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## Participation of Members of Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow in Polish and International Sokol Slets until 1939

### Abstract

This paper is a contribution to the history of activities of the Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow, which was created in 1886. Slets’ activity of the “Sokol” nest in Rzeszow was a reflection of the state of interest and support for the Sokol idea among the inhabitants of Rzeszow from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Slets constituted an important aspect of the Sokol movement and they were a manifestation of ties with the society. Their main goal was to promote the Sokol idea, to present the strength of the Sokol movement, to exchange mutual experiences and to integrate the representatives of individual units called “nests”. They also had a wider patriotic and national context. Each “Sokol” slet had its purpose and idea, a thought and a motto which they followed. The participation in slets was of primary importance for “Sokol” members. The representatives of the nest from Rzeszow participated in nationwide Polish “Sokol” slets organized by the Association of Gymnastic Societies in Austria before the First World War. According to historical sources, they were present at the slets organized in Lviv (in 1892, 1894, 1903, 1913) and Cracow (in 1896, 1910). The members of Rzeszow “Sokol” were also present at some slets abroad: in Prague (in 1901) and in Zagreb (in 1906). Between 1919 and 1939 the representatives of Rzeszow nest did not participate in the slets organized by the “Sokol” Gymnastic Society in Poland as actively as in the earlier years. They took part only in the slets in Poznan (in 1929) and Katowice (in 1937).

**Key words:** history, Rzeszow, Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol”.

### Introduction

The issue of Sokol slets was frequently the subject of Polish historical publications. Research on the circumstances of the organization and proceedings of Sokol slets were conducted, among others, by J. Snopko, K. Toporowicz,

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Z. Pawluczuk, E. Małolepszy, M. Ponczek, P. Godlewski, and many other scientists engaged in the issues of activity of the Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol”. Many of these publications describe the circumstances of the participation of some nests in slets with various extent, from regional to all-association and international. The Rzeszow “Sokol” has not been found among the described nests and, the available historical sources, especially memoirs and reports of “Sokol” members which contain interesting information. That is why the objective of this publication is to try to determine where and when the representatives of the Rzeszow Gymnastic Society “Sokol” participated in the most important slets.

Slets constituted an important aspect of the Sokol movement and were a manifestation of ties with the society. They were primarily aimed as a promotion of the Sokol idea, a presentation of strength of the Sokol movement, an exchange of mutual experiences and the integration of representatives of individual units called “nests”. They also had a wider patriotic and national context. Each Sokol slet had its purpose and idea, a thought and a motto. The organization of slets was combined with the celebration of anniversaries of important events in the history of the Polish nation. The slets were of various extent and importance: all-society, interdistrict, district, interregional or regional. It also happened that a single nest organized “jubilee slets”. The slets were organized by the departments of the “Sokol” Society, district departments, regions or nests respectively. The characteristic feature of Sokol slets was almost a uniform program, consisting of two main parts. The first part of every slet was of cultural and educational nature and it included a parade of participants combined with a church service and a ceremonial opening in the presence of invited guests. The second part, of gymnastic and sports nature, included shows of collective exercise and, with time, sports competitions in different sports disciplines. Participation in slets was always a matter of prestige for the members of “Sokol”. With the permission of the Board of the “Sokol” Society, the representatives of the Polish “Sokol” Associations operating in other countries and the Associations of Czech Sokols and the Association of Yugoslavian Sokols, as well as the representatives of other international gymnastic organizations, were invited to slets.

## **Polish slets before the First World War**

Rzeszow at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century was a typical provincial town of Galicia. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Rzeszow had around 7,500 inhabitants. The town’s population was composed of Roman Catholics and Jews in almost equal numbers. In 1858, Galician Railway of Archduke Charles Louis reached Rzeszow, which resulted in further development of the town. Total population of the town has increased steadily, reaching about 20,000 in 1902<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Kiryk (ed.), *Dzieje Rzeszowa*, t. 2, *Rzeszów (The history of Rzeszow)*, vol. 2, Rzeszow) 1998, pp. 47–59.

