

CANOE TOURISM IN POLAND (1919–1939)

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Abstract:

After Poland regained the Independence in 1918 the interest in using canoes in water recreation grew significantly. The very first organization to start spreading canoe tourism was 'Hellas' association established in 1924 in Myslowice. The growth of canoe tourism interest triggered that the first canoe cruises took place, so called canoeing rally. The usage of canoes aroused the interest particularly among the youth, scouts, white-collar workers and the army.

In 1927, Warsaw organized the first national water tourism, canoes and rowing exhibition. Together with establishing structures of Polish Canoeing Association the regulations concerning tourist canoeing rallies were introduced, for individual and also group ones.

Since 1932, swimming through water routs was regulated by 'Ustawa wodna'. In 1933, Antoni Heinrich published 'Podrecznik kajakowca' that included detailed information concerning canoe tourism. The number of canoes in 1934 led the Polish Canoeing Association to elaborate the regulations which complemented the recordings of the statute of the association. It also provided a number of requirements concerning the equipment and law and water habits.

The development of tourism movement in Poland was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

After regaining the Independence, Poland started to rebuild inland navigation. The World War I destroyed lots of water devices and means of transportation. The reconstruction started. Among others, water routs, devices and water units were rebuilt.

Moreover Poland started to rebuild water transport, passenger as well as goods. People started propagating the motto: *working on land, rest in water...*¹

A number of organizations and associations started to arrange relaxation in water.

Swimming using small boats in water reservoirs was taking place for a long time. In 1930s on Warsaw part of Vistula people were swimming in boats, canoes, sailboats and even first motorboats. Around 1850, there were 28 havens functioning on Vistula. Moreover the number of water units caused that the authorities introduced the obligation to comply with water law.

After Poland regained the Independence in 1918 the interest in using canoes in water recreation grew significantly.

The very first organization to start spreading canoe tourism was 'Hellas' association established in 1924 in Myslowice. The canoes during the Interwar Period were referred to as 'fold-up' canoes. It was first popularized in Silesia and then it quickly gained interest of

¹ Szlakami wodnymi do Bałtyku, s. 2.

people living in majority of river cities. The growth of canoe tourism interest triggered that the first canoe cruises took place, so called canoeing rally.

During 1925 – 1926 in canoe sections alongside with the wooden, usually hand-made canoes there were also first so called ‘fold-up’ canoes. In these years a number of fold-up canoes occurred on the Vistula, Garczynski lake and Baltic coastal waters during scout water units convention. The canoes were made use of on all of Polish rivers, lakes and channels. Alongside with the growing number of canoes additional canoe shelters were built. The usage of canoes aroused the interest particularly among the youth, scouts, white-collar workers and the army. The fold-up canoes were referred to as the ideal type of boat in water tourism².



1936, the advertisement of canoes by ‘Piast’ company.



The participants of ‘Sokol’ association during the break form canoeing rally on the Vistula.

² W. Grzelak: *Sport Kajakowy*, [w:] T. Sawicki, W. Kwast (red.): *Przewodnik Sportowy*, Warszawa 1933, s. 72–76.

The canoe equipment was composed of mast and sail, rudder with a sword, rubber pillows filled with air for sitting, tent with a floor, rubber mattresses for sleeping and dishes. The enumerated objects were supposed to provide comfort and fulfill water tourists expectations as well as make them independent and self-sufficient during water cruises³.

The very courageous canoe journey from Pinsk to Gdansk took place in 1925. The six Lvov participants (J. Abrysowski, L. Dabrowski, A. Dzbanski, F. Kalinowski, J. Sidorowicz and J. Zienkowicz) sailed with the canoe through water route. The distance was traveled within four weeks (from July 11th to August 7th)⁴.

At the same time, three graduates from Przemysl 2nd high school decided to travel the distance from Przemysl to Gdansk with boat that they built themselves. They were: Hausmann, Loos and Mann⁵.

On the initiative of 'Sport wodny' editorial office in 1926, there was a canoeing rally from Warsaw to Gdansk⁶.

However, it was not until 1927 that Warsaw organized the first national water tourism, canoes and rowing exhibition. Even though there were lots of obstacles, a number of social organizations tried to popularize water tourism.

With regard to the diversity of water routes and their picturesque river banks as well as antique buildings situated alongside, Polish water routes surpassed all European countries. In the guide books of German travel agencies, Polish water routes on Brda, Czarna Woda and Dretwica were recommended. They were equal to Dunajec, Dniestr, Prut, Wilia as well as thousands of lakes of Pomerania and Wilenszczyzna.

