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**POLISH–DANISH RELATIONS  
IN THE FIELD OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT  
IN PERIOD 1919–1939 IN THE LIGHT OF LATEST RESEARCH**

Official contacts between Poland and Denmark in the field of sports were initiated extremely late and remained in the shadow of cooperation on other levels. Within the first ten years of the independent Polish Republic there were no records of any tournaments, competitions or matches, official or unofficial, between the national teams of the two countries. The only exception were two meetings organised for the players of ‘Cracovia’ and AGF Århus in 1923. Poland lost the first game 2 : 4, but beat the Danish team in the return match 6 : 1.<sup>1</sup> Those first meetings on the pitch, however, did not result in any closer cooperation between the clubs. The reason for that situation was probably slow development of mutual political and economic relations and their influence on contacts in other fields, including sport. The consequence of interrelations between Polish and Danish industry, commerce and agriculture, taking shape in the 1920s, was the increase of interest in the partner country, its culture, art and science. Gradually developing contacts, both official and unofficial, had positive influence also on environments connected with sport.

The discipline in which the representatives of the two countries competed most frequently was boxing. In 1928 the boxing section of the Danish ‘Indrætssklubben af 1899’ (IK’99) and the Polish Boxing Association (PZB) established closer cooperation for the first time. Five boxers of Katowice Boxing Sports Club

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<sup>1</sup> *Polsk mening om Landskampen*, “Politiken”, 229, 20.05.1934, p. 8.

(BKS Katowice) went to Copenhagen upon the invitation of the Danes. The magnitude of interest that the press took in the first fights between the representatives of the countries was impressive.<sup>2</sup> The first five fights took place on 10 October in *Idrætshuset* sports hall in Copenhagen. Only one of those fights was won by a Polish boxer, Jan Górny.<sup>3</sup> Two days later, the representatives of BKS Katowice once again stood against their Danish opponents in the ring. The only Polish winner was Alfred Kupka. The remaining Polish boxers lost their fights.<sup>4</sup> This sporting event was widely commented upon across Denmark and led to establishing cooperation between Polish and Danish boxing clubs and even sports commentators. In the following years boxers met in the ring on five more occasions.<sup>5</sup> Denmark welcomed, among others, competitors of 'Warta' Poznań and 'Warszawianka' Boxing Club with the legendary coach Feliks Stamm. They were received in Denmark by representatives of 'Århus Atletklub', IF 'Sparta Bokseklub' and 'Odense Amatørbokseklub'.<sup>6</sup> The results of those meetings were various, with most fights won by Polish boxers, but that was a minor issue. The most important thing was that guests from Poland were welcomed with great warmth and hospitality by Danish sports authorities, fans and the press, which expressed the wish to "host boxers in Denmark as often as possible".<sup>7</sup> The last meeting of boxers in the discussed period took place in September 1938 in Copenhagen and Århus. Poland won 10 out of 16 fights.<sup>8</sup> Although the authorities of the Danish boxing club in Århus did not practice inviting foreign guests more than once, they made an exception for the competitors from Warsaw.<sup>9</sup> The performance of the Poles was

<sup>2</sup> *Det dansk-polske Boksestævne*, "Berlingske Tidende", 282, 11.10.1928, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Det dansk-polske Boksestævnes første Dag*, "Politiken", 11, 11.10.1928, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Sidste Polak-Aften i Idrætshuset*, "Politiken", 13, 13.10.1928, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> "Stadion", 49, 4.12.1930, p. 15; *De danske Boksere i Polen*, "Social-Demokraten", 334, 3.12.1930, p. 8; *Bokserzy Warty zwyciężają Duńczyków 12:4*, "Kurier Sportowy", 48, 2 XII 1930, p. 3; *Det dansk-polske Boksestævne*, "Politiken", 63, 2.12.1931, p. 10; *Pięściarze Warty na ringu w Kopenhadze*, "Przegląd Sportowy", 97, 5.12.1931, p. 3; *Polens Boksere vandt fire Kampe*, "Berlingske Tidende", 334, 3.12.1931, p. 7; *Det danske Boksere i Idrætshuset*, "Politiken", 64, 3.12.1931, p. 14; *Det danske Boksehold tabte 7 Kampe*, "Berlingske Tidende", 336, 5.12.1931, p. 11; *Syv danske Sejre mod en polsk*, "Politiken", 66, 5.12.1931, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Duńczycy o boksie polskim*, "Przegląd Sportowy", 76, 23.12.1937, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Zwycięskie tournée bokserów Warszawy*, *ibid.*, 75, 19.09.1938, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Vinder Polakkerne den første Bokseften?*, "Politiken", 345, 14.09.1938, p. 10; *Polens Hold til Rundskuestævnet*, *ibid.*, 339, 8.09.1938, p. 4; *Polakkerne møder med stærkere Hold*, "Berlingske Tidende", 248, 8.09.1938, p. 10; *Knud Jensen faar come-back*, *ibid.*, 249, 9.09.1938, p. 12; *Sv. Aa. Christensens "come back" Aftenens Oplevelse*, "Politiken", 346, 15.09.1938, p. 6; *Gerh. Petersen-Kolczyński*, "Berlingske Tidende", 256, 16.09.1938, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Duński bilans 3x10:6*, "Przegląd Sportowy", 78, 22.09.1938, p. 6.

