

PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY OF TG 'SOKÓŁ' IN THE FIFTH LVIV DISTRICT BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR - THE FORMATION OF SOKÓŁ STANDING BRIGADES (SDS)

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Abstract:

The military activity of TG Sokół members, including the one before the First World War, was based, among others, on the activities of teams called SDS (Stałe Drużyny Sokole), functioning aside the structures of TG Sokół. Before the First World War, training of people ready to fight for Poland's independence was the most important thing for the organization, and therefore TG Sokół established SDS teams at nests. SDS teams existed in almost in every nest. In particular sections: organizational and registration, instruction, touring, delivery and supply and sanitation ones, various useful skills were taught. In 1912 the first SDS teams were created. On the eve of the First World War, SDS teams had 1969 members.

SUMMARY

The military activity of Gymnastic Society (then: TG) 'Sokół' members, including the one before the First World War, was based, among others, on the activities of brigades called SDS (Stałe Drużyny Sokole - Sokół Standing Brigades), functioning aside the structures of TG 'Sokół'.

Before the First World War, training of people ready to fight for Poland's independence was the most important thing for the organization, and therefore TG 'Sokół' established SDS brigades at nests. SDS brigades existed in almost every nest. In particular sections: organizational and registration, instruction, touring, delivery and supply and sanitation ones, various useful skills were taught. In 1912 the first SDS brigades were created. On the eve of the First World War, SDS brigades had 1969 members.

'Sokół' was the largest organization of physical culture in the Polish lands under the partitions. Therefore, the period preceding World War I was one of the most significant in the history of the organization, and the organization itself was one of the most important paramilitary organizations before the First World War. Misunderstandings between the invaders gave hope for regaining independence. Therefore, all political organizations operating in Poland decided to form paramilitary groups. After 1912, the popularization of practices within paramilitary formations was dictated by the upcoming war. The SDS brigades (Sokół Fields Brigades) were brought to life under the command of reserve captain Joseph Haller. In the days leading up to the outbreak of the First World War, 'Sokół' authorities believed that the professional training of instructors was necessary in order to implement reforms in physical education, scouting and military training. Two advocates of such changes were Kazimierz Wyrzykowski and his close associate Walerian Sikorski (in addition, he participated in the formation of the Sokół Standing Brigades - then: SDS)¹.

¹ R. Tomik: *Działalność Waleriana Sikorskiego w organizacjach galicyjskich przed wybuchem I wojny światowej*, „Wychowanie Fizyczne i Sport” 1994, no. 3, pp. 69–80.

Introducing military exercises into the organization was not fully accepted because there was no clearly defined purpose why 'Sokół' was to create the armed forces. The program was criticized by two young activists of Lviv 'Sokół-Macierz'. These were Henryk Bagiński and Mieczysław Neugebauer, students of the Lviv Polytechnic. Bagiński at the general assembly of TG 'Sokół-Macierz' criticized the report for the year 1909 concerning the military and national activities. He said that the actions of the present leadership of the nest would not help the process of regaining independence and would not prepare for independence, and the second activist, Neugebauer, believed that the report contained insufficient information on the idea of falconry and it did not help the Polish society to think pro-independence². The comments of young falcons, however, no one took seriously. The vice-president of the nest said that the organization had always wanted to participate in all national and anniversary celebrations. What is more, the president of the nest argued that the idea of 'Sokół' did not need any repair, as it was perfect³.

K. Wyrzykowski and W. Sikorski organized in Skole several training courses for physical education and scouting instructors. The camp was set up in the woods in 10 residential tents and the larger one where the gymnasium was located. The classes, mainly from outdoor gymnastics, Swedish gymnastics, athletics, swimming, fencing, military drills, outdoor games and scouting, were conducted by W. Sikorski (Photo 1).