The idea of the Sokol movement reached Galicia in 1866, and the first nest of the “Sokol” was established in 1867 in Lviv. Subsequent Sokol nests began to emerge after 1884. The “Sokol” Gymnastic Society in Rzeszow, established in 1886, was the seventh successive nest formed in Galicia. According to the idea of the Sokol movement, Rzeszow Gymnastic Society were operating in the field of promulgation of patriotic behavior and promotion of physical fitness. These activities involved organizing sports activities for both adults and students of local schools, gala evenings to celebrate patriotic anniversaries and participate in official events important to the inhabitants of the town. One important element of the activity was to represent the local nest in slets. Members of Rzeszow Gymnastic Society “Sokol” participated in all slets organized before the First World War.

The first nationwide Polish Sokol slet was held in Lviv on 5–6 June 1892 and it was organized on the occasion of the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lviv nest. The slet was attended by over a thousand participants from 23 “Sokol” nests from the Austrian partition, (the number of active nests in Galicia was 34 at that time), 40 Sokols from Wielkopolska and 150 from Czech. The Rzeszow nest was represented by 38 “Sokol” members, who appeared in full uniform. On the first day of the slet the main item on the agenda was a procession of more than 1,000 participants along the city streets to the cathedral church, the Holy Mass and the consecration of the Lviv “Sokol” flag. On the second day there were public exercises on a field in the Kilinski Park, prepared specifically for that occasion. The exercises were attended by 600 athletes, including 15 from Rzeszow. The exercise program consisted of free exercises (performed by 600 athletes, including 40 Czechs), club exercise (40 athletes), gymnastic apparatus exercise (60 Polish and 11 Czech hosts) and exercise of groups of teachers (8 hosts)<sup>2</sup>. In cooperation with the local authorities and other organizations of Lviv, a series of accompanying events was also prepared, such as dinner parties, meetings, picnics, theatre performances, art exhibitions, sight-seeing tours of the city and its surroundings<sup>3</sup>. During the slet, Sokol delegates debated on the issues of unification into one organization. The meeting was attended by the then President of the Rzeszow nest, Wiktor Zbyszewski.

The second slet of Polish “Sokol” also took place in Lviv between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1894. At the same time a great National Kosciuszko Exhibition was held in Lviv, which was a significant event. The slet was first organized by

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<sup>2</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie za rok 1892*, Rzeszów (*Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow for the Year 1892*, Rzeszow), 1893, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> J. Snopko, *I Zlot Sokolstwa Polskiego w 1892 r. we Lwowie (The First Polish Sokols Slet in 1892 in Lviv*, [in:] A. Nowakowski (ed.), *Szkice z dziejów „Sokoła” w południowej i wschodniej Polsce*, Wadowice (*Sketches from the History of the “Sokol” in the Southern and Eastern Poland*, Wadowice), 2002, p. 9.

the Union of Polish Gymnastic Associations in Austria, and was attended by over 1,500 representatives of “Sokol” organization. The solemn march was attended by 1,502 Sokols, including 50 on horseback. Slet exercises were attended by a total of about 768 athletes. The exercises consisted of: free exercises (performed by 768 participants), gymnastic stick exercise (720), club exercise (250), pyramid building (80), gymnastic apparatus exercise (72 hosts) and “rej kolarski”<sup>4</sup> (30). There were also sports competitions with 30 participating athletes<sup>5</sup>. The Rzeszow nest was represented by 56 uniformed members, 20 of whom participated in slet exercises. Delegates from Rzeszow (Roderyk Als and Karol Stary) also took part in the debates of the convention of Sokol Association delegates<sup>6</sup>.

Krakow was the host of the next Polish Sokol slet, between June 28 and June 29, 1896. It was organized to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Sokol” nest in this city. The slet was attended by 1,488 participants, including 60 Sokols from Wielkopolska and four delegates of the Czech and Ruthenian “Sokol” in Lviv. The slet exercises included free exercises (performed by 660 athletes), gymnastic stick exercise (165), pyramids (183), club exercise (120), drill show (80), gymnastic apparatus exercise (72), “rej kolarski” (a type of cycling demonstration) (57), pentathlon (10) and horse exercise of Krakow Sokol (20). The total number of exercisers was approximately 900<sup>7</sup>. This time Rzeszow was represented by 40 Sokols, 24 of whom participated in free exercise, also 24 in gymnastic stick exercise, 20 in building pyramids, 12 in pair exercise (called “igrzyska”) and 12 in a game of football<sup>8</sup>.