received with such appreciation and fondness that another meeting was planned for September 1939. Due to the outbreak of war the meeting never took place.

Another sports discipline uniting Polish and Danish fans was football. However, the first meeting between the national teams of Poland and Denmark in an international tournament took place as late as in 1934 in Copenhagen<sup>10</sup>. A correspondent of “Przegląd Sportowy”, Marian Strzelecki, gave an extensive interview to “Politiken” a few days before the meeting, in which he declared that the result of the match was a big unknown.<sup>11</sup> The result proved to be unfavourable for Poland. The hosting team won 4 : 2, which was not a big surprise for the Danes. The Polish team was considered an undemanding opponent and the day before the game the result was expected to be 2 : 0 for Denmark. Friendly relations established between the journalists of “Przegląd Sportowy” and “Politiken” during the first match played by the national teams as well as the Olympics in Berlin, resulted in closer cooperation. A “Politiken” journalist, Emil Andersen, known to Danish readers as Mr Smile, did not only characterise Danish sport in Polish press on multiple occasions, but was also repeatedly received as a guest by his “friends from Poland” Narcyz Süssermann and Maurycy Lipszyc when Danish teams played matches in Poland.<sup>12</sup> One such occasion occurred in the autumn of 1936. On 4 October in Warsaw there was a meeting held between the national teams of Poland and Denmark. The guest team won the match 2 : 1.<sup>13</sup> However, the level of play of both teams was low and the match was later referred to as uninteresting. “This win was not a triumph of Danish football”, as one of the sports journalists summed up, despite the win of the Danish national team.<sup>14</sup>

The last match played between the two national teams in the discussed period took place on 12 September 1937 in the capital of Poland. In connection with that event, the journalists of “Przegląd Sportowy” turned to the Danish minister plenipotentiary in Warsaw, Peter Schou, asking him to comment on the relations between the two countries as regards sports. In the given interview the diplomat

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<sup>10</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie [New Files Archives in Warsaw – further: AAN Warszawa], Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – further: MSZ], B. 24890, p. 69: Pismo Polskiego Związku Piłki Nożnej do Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych Polski, 6.03.1934.

<sup>11</sup> *Polsk Mening om Landskampen*, “Politiken”, 229, 2.05.1934, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> E. Andersen: *Landsholdet mod Polen – ingen Eksperimenter*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, 84, 1.10.1936, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Vort bageste Forsvar og Stoltz vandt Landskampen*, “Berlingske Tidende”, 276, 5.10.1936, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Reserveren vandt Landskampen for os!*, “Politiken”, 5, 5.10.1936, p. 10.

made remarks on the limited knowledge of Danish people about the newly-reborn state and the important role of sport in the process of bringing together the two countries: "I have to admit that unfortunately the people of Denmark have insufficient knowledge of the impressive national and economic work of restoration done in Poland from the moment of liberating the state from the yoke of the enemy; our ideas of what Poland stands for today and of its place in economy and politics are very faint. That is why I find it very advantageous that several dozen of young Danish sportsmen have a chance to establish their own opinion about modern Poland on the basis of what they see here with their own eyes." One of sports journalists was very enthusiastic the day before the football match: "We are happy about tightening contacts with Denmark whose healthy, solid atmosphere can be nothing but good influence on the Polish sports movement. We are glad that despite geographical and communication difficulties our relations are gradually developing and expanding to new fields. We are also glad that in a few days we will have a chance to reciprocate the hospitality and warmth with which our Danish friends always welcomed and hosted Polish sports teams."<sup>15</sup> The match, whose result was predicted to be 2 : 1 for Poland, ended with the result of 3 : 1.<sup>16</sup> Emil Andersen, present on the stand, stated in an interview for "Przegląd Sportowy": "With today's win you confirmed the Polish-Danish contacts in the field of football."<sup>17</sup>