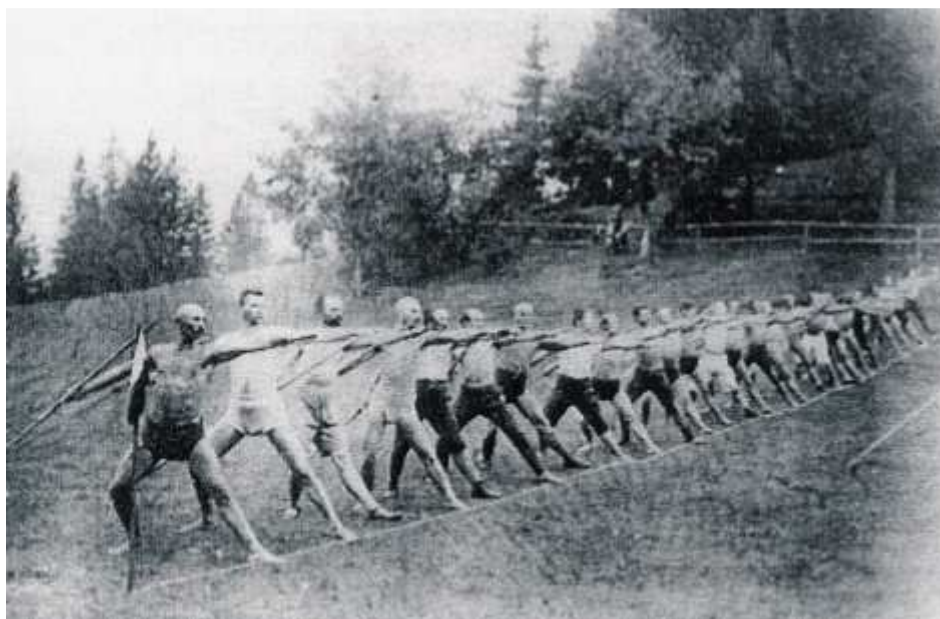


Photo 1. Training course for physical education teachers in Skole – 1911. The first from the left - Walerian Sikorski. Source: the author's own collection.

The first training course for physical games and activities instructors for 'Sokół' members took place from 7th to 27th of August 1910 in Skole. The course was held outdoors and was aimed at preparing the instructors' staff for promoting sport in 'Sokół'⁴.

The success of the first course resulted in the organization of the second one on 17th July - 25th August 1911. The extended program of this course included the issues of physical education and scouting⁵.

² Report for the year 1911 of TG 'Sokół-Macierz' Lviv Department, p. 8 (Ossoliński National Institute in Wrocław).

³ Ibid., pp. 9 and 36.

⁴ Przegląd Gimnastyczny „Sokół” (then: PGS) 1910, no. 10, p. 149.

⁵ „PGS” 1911, no. 9, p. 66.

In 1914 a course aimed at preparatory military training in SDS and implementing the rules of scouting was started. The course was interrupted by the outbreak of war⁶.

Apart from instructor courses in the field of military activity, other forms of activity also took place. Firstly, the underground organizations associated with the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) - Revolutionary Fraction led by Józef Piłsudski began to emerge. In 1907, a close associate of Józef Piłsudski, Kazimierz Sosnkowski⁷ arrived in Lviv.

In 1910 Józef Piłsudski, together with those close to him, legalized riflemen's associations, acting jointly with the Polish Rifle Squads, set up in 1911. Bartosz Brigades, which introduced military training in their program, joined the aforementioned organizations in the military activity. The Austrian authorities supported the formation of such organizations for two reasons. The first was the willingness to go along with the western states, which introduced physical and military exercises in their schools. The second one was Galician authorities' conviction that the young people participating in such exercises were more efficient and at the same time better, potential recruits for the Austrian monarchy army.

Military exercises in autonomous Galicia were extremely popular. In 1909 preparatory military trainings were conducted by gymnastic associations.

On November 10th, 1912, the representatives of the main independence organizations, operating in the Austrian and Russian partitions, established in Vienna a structure called the Temporary Committee for Confederate Independence Parties (then: KTSSN), to be the supreme authority over Polish military formations, and in case of war to select the National Government. The secretary of the commission was Witold Jodko-Narkiewicz, military commander - Józef Piłsudski. The KTSSN was recognized by the ZWC (Association for Active Struggle) and by the Polish Army⁸ and Polish Rifle Squads, but not by 'Sokół' and Bartosz Brigades, due to the close link of the organization with the pro-Russian National Democracy⁹.

It was not until the autumn of 1913 that 'Sokół' and Bartosz Brigades undertook a limited cooperation with the KTSSN, which at the same time removed the word 'temporary' from its name. Moreover, 'Sokół' started to create the so called Sokół Fields Brigades, being also a kind of military formations. The newly established military organization was under the command of Lieutenant General Józef Haller.