Yet another canoeing rally celebrating national exhibition took place in 1929 from Warsaw to Poznan. The participants of 125 teams took part in the rally. In 1930, celebrating the 10th anniversary of regaining the sea access another rally took place, from Cracow to the sea. Alongside with the Polish participants, 22 Czech oarsmen took part in the rally. The organizer of the canoeing rally was Polish Rowing Association⁷.

Together with establishing structures of Polish Canoeing Association the regulations concerning tourist canoeing rallies were introduced, for individual and also group ones. Since 1932, swimming through water routes was regulated by 'Ustawa wodna'⁸.

The act required that every boat should have technical documentation and also so called registration number. The documents were free and issued by water administration units.

A huge event among rowing society in Poland was held in 1933 canoeing rally titled 'throughout Poland to the sea'. The rally was organized by the Maritime and Colonial League. The individual part of the rally was held from any Polish city to Torun (star rally), subsequently all contestants swam to Gdynia (collective rally)⁹.

In Poland in 1930s during the Interwar Period, individual or several boat composition journeys were organized. Usually the water equipment was hand-made and based on printed manuals¹⁰. According to 'Przewodnik sportowy published in 1933 and based on swimming diaries scout teams swam 600 000km, the participants of canoe section 'Wawel' Cracow – 40 000km and canoeists of 'Wisla' Warsaw – 24 000km. The activity of canoeists was boosted by the Polish radio contest announced in December 1932. The contest concerned the

³ Tamże.

⁴ „Sport”, 1925 nr 143, s. 282; „Sport”, 1925 nr 146, s. 316.

⁵ Tamże

⁶ W. Kwast: *Turystyka*, [w:] *Przewodnik Sportowy*, Warszawa 1933, s. 216–217.

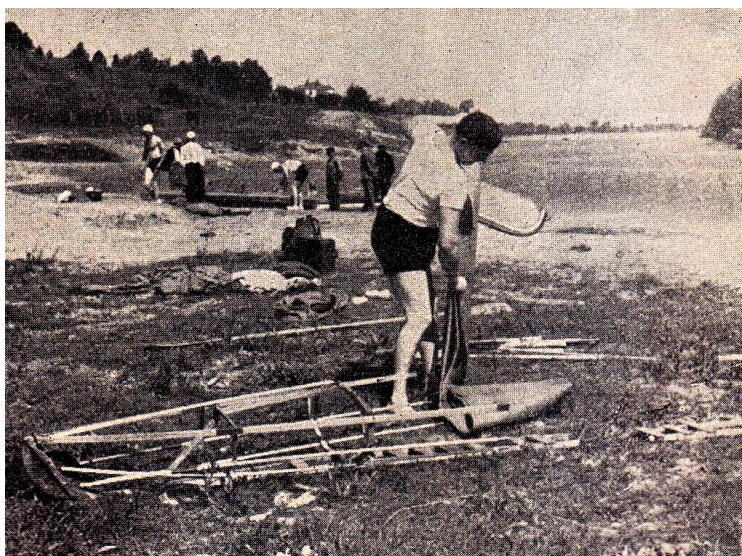
⁷ W. Kwast: *Turystyka*, dz. cyt.

⁸ Dz. U. RP Nr 62/32, poz. 573.

⁹ W. Kwast: *Turystyka*, dz. cyt.

¹⁰ A. Heinrich: *Podręcznik Kajakowca*, Warszawa 1933, s. 230.

most beautiful journey 'from water to water'. The first winner of the contest held in 1933 was A. Wislocki for the journey through Braslawski lakes¹¹.



1926, completing fold-up canoe.



1937, the canoeists of 'Sokol' association starting the rally on San to Przemysl.
In the background the bridge on San with distinctive roof.

The canoe tourism was regulated by the requirements of Polish Canoeing Association concerning canoeing hygiene. The water tourism and sport participants were embraced by special medical aid. The exhaustive manual concerning the necessity of obeying 'canoeing hygiene' was introduced by Antoni Heinrich in 'Podrecznik kajakowca'.