The fourth nationwide Polish Sokol slet under the Austrian rule took place in Lviv on June 28 and June 29, 1903. The slet was organized on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the January Uprising. The total number of participants was 4,628, including several hundred Czechs and Croats and 85 Sokols of the “Sokol” Association in Germany. In the annual report on the activities of the “Sokol” nest in Rzeszow we can read about that slet: “This meeting turned into a great manifestation of the heyday of Polish Sokol, with the participation of Rzeszow Society not being inferior at all”<sup>9</sup>. The exercise program consisted of

<sup>4</sup> „Rej kolarski” was a kind of a show bike ride.

<sup>5</sup> *Pamiętnik IV Złotu Sokolstwa Polskiego we Lwowie w dniach 27–29 czerwca 1903*, Lwów (*Memoir of the Fourth Slet of Polish Sokols in Lviv on 27–29 June 1903*, Lviv), 1904, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie za rok 1894*, Rzeszów (*Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow for the Year 1894*, Rzeszow), 1895, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Pamiętnik IV Złotu Sokolstwa Polskiego we Lwowie w dniach 27–29 czerwca 1903*, Lwów (*Memoir of the Fourth Slet of Polish Sokols in Lviv on 27–29 June 1903*, Lviv), 1904, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie za rok 1896*. Rzeszów (*Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow for the Year 1896*, Rzeszow), 1897, p. 15, 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie za rok 1903*, Rzeszów (*Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow for the Year 1903*, Rzeszow), 1904, p. 8.

free exercise, lance exercise, gymnastic apparatus exercise, pyramids, fun and games, Swedish gymnastics, athletics, club exercise, and gymnastic apparatus exercise performed by the Czechs. The program also included women's exercises: gymnastic stick exercise, fun and games as well as show bike ride called "rej kolarski". Slet exercises were performed by 2,500 people in total, including 126 women. Rzeszow "Sokol" nest "provided 68 people to perform the exercise – and thus the number was more than three times higher than in previous general slets"<sup>10</sup>. They participated in the following exercises: free, club, lance and gymnastic apparatus (horse, parallel bars and horizontal bar). On the second day of the slet a group competition was held, with the participation of 54 hosts. 284 participants (including only 71 from Polish nests) competed in the individual competition in apparatus gymnastics and 75 people in athletics competition (running, throwing and jumping). Rzeszow Sokols taking part in the competition won several prizes. Karol Stary, Franciszek Stein and Stefan Czaplinski competed in gymnastic apparatus competition, which consisted of parallel bars, horizontal bar, horse across and along. Among 71 competitors, they took places in the following order: 38, 58, and 65, for which they received letters of commendation. In athletics Jan Weglarz won the second prize for a 10 kg stone throw for a distance of 8.65 m. Moreover, Rzeszow nest was awarded a diploma<sup>11</sup>.

Krakow again became the place of the Polish "Sokol" slet, held from 14 to 16 July, 1910. It was the fifth all-society slet, organized to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald. That slet, called "Grunwald", was attributed a particular importance. It was to serve as propaganda, but also had a political role. An important event, attended by many participants of the "Sokol" slet, was the unveiling of the monument of Jagiello in Krakow (called the Grunwald Monument), funded by Ignacy Paderewski. The slet started on July 15<sup>th</sup> in the evening with the official welcome of the guests. Next day, in the afternoon, slet exercises began and they were attended by 3,106 participants. A solemn Mass and a march from the field of Krakow Błonie to the Wawel Hill did not take place until July 17<sup>th</sup> before noon. The march was attended by 7,097 people in total, including a 70-people equestrian squad. In the afternoon, on the same day, slet exercises were continued. The program consisted of the following exercises: free (performed by 3,312 athletes), with clubs (652), with lances (781), with rifles (235), with scythes (169), and with hatchets, which were combined with the dance of the Tatra highlanders (72). Women also performed exercises with a short "wywijadło"<sup>12</sup> (640 participants), common exercise of Sokols from Wielkopolska (free exercises in five routines, performed by 316 partici-

<sup>10</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokol” w Rzeszowie za rok 1903*, Rzeszów (*Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Gymnastic Society "Sokol" in Rzeszow for the Year 1903*, Rzeszow), 1904, pp. 8, 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Pamiętnik IV Zlotu Sokolstwa Polskiego we Lwowie w dniach 27–29 czerwca 1903*, Lwów (*Memoir of the Fourth Slet of Polish Sokols in Lviv on 27–29 June 1903*, Lviv), 1904, pp. 120–122.