In June 1914, the ZWC and its subordinate units had about 7200 members, Polish Rifle Squads about 6000 members, and Bartosz Brigades about 1000 members, but they were less well-trained and equipped.

In the area of 'Sokół' new forms of activity related to physical culture appeared before 1912. Their task was to group active youth into separate units where military and weapons trainings were conducted. One of the first nests that introduced such exercises was the nest Lviv II¹⁰. These and other forms of activity led, by the decision of the association, to the establishment of Sokół Standing Brigades on December 10th, 1912¹¹.

⁶ „PGS” 1914, no. 5, pp. 1–2.

⁷ *Mała encyklopedia wojskowa*, v. 3, ed. MON, Warszawa 1971.

⁸ The Polish Army – Polish independence organization founded in October 1910 in Lviv by the Organization of Independent Youth "Zarzewie" in place of the dissolved secret Polish Military Union, operating in this city within 1908-1909. Its members mainly belonged to Lviv academic and junior high school students. In 1911, using the legalization of scouting made a year earlier by the Austrian authorities, the Polish Army set up a paramilitary organization - the Polish Rifle Squads. In 1914 most of their members became soldiers of the Polish Legions. The successive commanders were: Mieczysław Norwid-Neugebauer (1910-1911), Henryk Bagiński (1911-1912), Marian Januszajtis-Żegota (1912-1914).

⁹ E. Kozłowski, M. Wrzosek: *Dzieje oręża polskiego 1794–1938*, Warszawa 1973.

¹⁰ D. Dudek: *Działalność wojskowa Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” przed I wojną światową*, Nowy Sącz 1994, p. 16.

¹¹ E. Kubalski: *Z przeżyć i wspomnień...*, op. cit., p. 14.

'Sokół-Macierz' nest had three brigades, consisting of about 350 members¹². Lviv nest 'Sokół III' also had a brigade and a regular horse brigade.

Slightly worse was the situation in the countryside, where young people were not many. In some places the brigades were not formed despite orders from the nest authorities. For example there was a nest in Bełżec where the brigade was not created because there were only elderly members¹³.

The nest in Bolechów sent a report on the SDS brigade in their nest to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District on February 2nd, 1913. The report said that Dr. Michał Schwarz was the president, M. Ludwik was the head and Franciszek Jagielnicki was a member of the department. The brigade had 10 active members and 4 in the reserve¹⁴.

SDS brigade in Brody reported to have had 30 members and 35 in the reserve. The board of the brigade: Tadeusz Andrzejewski, Antoni Kankofer, Adam Lukas, established sections in SDS. These were instruction, administrative, touring and communication and sanitation sections. Brigade exercises were conducted from September 30th, 1913, three times a week. The scheme of exercises was as follows: the first 30 minutes were devoted to gymnastics, the other half an hour was given to lectures on the service (Monday), handicraft (Wednesday), shooting - theory and practice (Friday)¹⁵.

Bursztyn was another Sokół nest which sent its information. According to its report, SDS brigade had 2 patrols, 11 second-grade members and 14 first-grade ones, the remaining 4 persons (also first-grade ones) remained in the reserve. The lessons were not conducted until 30th September. Stanisław Jabłonowski was the president of the nest, Zygmunt Stadnicki was its head and Tadeusz Sanetra was a member of the department¹⁶.

The SDS authorities in Busko in a letter dated November 6th, 1913 passed a report on the actions of their brigade, which consisted of one platoon. There were 16 active members, including 14 uniformed ones and 4 in the reserve. Bronisław Żawarski was the president, Marian Kraczkowski was the head, Aleksander Grosse was a member of the department. Sections in Busko SDS were: organizational and registration, instruction, touring, delivery and supply and sanitation ones¹⁷.

The only information that Chodorów nest sent to the headquarters was the number of people in the team: 36, including 23 uniformed ones¹⁸.

Dawidów was a city that rarely sent reports to the headquarters. But the report on SDS brigade was sent. According to it, the brigade consisted of 1 platoon, including 30 men and 10 men in the reserve partially uniformed. The command of the team was as follows: Ludwik Lichacki was the commander, Wincent Gulewicz the head and Michał Kornieniowski was a member of the department¹⁹.