The Davis Cup competitions were also a chance for the sportsmen of both countries to meet. The Danish Tennis Association (*Dansk Lawn Tennis Forbund*) was established in 1920 and in the following year it already declared the participation of the national representation in the international tournament.<sup>18</sup> Its Polish equivalent, the Polish Tennis Association, was founded in 1921, but contrary to the Danes, Polish players did not achieve any success in this discipline and the level of play presented by them on international courts was very poor.<sup>19</sup> The first meeting of tennis players took place in May 1928.<sup>20</sup> The fourth start of Polish players in the Davis Cup competitions ended with a defeat of 0 : 5 suffered by Maks

<sup>15</sup> *O przyjaźni polsko-duńskiej*, "Przegląd Sportowy", 72, 9.10.1937, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Det unge dansker Landshold tabte 1-3 i Warszawa*, "Berlingske Tidende", 253, 13.09.1937, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Byliście zawsze lepsi... Pochlebny głos dziennikarza duńskiego*, "Przegląd Sportowy", 73, 13.09.1937, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Dania w Pucharze Davisa i jej rakiety reprezentacyjne*, *ibid.*, 18, 5.05.1928, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> H. Lipoński, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Dania-Polska o Puchar Davisa*, "Stadion", 19, 8.05.1928, p. 4.

and Jerzy Stolarow and Przemysław Warmiński in a game with Axel Petersen and Einer Ulrich. The day before the tournament a tennis player, Karol Steinert, wrote in “Przegląd Sportowy”: “We do not have any chance of winning. We can count on honourable defeat.”<sup>21</sup> However, in the conclusion, he expressed his great satisfaction with the arrival of ‘representatives of the brave nation of Poland’s great friend, Denmark.’<sup>22</sup> In the following years there were four more occasions for tennis players to meet on court. However, Polish representatives, Józef Hebda, Ignacy Tłoczyński, Ernest Wittmann and Jadwiga Jędrzejowska, suffered defeats in confrontation with Danish players. After their return to Poland the sportsmen emphasised on several occasions that Scandinavian players had excellent conditions to practice, compared to Polish realities. In Poland they did not have indoor courts with wooden floors which they saw in Stockholm and Copenhagen. Expressing their admiration for that type of constructions, they referred to them in a press interview as “palaces arranged according to the most modern technological demands”.<sup>23</sup>

As it comes to physical culture, the Danes had unquestionable merits in the field of gymnastics. In the discussed period the notion of gymnastics had a very wide meaning and extended beyond the modern understanding of this issue. It was conceived not only as a sports discipline but also as a subject of scientific analysis, closely related to anatomy, physiology and hygiene of the motoric system. The idea of teaching teenagers gymnastics came to Poland from Scandinavian countries in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Polish people came to the capital of Denmark in great numbers in order to study at the National Gymnastics Institute (*Statens Gymnstikinstitut*) and at the Department of the Theory of Gymnastics at the University of Copenhagen. Danish physiologists, Johannes Lindhard, Knud Knudsen and Niels Bukh, modified the extremely popular system of physical education created by Pehr Henrik Ling and his son, Hjalmar Ling, from Sweden.<sup>24</sup> The creators of the system assumed that gymnastic exercises should have scientific basis and through a number of successive, carefully

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<sup>21</sup> Steinert o tenisie duńskim, “Przegląd Sportowy”, 18, 5.05.1928, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> *Przykra lekcja tenisa w hali*, ibid., 14, 18.02.1933, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> R. Kalina, K. Klukowski, S. Ślusarski: *Naukowe aspekty edukacji fizycznej w Wojsku Polskim 1918–1996*, in: *Wychowanie fizyczne w edukacji obronnej społeczeństwa*, vol. 1, ed. by R. Kalina, Warszawa 1996, p. 31; E. Piasecki: *Niektóre doniosłe zagadnienia naukowe wychowania fizycznego*, “Wychowanie Fizyczne” 1928, 6, pp. 150–152; idem: *Ewolucja metody ćwiczeń gimnastycznych na zasadach systemu Linga*, ibid., 1929, 9/10, p. 259.