<sup>12</sup> "Wywijadło" – a flexible cane stick with a thickness of 1 cm and a length of about 1,5 m.

pants), free exercise of the guests from the Polish Kingdom (in five routines, performed by 215 participants)<sup>13</sup>.

The total number of exercisers was estimated by organizers at about 5,000, including about 800 women. Rzeszów "Sokol" was prepared very carefully to participate in that slet. Ultimately, Rzeszów was represented at Grundwald slet by 74 uniformed male and female members of "Sokol", of whom 54 took part in exercises. For the first time the all-society slet was attended by a Rzeszów female unit<sup>14</sup>. A competition that included individual rivalry in sports exercises took place on July 14<sup>th</sup> and on July 15<sup>th</sup>. The program of the competition consisted of running, jumping, throws, wrestling, exercise with gymnastic apparatus, shooting, fencing, swimming, rowing and cycling. In addition, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, in the late morning, equestrian competitions were held. At the end of the slet, on July 18<sup>th</sup>, tournament games on the field, which included football and Polish traditional bat-and-ball game called "palant"<sup>15</sup>, took place. The competition was attended by 272 athletes, but Sokols from Rzeszów did not compete in any of the sports. The only representative of the Rzeszów nest, A. Kowalski, was one of the referees<sup>16</sup>.

The last slet of the Sokol unions before the outbreak of the First World War took place on July 6, 1913 in Lviv. It was the first immediate slet. Those types of slets, also known as mobilization, had been organized at a district level since 1906. What distinguished them from general slets was the fact they were not previously announced, not preceded by earlier preparations and they were to be organized at the cheapest cost<sup>17</sup>. Officially, Lviv immediate slet was organized to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the January Uprising. In fact, it became a presentation of military training of permanent Sokol and scout troops. The slet was attended by about 7,000 armed and militarily organized Sokols and about 2,000 scouts. That slet was a kind of military exercise. It was organized as a battle of Lviv, where scouts attacked Lviv from the south, pretending to be the Muscovite army and Sokol troops defended the city of Lviv. The official slet exercise program consisted of free exercises, exercises with rifles and drill (development of teams in line formations and attack on the enemy)<sup>18</sup>. Rzeszów nest

<sup>13</sup> *Pamiętnik V Zlotu Sokolstwa Polskiego w Krakowie w dniach 14–16 lipca 1910*, Lwów (*Memoir of the Fifth Slet of Polish Sokols in Krakow on 14–16 July 1910*, Lviv), 1911, pp. 45–51; 63–64; 133.

<sup>14</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokol” w Rzeszowie za rok 1910*, Rzeszów (*Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Polish Gymnastic Society "Sokol" in Rzeszow for the Year 1910*, Rzeszow), 1911, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Palant is a traditional old Polish game, similar to baseball.

<sup>16</sup> *Pamiętnik V Zlotu Sokolstwa Polskiego w Krakowie w dniach 14–16 lipca 1910*, Lwów (*Memoir of the Fifth Slet of Polish Sokols in Krakow on 14–16 July 1910*, Lviv), 1911, pp. 122–133.

<sup>17</sup> „Przewodnik Gimnastyczny «Sokół»”, Lwów („Gymnastic Guide «Sokol»”, Lviv) 1908, no 9, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> P. Godlewski, M. Tybiszewski, *Masowe pokazy gimnastyczne w działalności Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokol” na ziemiach polskich pod zaborami w latach 1879–1918* (*The Mass*

was represented by 66 Sokols of the Permanent Sokol Troop, equipped with twelve Werndl and two Manlicher rifles. They took part in slet exercises<sup>19</sup>. The slet was also attended by a group of 42 members of the scouting organization, acting within the structures of Rzeszow "Sokol". Scouts came to Lviv under the care of Karol Stary, Julian Woiński, Szpunar and doctor Zdzislaw Maurer. By participating in slet exercises scouts formed a part of the Samaritan squad under the direction of doctor Maurer<sup>20</sup>.