¹² The list of SDS members in the fifth District for years 1913-1914 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

¹³ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Bełżec to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 22nd December 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

¹⁴ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Bolechów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 2nd February 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

¹⁵ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Brody to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 3rd October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

¹⁶ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Bursztyn to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 11th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

¹⁷ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Brody to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 19th December 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

¹⁸ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Chodorów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 3rd November 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

¹⁹ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Dawidów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 7th November 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

SDS brigade in Drohobycz had a complex organizational structure. It consisted of 1 team with 100 scouts and 3 platoons. Each of them had a commander: Prokop, Wójcik, Martynowicz. There were sections: organizational and registration, instruction, touring and communication and sanitation ones. The management was as follows: Bronisław Wierzyński, Józef Wróbel and Władysław Kultys²⁰.

SDS brigade in Gliniany, despite being small in size, had a highly complex structure. There were five sections: organizational and registration, instruction, touring and communication, sanitation and delivery and supply ones. One platoon consisted of 15 people (as at that time in the nest) and all the people had uniforms²¹.

In Gródek Jagielloński SDS brigade consisted of 1 platoon, including 35 members, 13 first-grade ones and 22 second-grade ones. 24 scouts had uniforms. The president was Jan Bogdanowicz²².

Janów near Lviv also had its SDS brigade, its commander was Ignacy Czemeryński, the head was Konrad Haas and a member of the department - Adam Mackiewicz. The brigade consisted of 12 uniformed members and the training took place from October 3rd, 1913²³.

In Jaworów, SDS brigade consisted of 1 platoon, consisting of 2 patrols. There were 15 first-grade members and 18 second-grade ones. 26 scouts had uniforms. The sections were similar to those in other SDS brigades in the fifth District: organizational and registration, instruction, touring and communication, sanitation and delivery and supply ones. Stanisław Mierzewski was the president of the nest and at the same time the brigade, the head was Fryderyk Wanesz and Jan Krajewski was a member of the department²⁴.

Kleparów was a village near Lviv. Its brigade consisted of 1 platoon, with 9 active members, 11 in the reserve and 4 uniformed ones. In the letter from October 15th, 1913 the names of the leaders were given: Zwierzchowski, Orzechowski, Repa and instructor Ludwik Szamota²⁵.

Lewandówka had a SDS brigade of 11 people. The commander and instructor at the same time was Jan Tyrz²⁶.

The nest 'Lviv III' had a very well-organized SDS brigade consisting of one troop and two platoons - together 76 people. There were lectures on ideology, practice (military training, etc.), field exercises, shooting. Each exercise was attended by an average of 37 people, twice a week: on Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 to 9.30 p.m.²⁷.

Partial information about the SDS brigade was sent from Łopatyn. Only 6 members were mentioned²⁸.

²⁰ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Drohobycz to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²¹ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Gliniany to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 8th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²² The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Gródek to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 8th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²³ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Janów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 7th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²⁴ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Jaworów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 11th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²⁵ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Kleparów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 15th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²⁶ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Lewandówka to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 7th November 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²⁷ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in nest 'Lviv III' to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 1st February 1914 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

²⁸ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Łopatyn to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 24th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

According to a report from Mikołajów SDS brigade consisted of one platoon, including 21 uniformed and fully-equipped people. The board of the nest was as follows: president Franciszek Blauth, the head Władysław Skulski, member of the department Edmund Rudnicki. In addition, the nest held a course for those willing to join the SDS, lasting three months and ending with an exam in Stryj²⁹.

The report on SDS brigade in Mosty Wielkie did not contain much information. It was stated that the brigade had 1 platoon consisting of 15 members; there were no sections³⁰.

'Sokół' in Niemirów had a brigade consisting of 1 platoon (2 patrols), without division into sections. The management of SDS was as follows: president Władysław Kianty, head - Bolesław Łukotyński and a member of the department Edward Kozłowski³¹.

A small SDS brigade from Olesko also sent information concerning their activities. According to the document, the brigade consisted of 10 people, 6 in the reserve and 8 uniformed ones. There were no sections due to the small number of members³². The management of SDS was as follows: Emil Witkiewicz, Józef Żmijowski, Ignacy Kubiszyn.

Rawa Ruska had 50 people in its SDS brigade, 2 platoons and 43 uniforms³³.

Information concerning SDS brigade in Rohatyn was very brief. The report contained only the names of the leaders: Antoni Oprych, Karol Mueller and Jan Stenzel and the number of people - 51 fully-uniformed³⁴.