selected activities, such as bends, hangings, shifts and jumps, guarantee harmonious development of the whole body. The role of the teacher, in their opinion, was to form the bodies of students “just like a sculptor forms a statue”.<sup>25</sup> Those innovative, for those times, ideas gained great popularity in Poland. In particular, the achievements of N. Bukh, the creator of the gymnastic school in Ollerup (*Gymnastikhøjskole*), brought him fame. His book entitled *Primitiv gymnastik eller grundgymnastik*, published in 1922 and translated into Polish four years later, proved to be a milestone in the theory of physical education.<sup>26</sup> Many Poles took part in courses conducted by the instructor in Ollerup in the interwar period. The programme of the course, apart from gymnastics lessons, included sports games, track and field sports, folk dancing and swimming. In 1932 the price of a two-week training course amounted to about PLN 90.<sup>27</sup> As one of the journalists of “Berlingske Tidende” mentioned in an interview for the Polish press: “Every year a crowd of Polish students, who are Bukh’s most grateful learners, comes to Ollerup where Bukh works.”<sup>28</sup>

In September 1937, upon the invitation of the Polish Olympic Committee and the Polish-Danish Association, N. Bukh together with a gymnastics team visited Warsaw, Łódź, Cracow, Katowice and Poznań.<sup>29</sup> On the eve of the performance of the Danes in the capital of Poland a Danish minister Peter Schou, ensured: “I dare say that the performance of Niels Bukh’s gymnasts on 19 and 21 September, without trying to diminish anyone else’s fame, will be a sample of the best that Denmark can show in the field of sport.”<sup>30</sup> A team of 13 girls and 13 boys presented itself on ‘Wojska Polskiego’ Stadium in Warsaw. The spectacular effect of presented exercises was to constitute a specific advertisement of the method of physical education created and promoted by him. The reaction of the audience of ten thousand people gathered at the stadium was extremely enthusiastic. The Polish press called Niels Bukh “the miracle worker from Ollerup”<sup>31</sup>, “the magi-

<sup>25</sup> *Główne kierunki rozwoju wychowania fizycznego od końca XVIII w. do 1918 r.*, ed. by K. Hądzelek, R. Wroczyński, Wrocław 1968, pp. 3–15.

<sup>26</sup> N. Bukh: *Gimnastyka podstawowa*, Poznań 1926.

<sup>27</sup> D. R.: *Wakacyjny kurs gimnastyki w Ollerup*, “Wychowanie Fizyczne” 1932, 6, p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> *Niels Bukh, najlepszy gimnastyk świata*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, 70, 2.09.1937, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Parobek duński pierwszym gimnastykiem świata*, “Kurier Poranny”, 259, 18.09.1937, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> *O przyjaźni polsko-duńskiej*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, 72, 9.09.1937, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Gimnastyka, która porywa*, *ibid.*, 75, 20.09.1937, p. 6.

cian from Denmark”<sup>32</sup>, “the Napoleon of gymnastics”<sup>33</sup>, and the show itself was recognised as impressive and thrilling. The words of admiration stated: “We have to say that gymnastics in the interpretation of Bukh’s team is as exciting as the most fierce fights of footballers, boxers or athletes.”<sup>34</sup> Other Polish cities received the performances of the Danish gymnasts with similar enthusiasm. Setting off on the return journey, N. Bukh stated in an interview given to one of the newspapers: “I am very pleased with our visit to Poland. I had been warned before I left that gymnastics is not very popular in Poland. However, I became convinced that this is not the case. There were a lot of spectators who reacted so passionately to the performances of my team that I decided to accept another invitation of the Polish Olympic Committee and return next year”<sup>35</sup> Due to political tensions in Europe the announced performances of Danish gymnasts in the following years did not come into effect.