### Polish Slets in Interwar Period

After Poland regained independence in 1918, Rzeszow continue to expand. It became the capital of the district of Rzeszow, which was the westernmost administrative unit the province of Lviv, bordering on the province of Cracow. Underway in Poland from 1928 great economic crisis also has affected the inhabitants of Rzeszow. The real effect of this crisis was impoverishment of all classes of the local society and, reduced involvement in social activities. In 1921 25,000 people lived there, in 1931 27,500, and in 1939 as many as 42,000. Such an immense increase of population in the 1930's was connected with the creation of the Central Industrial District from 1937. The town developed and became a Polish center of defense industry. The increasing number of inhabitants changed the local ethnic structure and decreased the percentage of the Jewish population<sup>21</sup>.

In 1919 "Sokol" organizations were united, which resulted in the formation of the Union of Gymnastic Societies "Sokol" in Poland. It became the organizer of nationwide slets in the years 1919–1939. The representatives of Rzeszow slet did not participate in all slets anymore. First "Sokol" slet organized in independent Poland was held in Warsaw between July 8 and July 10, 1921. It was the sixth nationwide slet. It was attended by more than 7000 Sokols and representatives of highest state authorities with the Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland Wojciech Trapczynski, the Minister of Military Affairs, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Wojciech Korfanty and others. Free exercise was attended by about 2,000 female and male participants<sup>22</sup>. For the first time the rep-

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*Gymnastic Show in the Activities of Gymnastic Society "Sokol" in the Polish Lands under Occupation in the Years 1879–1918*, [in:] M. Mirkiewicz (ed.) *Działalność Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokol”*. Rzeszów (*The activities of Gymnastic Society "Sokol"*. Rzeszow), 1996, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokol” w Rzeszowie za rok 1913*, Rzeszów 1914, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> F. Kiryk (ed.), *Dzieje Rzeszowa*, vol. 3, Rzeszów (*The History of Rzeszow*, vol. 3, Rzeszow) 2001, pp. 53–102.

<sup>22</sup> E. Małolepszy, *Wychowanie fizyczne, sport, przysposobienie wojskowe, zloty* (*Physical Education, Sport, Military Preparation, Slets*), [in:], E. Małolepszy, Z. Pawluczuk (ed.), *Zarys dziejów Sokolstwa Polskiego w latach 1867–1997*, Częstochowa (*The Outline of the History of Polish Sokol in the Years 1867–1997*, Częstochowa) 2001, p. 130.

representatives of Rzeszow "Sokol" did not attend the union slet. The reason for that were organizational and personnel issues, with which the Rzeszow nest struggled after the First World War.

The next nationwide slet in independent Poland and the 7<sup>th</sup> successive slet was organized in Poznan between June 28<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1929. It took place at the Polish General Exhibition. Poznan slet was dedicated to commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of regaining independence and signing the Treaty of Versailles and the "Vistula's Wedding to the Baltic Sea". Due to numerous participation of the representatives of the Polish "Sokol" Societies from America and Europe, and Sokols affiliated with the Slavic "Sokol" Association, it gained the name of All-Slavic "Sokol" Slet. Eminent Poles, such as Roman Dmowski, Jozef Haller, Ignacy Paderewski, Wladyslaw Grabski, and others participated in the slet as guests. It was attended by 24,535 Polish Sokols, 900 Czechoslovakian, 200 Yugoslavian, 25 Russian emigrant Sokols and 25 Serbian Sokols. The exercise was attended by over 2,000 female Sokols and 3,700 male Sokols, as well as, 20 French, 32 Italian and 16 English gymnasts and one gymnast from Belgium and one from Finland<sup>23</sup>. The members of Rzeszow Sokol nest probably marked their presence at that slet. Available historical sources only say that at the end of 1927 preparations began to participate the slet in Poznan. The following information was found in the local press in Rzeszow: "All-Slavic Sokol Slet will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of June and on 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1929 in Poznan, where our local Sokol team goes. People willing to join the slet can go on a trip with them, if they pay a fee – the head of Sokols, professor Wrobel said"<sup>24</sup>.

