult, the construction of a rural women's physical culture was even worse. The organization of rural Olympiads and other sports tournaments for peasants gave superficial credence to the state's emphasis on "sport for all".<sup>84</sup> This was more propaganda than reality.

Thus overall, in communist Poland, women's physical culture was employed to display images of the "Big Lie," that is, of the supposed greatness of socialism and the rhetoric of women's equality and liberation. Unfortunately, the reality of embittered and disillusioned ordinary women contrasted sharply with the images of a few elite strong and healthy sports-women. Sports, it appeared, imposed a "triple burden" on female athletes, the additional burden being the product of state socialism's fascination with improving women's physicality for political purposes.

## CONCLUSION

This article has examined the interaction between the forces of nationalism and feminism in the construction of Polish women's physical culture.

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<sup>80</sup> PzS, 17 April 1981, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> "Przyjaciółka", 27 March 1960, p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> PzS, 13 February 1971, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> KiZ, 6 September 1964, p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> PzS, 17 July 1950, p. 3; PzS, 8 March 1951, p. 1; PzS, 1 February 1954, p. 1; PzS, 30 November 1961, p. 3; PzS, 1 December 1969, p. 2; "Przyjaciółka", 20 August 1950, p. 10; "Przyjaciółka", 1 August 1954, p. 11; "Przyjaciółka", 23 October 1955, p. 2; "Kobieta Wiejska", 7 November 1949, p. 11; "Kobieta Wiejska", 15 August 1949, p. 13; "Kobieta Wiejska", 15 October 1949, p. 13; MiZP, 1 October 1950, cover page, p. 7; and MiZP, 1 October 1952, p. 13.

Women's athleticism was a source of national pride and prestige. But women's physicality also remained the subject of much debate. Women's sports, in all the three time periods of partitioned, interwar, and communist Poland, were constrained by multiple issues. The conservative Catholic image of the *Matka Polka* was still embedded in popular consciousness. And Polish feminism typically subordinated itself to the larger goals of Polish nationalism. But despite the patriarchal and other barricades, the struggles for independence and women's concerns to achieve greater equity with men created significant institutional spaces and ideological avenues for sportswomen to build their physical culture. Although sportswomen were not portrayed by the official press as Soviet-style sports-stakhanovites, neither were they portrayed as "abnormalities" quite typical of the western characterization of their sportswomen. Polish female athletes were not placed in either of these two ludicrous categories. Instead, they were simply "heroic" women who took advantage of the available opportunities to build their physical culture without causing much controversy. In this manner, they made significant contributions to the feminist goals of self-awareness and self-authorization, albeit within the boundaries of a still patriarchal nationalist agenda.

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