Niels Bukh was known in Denmark for his pro-German sympathies, which he confirmed on several occasions in press interviews and during lectures. Not only did he officially express his support for the national socialist party, but also openly showed his admiration for Nazism. He identified himself with its ideology based on chauvinism and racism. The thing that particularly made it attractive, according to Bukh, was the cult of physical strength.<sup>36</sup> Bukh visited Berlin as soon as in the year that the national socialist party came into power in Germany. The visit was seen as evidence of cultural cooperation between the Third Reich and the “small, northern, brotherly nation”.<sup>37</sup> The activity of the world-renowned gymnastics instructor provoked a discussion on the attitude of representatives of the world of sport towards Nazism. The cult of body and power, which officially became a part of national ideology after Nazis took over power, could have been perceived by young Danish sportsmen as attractive.

<sup>32</sup> *Gimnastyka, która zdobyła świat*, “Kurier Warszawski”, 259, 20.09.1937, p. 7; *Wspaniała rewia gimnastyki duńskiej na stadionie WP*, “Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny”, 261, 21.09.1937, p. 2; *Czarodziej z Danii na boisku Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie*, “Dobry Wieczór”, 261, 20.09.1937, p. 4; *Czarodziej z Ollerup*, “Kurier Poznański”, 432, 22.09.1937, p. 11; *Jeszcze o Nielsie Bukhu*, “Głos Poranny”, 263, 24.09.1937, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> *Występ duńskich gimnastyków Bukha wspaniałym widowiskiem sportowym Krakowa*, “Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny”, 262, 22.09.1937, p. 20; *Niels Bukh – Napoleon gimnastyki oczarowuje Warszawę*, “Dobry Wieczór”, 258, 17.09.1937, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Gimnastyka, która zdobyła świat*, “Kurier Warszawski”, 259, 20.09.1937, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Szkola Nielsa Bukha podbija Kraków*, “Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny”, 266, 26.09.1937, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> H. Bonde: *Fodbold med Fjenden. Dansk idræt under hagekorset*, Odense 2006, p. 40.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

The choice of Berlin as the place of organising the 11<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games planned for 1936 raised a lot of controversy in the international public opinion. People were concerned that the Olympic spirit of fair competition would be dominated by the Nazi propaganda.<sup>38</sup> On 3 August 1936 N. Bukh's gymnastics team performed at the Berlin stadium. The gymnasts that took part in the show were students of the school in Ollerup carefully selected in respect of their appearance: they all had blond hair and blue eyes.<sup>39</sup> Due to a delay in the programme and rainy weather, Adolf Hitler was absent during the performance. Therefore, the instructor turned to the Danish Olympic Committee (*Danmarks Olympiske Komité*) to give permission for repeating the performance. However, his request was denied,<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, N. Bukh had a chance to meet the Chancellor of the Reich personally during the Olympics and talk with him about the basics of national socialism.<sup>41</sup> In the following years the cooperation between N. Bukh and the representatives of German sport further intensified. At the turn of 1936 and 1937 the instructor was awarded the Olympic Order of the second grade. It was formally presented to him by a German deputy in Denmark, Cecil von Renthe-Fink. In June 1937 the diplomat and his wife visited the school in Ollerup.<sup>42</sup> In the same year they started negotiations regarding cooperation between the school and *Reichsakademie für Leibesübungen* in Berlin. The negotiations resulted in an exchange of carefully selected students. The instructor started fully cooperating with authorities in occupation in Denmark in the years 1940–1945. His international fame was used by the Nazi propaganda in order to create a positive image of German-Danish relations and that led to an ultimate drop of N. Bukh in the eyes of his compatriots.<sup>43</sup>

In the years 1918–1939 contacts between Poland and Denmark regarding physical culture were limited to only several sport disciplines and physical education. It is worth noticing that the most significant development in this field occurred in the 1930s, a period of intensified economic cooperation. Therefore, we might venture to say that the revival of Polish-Danish economic, political and

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<sup>38</sup> M. Słoniewski: *Zarys działalności polskiego ruchu olimpijskiego w latach 1919–1939*, Warszawa 1990, p. 73.