The last all-association slet, which took place in Poland before the World War II, was organized on 26–29 June 1937 in Katowice. Officially, it was dedicated to the commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Polish Sokols and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of Silesia to Poland. It was also a tribute to the fallen Silesian insurgents. The slet was attended by Polish and foreign Sokols, Slavic Sokols from Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Russian emigrants, and representatives of the International Federation of Gymnastics. In total, the slet was attended by about 25,000 Sokols, including 20,000 from the Association of Gymnastic Societies "Sokol" in Poland. The slet was organized under the patronage of Polish Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly. The exercise was attended by about 6,000 people, including 1,500 youth. As the cost of the organization of that slet was huge, some of them had to be covered by participants. In addition, each slet, depending on the number of members, paid the so-called slet tax to the Association<sup>25</sup>. The slet in Katowice was attended by a group of more than a doz-

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> „Gazeta Rzeszowska”, Rzeszów (“Rzeszow Newspapers”, Rzeszow) 1929, no 18, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> E. Małolepszy, *Wychowanie fizyczne, sport, przysposobienie wojskowe, zloty (Physical Education, Sport, Military Preparation, Slets)*, [in:] E. Małolepszy, Z. Pawluczuk (ed.), *Zarys dziejów Sokolstwa Polskiego w latach 1867–1997*, Częstochowa (*The Outline of the History of Polish Sokol in the Years 1867–1997*, Czestochowa) 2001, p. 130.



en Sokols from Rzeszow. During the solemn procession the flag of the Rzeszow “Sokol” Society was carried by Wladyslaw Waller<sup>26</sup>.

E. Malolepszy states that: in June, 1938, in Lviv, a nationwide and all slavic slet was to be held to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the defence of Lviv against the Ukrainians. Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly and Prime Minister Felicjan Slawoj-Skladkowski gave the slet their patronage. At the last moment the slet did not receive the consent of provincial authorities and of the Ministry of Home Affairs, as a result of Ukrainian nationalist organizations protest. That decision of administrative authorities was very severely criticized by the whole “Sokol” organization and its press organs, as well as the writings of the national camp<sup>27</sup>. A nationwide Sokol slet in Gdynia<sup>28</sup>, planned for the year 1940, also did not come into effect – the outbreak of the Second World War interrupted the tradition of organizing Sokol slets in Poland for many years.

## International Slets

The representatives of the Rzeszow nest participated in Sokol slets also beyond the borders of our country. The slets organized by Czech “Sokol”, known as all-Sokols slets were among the most important ones. The first slet of the Czech Sokol movement took place in 1882, the second one was to be held in 1887, but it was cancelled due to lack of consent of the Austrian government for its organization. Next all-Sokols slets were held in the Czech Republic in the years: 1891, 1895, 1901, 1907, 1912, 1920, 1926, 1932, 1938. Available historical sources confirm participation of Rzeszow Sokols only in the fourth slet, which took place in Prague from June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1901. Rzeszow was represented by ten Sokols, four of which took part in the lance exercise. In addition, Karol Stry, the then head of Rzeszow nest, participated in the apparatus gymnastics competition winning a silver medal and a distinction in the form of a diploma of recognition. The Rzeszow “Sokol” also received a diploma of recognition from the Association of Czech “Sokol” Societies for the participation of the society members in the competition in Prague. This diploma was sent to Rzeszow in November 1901<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> *Informator VIII Zlotu Sokolstwa Polskiego w Katowicach 26–29 VI 1937 r.*, Katowice (*The Guide of the Eight Slet of Polish Sokols in Katowice*, Katowice), 1937, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> E. Malolepszy, *Wychowanie fizyczne, sport, przysposobienie wojskowe, zloty* (*Physical Education, Sport, Military Preparation, Slets*), [in:] E. Malolepszy, Z. Pawluczuk (ed.), *Zarys dziejów Sokolstwa Polskiego w latach 1867–1997*, Częstochowa (*The Outline of the History of Polish Sokol in the Years 1867–1997*, Czestochowa) 2001, p. 131.

<sup>28</sup> „Przegląd Rzeszowski”, Rzeszów (“Rzeszow Review”, Rzeszow) 1939, No 9, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokol” w Rzeszowie za rok 1901*, Rzeszów (*Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow for the Year 1901*, Rzeszow), 1902, p. 7, 12.