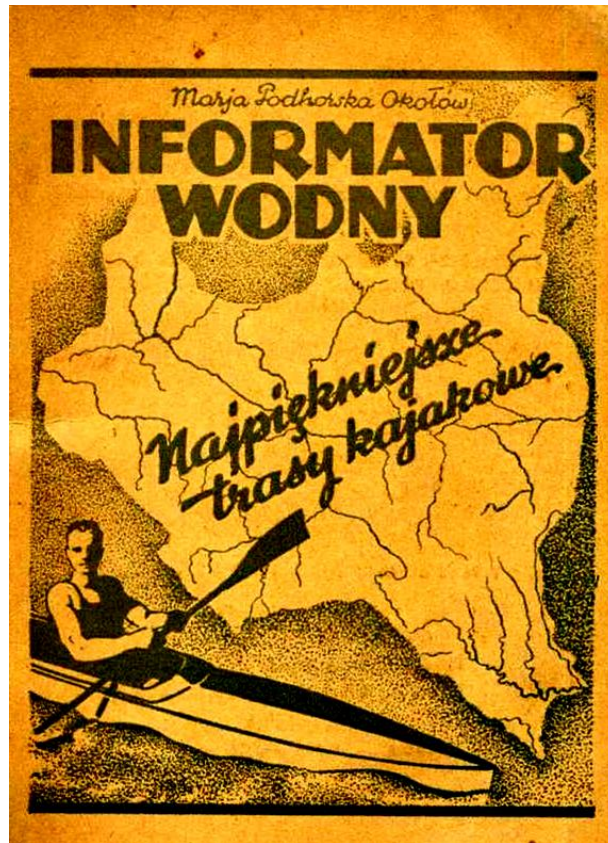
The people who took up canoeing or any other water device were instructed to follow the rules:

- start the journey when relaxed and full of energy,
- if reaching the starting point requires driving then the first part of the journey should not be long,

¹¹ W. Grzelak: *Sport...*, dz. cyt., s. 76.

- the effort of rowing should be evenly divided so the lungs, heart and muscles are not overworked,
- every one hour of effort should have 10 minute brake, every three hours – 20 minutes and 3-4 hours the break should include dinner,
- control the body condition, the exhausted people were viewed as those who lost attitude, were sensitive, nervous, depressed, without spark in the eye, without appetite, suffering insomnia, with the fear in heart, and whose heart beat could not reach its correct level for a long time (normally 3 to 5 minutes), and also those with weight loss¹².

In such situation the author recommends a rest through limiting daily dose of effort and in more severe cases – whole day relaxation. The contestants were warned from using any medications that stimulate heart work, which improve body effectiveness for a while but after short time they lead to even bigger depression¹³. When the muscle pain appeared it was suggested to stop the effort and staying on land until they recede completely. After the great effort it was suggested to obey the proper amount of sleep – 8 hours during the night and 1 hour slumber after dinner¹⁴.



The guidebook presenting Polish water routs.

Further instructions of A. Heinricha informed about obeying the nutrition hygiene, sunbathing, taking baths as well as the first aid with fainting and other conditions, especially those in water¹⁵.

¹² *Higiena kajakarstwa*, [w:] A. Heinrich: *Podręcznik kajakowca*, Warszawa 1933, s. 236–239.

¹³ Tamże.

¹⁴ Tamże, s. 249–254.

¹⁵ Tamże, s. 240–246.

The great significance was attributed to the necessity of having first aid kit. The author provides its exemplary equipment¹⁶. The requirements, the equipment and usage instruction concerning the kit on the tourist swimming unit were as follows:

- *ammonia* (15,0) – as a means used for regaining consciousness and against insects stings,
- *aspirin* – antipyretic, sudorific, used against cold, rheumatic pain, head and toothache, 2 pills three times a day, drink a lot of water*¹⁷,
- **bandage* (2 elastic bands – width: two to three centimeters),
- *bromine* (10x0,25) – sedative,
- **oilcloth* – for compresses,
- **quinine* (10x0,25) – antipyretic, necessity in malaria regions,
- *ether* (15,0) – for regaining consciousness,
- *gardan* (10x0,25) – for intense head and toothache,
- *lint* (1/2 m²) – sterile packed,
- **hanzaplast* (two or three – width: 5cm) - sterile temporary dressing,
- **iodine* (20,0) – antiseptic,
- *kaskaryna* (50 pills) – laxatives,
- *Kola* (1 box) – stimulate heart work,
- *collodion* (10,0) – liquid for plaster small wounds,
- * *Inoziemcowa* drops (based on ether, 15,0) – for stomachaches (10-15 drops on sugar),
- *mint drops* – for stomachache (10-15 drops with water),
- **valerian drops* (based on ether, 15,0) – heart sedative (10-15 drops on sugar), for smelling when fainting,
- *boric acid* (20,0) – antiseptic (1 spoon into 1 glass of hot water),
- *salicyl* (20,0) – for burns,
- **potassium permanganate* (5,0) – disinfectant, for viper stings (dissolve few crystals in glass of water),
- **calcareous olive* – for burns,
- *opium* (drops 15,0) – sedative for heart and intense stomachaches,
- **Burow's solution* (50,0) – for contusions, compresses for joints, muscle aches caused by overtraining (one or two spoons for glass of water). It is also available in pills 'Statim' or 'Alacet',
- *headache pills* – 'Piramidon'
- * *sticking plaster* (width: 2cm, length: 1cm) for minor cuts,
- *zinc powder* (100,0) – for burns,
- **baking soda* (50,0) – for heartburn,
- **bitter salt* (50,0) – laxative (one to three spoons for glass of water),
- *serum against snake bites* (with the syringe),
- **tannalbin tablets* (10x0,25) – to stop diarrhea (3 to 10 times a day),
- **tannina* (powder 15,0) – used in case of eating poisonous berries or mushrooms (one spoon for liter of water – 1 spoon every 5 minutes),
- **trigemina* (10x0,25) – for intense toothache
- **hygroscopic cotton wool* (100g)
- *lignin* (100g)
- **boron vaseline* (50g)
- *hydrogen peroxide solution 3%* (50g) – disinfectant,
- *thermometer, scissors, safety pin, tweezers, syringe*¹⁸.