SDS brigade also existed in Rudki. It consisted of 1 team divided into 3 platoons and there were 73 people. 33 people had uniforms. There was only one section: touring and communication³⁵.

SDS brigade in Stryj was composed of 42 people, consisting of 1 platoon and divided into 3 sections: touring and communication, instruction and organizational and registration³⁶.

In Winnik Stanisław Gąsiorowski was the president of SDS brigade and at the same time the nest, the head was Ignacy Józefowicz, and a member of the department - Adam Szczek. Within the brigade, there were sections: touring and communication, organization and registration and Samaritan ones. The size of the team was impressive - 159 people³⁷.

SDS brigade in Żółkiew, operating at the nest, consisted of 21 people divided into 2 patrols. The management of the brigade were Antoni Schiller, Tadeusz Gajewski and Czesław Sidorowicz³⁸.

The last place that sent a report to the Lviv headquarters was Żydaczów. There SDS brigade consisted of 1 patrol, 17 active members and 4 in the reserve. 13 of them had field outfits and 3 had ceremonial ones. There were no exercises and sections³⁹.

²⁹ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Mikołajów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 5th November 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³⁰ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Mosty Wielkie to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 8th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³¹ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Niemirów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 10th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³² The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Olesko to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 16th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³³ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Rawa Ruska to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 8th January 1914 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³⁴ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Rohatyn to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 8th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³⁵ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Rudki to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 5th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³⁶ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Stryj to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 12th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³⁷ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Winniki to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 9th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

³⁸ The message from authorities of 'Sokół' in Żółkiew to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 20th October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

Table 1. Number of SDS brigades members and the number of weapons possessed – 1913/1914 (the fifth Lviv District)

No.	Nest	Number of SDS brigade members	Number of rifles possessed
1.	Bełz	14	21
2.	Bełżec	0	12
3.	Bolechów	14	16
4.	Borysław	27	16
5.	Bobrka	25	13
6.	Brody	78	21
7.	Buczały	40	0
8.	Bursztyn	25	16
9.	Busk	30	14
10.	Chodorów	36	12
11.	Dawidów	20	12
12.	Drohobycz	96	3
13.	Gliniany	22	13
14.	Gródek Jagiell.	37	4
15.	Janów	15	2
16.	Jaworów	39	19
17.	Kamionka	38	10
18.	Kleparów	20	1
19.	Komamo	54	12
20.	Krasne	12	4
21.	Lwów „Macierz”	347	SI
22.	„II”	70	0
23.	„III	85	50
24.	„IV”	48	59
25.	Mikołajów	20	18
26.	Mosty Wielkie	13	0
27.	Niemirów	14	10
28.	Olesko	12	13
29.	Przemyślany	76	26
30.	Rawa Ruska	58	27
31.	Rohatyn	76	0
32.	Rudki	102	38
33.	Skole	34	10
34.	Sokal	42	20
35.	Stryj	96	12
36.	Uhnów	34	7
37.	Winnik:	56	35
38.	Żółkiew	43	17
39.	Żydaczów	12	13
	Total	1969	641

Source: the author's own on the basis of the data found in documents of the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

Lviv region at the turn of 1913/1914 had brigades in 39 nests. However, the attendance at exercises was not systematic, and the members of nests did not always take their duties

³⁹ The message from authorities of ‘Sokół’ in Żydaczów to the headquarters of the fifth Lviv District dated 2nd October 1913 (The Czartoryski Library, manuscript MNK 1691)

towards 'Sokół' seriously. Such situation took place in Brody, where in 1913 the number of SDS brigade members decreased to almost zero.

Table 1 shows that 39 nests (as already mentioned) from the fifth District had SDS brigades; in some places outside Lviv, such as Brody, Drohobycz, Rudki, the number of people belonging to the brigades was impressive. The largest number of rifles per person was in Bełz, Olesko and Żydaczów. And their greatest number was in 'Macierz'.

SDS brigades were one of the component parts of 'Sokół', and the most important part was command office, consisting of the president, head and one department member. The latter was responsible for administrative and civil matters. Gymnastics was the leading activity therefore the commander was required to have had the ability to conduct gymnastic exercises and knowledge of basic military notions. The commander of the brigade reported to president of the nest, the district and the union, and was strictly dependent on the civil authorities. The finances of the brigade were coordinated by the headquarters i.e. the Sokół Union⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ *Regulamin Skarbu Sokolego*, § 5 i 6.