Sokols from Rzeszow also participated in the Slavic slet in Zagreb, which took place between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1906. During the slet, six Rzeszow Sokols participated in free exercise, lance exercise and pyramids. Among the participants of the slet were Stanislaw Krukowski, Wojciech Ksiazek, Karol Mokrzycki, Karol Stary, Franciszek Stein and Julian Woinski<sup>30</sup>.

Another slet, which Rzeszow Sokols were to take part in, was the 8<sup>th</sup> all-Sokols slet in Prague, organized in 1926. Unfortunately, the Gymnastics Association of Sokol Societies in Poland decided not to give their consent to participation of Polish representatives in the slet. Rzeszow Sokol obeyed the recommendation of the Association. The reason for that decision was an idea to combine the Sokol slet with the celebrations in honor of Jan Hus, the Czech national hero, religious reformer and founder of Hussitism<sup>31</sup>. The decision of the Association of Gymnastic Society was the result of the pressures from the Catholic clergy, which became a manifestation of religious intolerance. That event triggered a strong response, which manifested itself in a number of polemics and media publications across the country. Rzeszow press also posted releases on that matter. Rzeszow "Nowy Glos" published a long article entitled "The attitude of Polish Sokol towards the celebrations of Jan Hus in Prague in 1926" on its pages<sup>32</sup>. An extensive analysis of the situation concluded with a strong criticism of the attitude of Polish Sokol: "A few more such incidents, and Polish Sokols will be crossed out from a number of national and social bodies and enter a bunch of confraternities, and ideological activities of Sokol intelligence will become the subject of scholastic thinking"<sup>33</sup>.

## Conclusion

Summarizing the above facts is a table showing the number of Rzeszow "Sokol" slet participants against the total number of participants in subsequent slets:

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<sup>30</sup> F. Stein, *Pamięci 25-lecia „Sokoła” Rzeszowskiego (The Memory of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Rzeszow "Sokol")*, [in:] *Sprawozdanie z czynności Wydziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie za rok 1910, Rzeszów (Report on the Activities of the Faculty of Polish Gymnastic Society "Sokol" in Rzeszow for the Year 1910, Rzeszow)*, 1911, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Devotees to Hussitism are known in many European countries as the Czech Brethren, later called Moravian brethren.

<sup>32</sup> „Nowy Głos”, Rzeszów (“New Voice”, Rzeszow) 1926, No 4, p. 2; No 5, p. 2; No 6, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> „Nowy Głos”, Rzeszów (“New Voice”, Rzeszow) 1926, No 6, p. 2.

**Table 1.** Comparison of the number of Rzeszow “Sokol” members against the total number of participants in nationwide slets of the Polish Sokol movement

| Item no. | Date and place                        | Name of the slet   | No. of participants                        |                                       | No. of exercisers |                                       |
|----------|---------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
|          |                                       |  | Total                                      | Rzeszow                               | Total             | Rzeszow                               |
| 1        | 5–6 June<br>1892<br>Lviv              | 1 <sup>st</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols to celebrate the 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Lviv  | approx 1,000                               | 38                                    | 600               | 15                                    |
| 2        | 14–15 July<br>1894<br>Lviv            | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols on the occasion of the National Kosciuszko Exhibition in Lviv  | 1,502                                      | 56                                    | approx 1,000      | 20                                    |
| 3        | 28–29 June<br>1896<br>Krakow          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols on the occasion of the 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Krakow  | 1,488                                      | 40                                    | approx 900        | 24                                    |
| 4        | 27–29 June<br>1903<br>Lviv            | 4 <sup>th</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols on the occasion of the 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the January Uprising  | 4,628                                      | 127                                   | 2,500             | 68                                    |
| 5        | 14–16 July<br>1910<br>Krakow          | 5 <sup>th</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols “Grunwald Slet”, to commemorate the 500 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald.   | 7,097                                      | 74                                    | approx 5,000      | 54                                    |
| 6        | 6–7 July<br>1913<br>Lviv              | Immediate Slet of Polish Sokols on the occasion of the 40 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the January Uprising  | approx 7,000 Sokols<br>approx 2,000 scouts | 110, including 66 Sokols<br>42 scouts | 3244              | 110, including 66 Sokols<br>42 scouts |
| 7        | 8–10 July<br>1921<br>Warsaw           | 6 <sup>th</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols (The slet of Polish Gymnastic Societies “Sokol”)   | approx 7,000                               | —                                     | approx 2000       | —                                     |
| 8        | 28 June –<br>1 July<br>1929<br>Poznan | 7 <sup>th</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols to commemorating the 10 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of regaining independence and signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the “Vistula’s Wedding to the Baltic Sea”. | 25,685                                     | no data                               | 5,770             | no data                               |
| 9        | 26–29 June<br>1937<br>Katowice        | 8 <sup>th</sup> Slet of Polish Sokols to commemorating the 70 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Polish Sokols and the 15 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of Silesia to Poland                         | approx 25,000                              | 15                                    | 6,000             | approx 15                             |