¹⁶ Tamże, s. 247–249.

¹⁷ * means the medicine for individual people participating in water tourism

¹⁸ A. Heinrich: *Podręcznik...*, dz. cyt., s. 246–249.

The author recommended that such equipped first aid kit should be meticulously signed and carried in a small container (suitcase).

Moreover the author recommended that when on trip, people should take guidebook about performing first aid. The already prepared medical kits 'Spiess' though big and expensive, they were available in 'Red Cross' pharmacies¹⁹.

Further consideration concerned *water accidents* which demanded acting in accordance with Polish Canoeing Association regulations. The requirements that every participant of tourism and water sport had to fulfill were ability to swim as well as knowledge and skills concerning helping people in water and giving first aid to drowning person²⁰.

In order to facilitate canoe transportation, groups of 8 on the basis of Polish Canoeing Association membership were entitled to 33% discount for train tickets. Moreover, on the basis of document from proper regional unit of national department of physical education the discount reached 50-75%. Fold-up canoes packed in proper covers could be sent by post according to 20kg rate²¹. The fold-up canoes could be transported in train compartments as hand luggage (without pay), provided there was enough space²².



The canoe team before rally.

During the Interwar Period canoe owners were able to travel not only on Polish rivers. In 1930 the participant of 'Sokol' association travel with canoes from Cracow to Belgrade where they took part in Gymnastic Association 'Sokol' convention.

The preserved photos give evidence that four members of 'Sokol' Cracow took part in the journey in two canoes.

The great significance in popularizing physical education among Polish society could be attributed to the fact that in 1930 the regulations of National Sport Medal were established. Among the number of requirements, in the 5th group rowing and rowing cruises were included²³.

¹⁹ Tamże, s. 249.

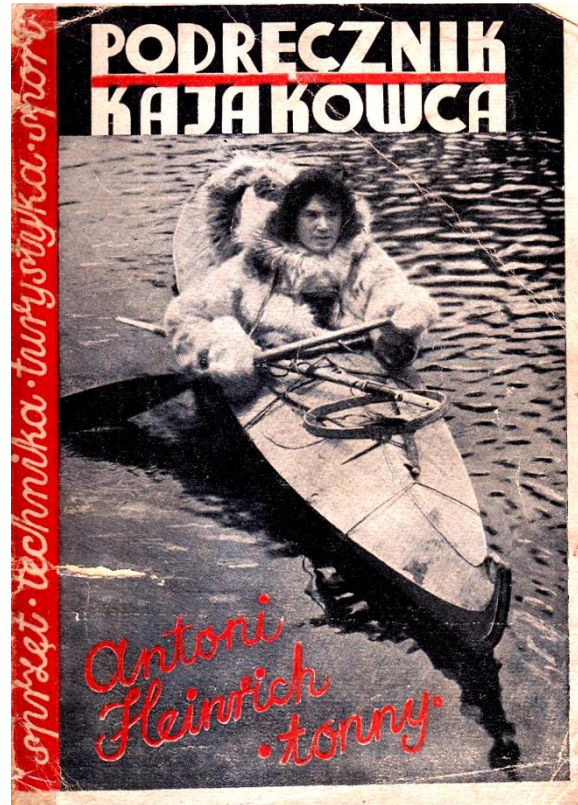
²⁰ *Wypadki w wodzie*, [w:] A. Heinrich: *Podręcznik kajakowca*, Warszawa 1933, s. 249–254.

²¹ Dz. Taryf i Zarządzeń Kolejowych Nr 26/31, poz. 320.

²² *Rozporządzenie Ministerstwa Komunikacji*, Dep. III, Nr III RW 8656/29.