<sup>39</sup> H. Bonde: op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> Idem: *Gymnastics and Politics. Niels Bukh and Male Aesthetics*, Copenhagen 2006, pp. 192–193.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>42</sup> H. Bonde: *Fodbold med ...*, p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

cultural relations had its influence on sport-related contacts, both official and unofficial. Their intensification was hindered by, among other things, financial difficulties of Polish associations and clubs, as well as lack of appropriate infrastructure. Conditions favourable to undertaking physical activities were very different in the two countries. Most competitors returning from Denmark emphasised the ideal state of numerous stadiums and sport facilities in that country. In Polish realities, in the face of more important expenses covered from the state budget, such as health service, education or army, such investments could not be put into practice. According to statistical data, in 1937 in Poland there were 1187 sports halls and 8948 sports grounds of which only 1644 were appropriate for playing team sports<sup>44</sup>, whereas in Denmark in the same year the total number of football and handball fields amounted to 2170 and the number of sports halls amounted to 2604.<sup>45</sup> The minimal support of state authorities stirred up strong criticism of activists suffering the substantial deficiencies in Polish sport, especially as regards contacts with foreign teams. After one of the boxing matches that took place in Denmark, one of the correspondents of “Przegląd Sportowy” wrote: “The Danes crushed us with their sports halls. Århus – a city of one hundred thousand people has a hall for four thousand spectators. A beautiful place – ideal for organising boxing matches. We will blush for shame when the Danes see our shacks.”<sup>46</sup>

Sporadic contacts between sportsmen from the two countries did not constitute any proof of Polish-Danish cooperation in the field of physical culture. However, they were undoubtedly good for tightening mutual unofficial relations. We cannot disregard the social function of sport which constituted an important factor in bringing closer the nations that got a chance to learn about one another. Even more so that both the achievements of Polish sportsmen in Denmark and Danish sportsmen in Poland were not generally known. It is also worth noticing that the contestants coming to both countries were received with great liking and friendship. However, boxing was the only sport in connection with which the established contacts resulted in further exchange of sportsmen and cooperation between clubs.

<sup>44</sup> *Mały rocznik statystyczny 1937*, Warszawa 1937, p. 331.

<sup>45</sup> *Statistisk Aarbog 1939*, København 1939, p. 168.

<sup>46</sup> *Duński bilans 3x10:6*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, 78, 22.09.1938, p. 6.

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## STOSUNKI POLSKO-DUŃSKIE NA PŁASZCZYŹNIE SPORTU W LATACH 1919–1939 W ŚWIETLE NAJNOWSZYCH BADAŃ

### Streszczenie

Uwarunkowania rozwoju kontaktów sportowych II Rzeczypospolitej z innymi krajami w latach dwudziestych XX wieku były niezwykle trudne. Wynikały one przede wszystkim z ciężkiej sytuacji ekonomicznej odrodzonego państwa, stojącego przed koniecznością konsolidacji po zakończeniu pierwszej wojny światowej. Oficjalne polsko-duńskie kontakty w dziedzinie sportu zostały zainicjowane niezwykle późno i przebiegały w cieniu współpracy na innych płaszczyznach. Przez pierwszych dziesięć lat istnienia niepodległej Rzeczypospolitej nie odnotowano żadnych rozgrywek, zawodów ani meczów zarówno oficjalnych, jak i nieoficjalnych pomiędzy reprezentacjami obu narodów. Wyjątek stanowiły dwa spotkania piłkarzy klubu „Cracovia” z drużyną AGF Århus w 1923 roku. Przyczyny tego stanu rzeczy dopatrywać się należy w powolnym rozwoju obustronnych stosunków politycznych i gospodarczych oraz ich wpływie na kontakty w innych dziedzinach, w tym również sportu. Konsekwencją kształtujących się w latach dwudziestych powiązań polskiego i duńskiego przemysłu, handlu i rolnictwa był wzrost zainteresowania krajem partnerskim, jego kulturą, sztuką i nauką. Rozwijające się stopniowo relacje, zarówno oficjalne, jak i nieoficjalne, oddziaływały pozytywnie również na środowiska związane ze sportem. Pierwsze kontakty między polskimi i duńskimi sportowcami zainicjowano w latach trzydziestych, miały one jednak przeważnie charakter nieoficjalny. Do dyscyplin, w których najczęściej polscy i duńscy zawodnicy stawali naprzeciwko siebie, należały boks, tenis i piłka nożna. Jednak jedynie w wypadku boksu nawiązane kontakty zaowocowały szerszą współpracą między klubami, a w konsekwencji wymianą sportowców.