Source: our own calculations based on various historical sources.

It can be concluded that members of the Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow took an active part in all the Polish Sokol slets organized until the outbreak of the Second World War. Analyzing the number of Rzeszow representatives at Sokol slets as compared to all participants it should be noted that number of members of Rzeszow “Sokol” participating in the next slets has steadily increased – from 38 in 1892 to 127 in 1903. The largest number of Sokols from Rzeszow took an active part in Polish Sokol slets of 1913. These statements show an increase in the involvement of Rzeszow Sokols in preparation for active participation in slets and sporting events. This is undoubtedly a positive effect of participation in such important events which were nationwide slets. Willingness to participate in any subsequent slet was the reason for the mobilization of forces inserted to promoting physical activity in Rzeszow. Diplomas and awards won by the Rzeszow Sokols during sporting events reinforce the belief in the sense of realization of the Sokol idea among members of the organization.

Minor involvement in nationwide events of the Sokol could be observed in the interwar period. Compared to the pre-war period, the members of “Sokol” from Rzeszow only episodically appeared on the general all-society slets. The interest in slets clearly decreased both among members of the Rzeszow nest, as well as inhabitants of the town. That situation was a consequence of putting all the strength and financial resources for active participation in regional and district slets. It was also the consequence of the decline in popularity of the Gymnastic Society “Sokol” in Rzeszow, expressed in a small number of active members, as well as significant financial difficulties of the society.

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## Streszczenie

### **Udział członków Polskiego Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie w zlotach sokolstwa polskiego i zlotach wszechsokolich do 1939 roku**

Praca stanowi przyczynek do dziejów działalności Polskiego Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Rzeszowie, które zostało utworzone w 1886 roku. Aktywność zlotowa członków rzeszowskiego gniazda jest odzwierciedleniem stanu zainteresowania i poparcia dla idei sokolej wśród mieszkańców Rzeszowa od końca XIX wieku do wybuchu II wojny światowej.

Zloty stanowiły istotny element integracji ruchu sokolego i były przejawem więzi ze społeczeństwem. Ich celem było przede wszystkim propagowanie idei sokolej, prezentacja siły ruchu sokolego, wymiana wzajemnych doświadczeń i zintegrowanie przedstawicieli poszczególnych gniazd. Miały one również szerszy kontekst patriotyczno-narodowy. Każdy zlot sokoli miał swój cel i ideę, myśl i hasło, które mu przyświecało. Uczestnictwo w zlotach zawsze było dla członków „Sokoła” sprawą prestiżową. Przedstawiciele rzeszowskiego gniazda PTG „Sokół” brali udział we wszystkich ogólnozwiązkowych zlotach sokolstwa polskiego przed I wojną światową, organizowanych przez Związek Towarzystw Gimnastycznych w Austrii. Źródła historyczne potwierdzają ich obecność na zlotach organizowanych we Lwowie (1892, 1894, 1903, 1913) oraz w Krakowie (1896, 1910). Członkowie rzeszowskiego „Sokoła” zaznaczyli również swój udział w zagranicznych zlotach sokolich: w Pradze (1901 r.) i w Zagrzebiu (1906 r.). W latach 1919–1939 przedstawiciele rzeszowskiego gniazda nie uczestniczyli już tak aktywnie w zlotach ogólnozwiązkowych, których organizatorem był Związek Towarzystw Gimnastycznych „Sokół” w Polsce. Uczestniczyli jedynie w zlotach w Poznaniu (1929 r.) i w Katowicach (1937 r.).

**Słowa kluczowe:** historia, Rzeszów, Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne „Sokół”.