²³ § 13 *Państwowa Odznaka Sportowa. Rozporządzenia i Regulaminy*, Warszawa 1934, s. 14.

The popularizing canoe tourism took place with the help of radio and press. Among others, traveling in canoe was described in 'Sport wodny' and in 1932, Polish radio announce the contest for the most interesting coverage of the trip. With the endeavors of military bookshop the 'Podrecznik kajakowca' by Antoni Heinrich was published in 1933. The author provides detailed descriptions and information concerning canoe tourism.



A title page of A. Heinrich 'canoeist guidebook', Warsaw 1933.

The significant contribution to popularizing canoe tourism could be attributed to establishing Maritime and River League in 1924²⁴. The precursor of the league was establishing Polish banner association on October 1st, 1918²⁵.

The main aim of the organization was to annex overseas colonies to the territory of Poland. Moreover, it contributed greatly to popularizing inland tourism. Maritime and River League in many cities built havens and equipped them in water units.

The Maritime and River League in its press organs popularized canoeing, rowing and sailing, among others in its monthly 'Morze' and 'Sprawy morskie i kolonialne'. It included articles concerning canoe tourism among water issues²⁶. It made accessible numerous havens and swimming devices such as canoes, rowing boats, and sail boats²⁷.

²⁴ Liga Morska i Rieczna powstała 27 kwietnia 1924 roku z przekształcenia Ligi Żeglugi Polskiej (na bazie statutu zatwierdzonego przez min. spraw wewnętrznych RP w dn. 19 VIII 1924). Od października 1930 zmiana nazwy (na mocy uchwały III Walnego Zjazdu Delegatów LMiR w dniach 25–27 października 1930) na Liga Morska i Kolonialna (LMK).

²⁵ Wśród 25 założycieli znajdował się Kazimierz Porębski, późniejszy twórca szkolnictwa morskiego w II Rzeczypospolitej.

²⁶ Tadeusz Białas: *Liga Morska i Kolonialna (1930–1939)*, Gdańsk 1983, *passim*.

²⁷ G. Orlicz-Dreszer: *Statut Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, Warszawa 1932, *passim*.



Poster of propaganda exhibition 'Polskie morze i ziemia pomorska, 1931.



'Morze i kolonie' periodical 1939.



1937, the celebration of sea day in Katowice

In many Polish cities situated on the rivers there were canoeing clubs ran by number of organizations and association. Among others, the Maritime and River League in Hrubieszow had a campsite which in 1932 had 40 canoes that could be rent to those who wanted to take a trip on the Huczwa river²⁸.

²⁸ Hrubieszowska Gazeta Internetowa, dostęp w dniu 18.06.2014.



1932, a canoe campsite in Hrubieszow on Huczwa river.



Bydgoszcz 1936, a special tram trailer transporting canoes to Brda.

Alongside with water tourism there was functioning an industry that transported the necessary water equipment. In 1936, Warsaw rubber factory advertised its fold-up canoes that could be bought in Bydgoszcz, Gdansk, Katowice, Lvov, Lodz, Warsaw and Vilnius.

A great popularity among the lovers of water tourism was attributed to canoe trips coverage of Melchior Wankowicz which were published in 1936, titled 'Na tropie Smetka'. The number of canoes in 1934 led the Polish Canoeing Association to elaborate the regulations which complemented the recordings of the statute of the association. It also provided a number of requirements concerning the equipment and law and water habits²⁹.

The social as well as technological development has an influence on tourism consciousness of Poland. The great impact on popularizing canoe tourism had the examples of its usage in recreation of Polish famous people, the president of Poland Ignacy Moscicki. The president participated in tourism among others, canoe and ski tourism. He demonstrated his recognition for physical recreation.

²⁹ A. Heinrich: *Podręcznik...*, dz. cyt., s. 273–283.

The journey that was documented in 'Sport Wodny' in 1936 was canoe rally of Piotr Gesior and Antoni Serwa from Rzeszow to Gdynia. The route started in Rzeszow on Wislok river, then San and the Vistula to Gdynia. The canoeists traveled the distance merely in 9 days³⁰.



Warszawa 1939, the ship in harbor with white flag and sunken one in the background that depicts German occupation of Warsaw.

The development of tourism movement in Poland was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Its horrible influence can be seen on the photo presenting the sentimental river ship with white flag on the mast and sunken ship in Warsaw harbor. During 1925 – 1926 in canoe sections alongside with the wooden, usually hand-made canoes there were also first so called 'fold-up' canoes.

³⁰ *Kajakiem z Rzeszowa do Gdyni*, „Sport Wodny”, 1936 nr 13, s. 251.