

## THE BEGINNINGS OF WINTER SPORTS BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN WARSAW

Robert KRASOWSKI<sup>AB</sup>, Waldemar NADOLSKI<sup>DF</sup>

The University of Business and Entrepreneurship in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski Poland

### Keywords:

- Skating,
- Skiing,
- Uge,
- Agrykola,
- Warsaw.

### Abstract:

The development of recreational and sports forms in Warsaw before the First World War was the subject of studies of many historians of physical culture. Majority of studies were focused on summer sports, such as gymnastics, cycling or kayaking. They resulted in undertaking studies on the beginnings of winter sports in Warsaw before the First World War. The analysis was conducted on the previous papers reflecting the current state of study on the history of physical culture in Warsaw, i. a. J. Chełmecki, *Działalność konspiracyjna Gniazda XI „Sokoła” im. Jana Kilińskiego w Warszawie w latach 1907-1914*, J. Chełmecki, *Etapy rozwoju sportu na ziemiach polskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, J. Chełmecki, *Spoleczne i polityczne uwarunkowania rozwoju sportu w Rosji i Królestwie Polskim na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, J. Dżereń, *Przyczynek do stanu badań nad historią Mazowsza – ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem dziejów kultury fizycznej do 1918 roku (zarys problematyki)*, T. Drozdek-Małolepsza, E. Małolepszy, *Działalność Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1905-1914*, R. Gawkowski, *Encyklopedia klubów sportowych Warszawy i jej najbliższych okolic w latach 1918-39*.

General and specialized literature also allowed for the cognition of the stages of implementation of winter sports in Warsaw. Nevertheless, Warsaw's press of the time, either daily, weekly or sports one, was the main source of information in the research.

## INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 19th century Warsaw was „the window to the word” for the Russian Empire, as it was the furthest away western city with rapid industrial progress, especially in infrastructure and building engineering. Considerable increase was observed in metal, machine, textile, food, leather, chemical and printing industries. This resulted in the significant increase in the number of inhabitants of Warsaw. It used to be 261 thousand in 1874, 407 thousand in 1885, and nearly 639 thousand inhabitants in 1897. In the eve of the

outbreak of the First World War, in 1914, the number of inhabitants of Warsaw reached 884 thousand people<sup>1</sup>.

The first forms of recreation and sport in the 19th century Warsaw were developing rapidly as well. It mainly referred to summer sport activities, therefore there was a lot of attention placed on cycling or kayaking. Due to climate conditions, winter sport in Warsaw was mostly associated so far with speed skating or figure skating, known at the time as “artificial” skating. However, Warsaw sports elite was eager to introduce new forms of winter sports that travelled from the Russian Empire, the German Empire, Austria-Hungary or Scandinavian countries. Among new disciplines were skiing, skating ring, tennis on ice, ice hockey, skate sailing and luge.

### **Ice skating**

The beginnings of ice skating in Warsaw date back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and the reign of king Augustus III of Poland. It was then that the first ice skating race was held. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ice skaters from Warsaw skated in Powązki and Marymont; they also used a skating ring in Izabelin<sup>2</sup>. Shortly after, skating rinks made of Ordynacki and Łazienkowski ponds gained popularity.

In 1870 an ice skating club was formed in Warsaw for the first time. It ensured the safety of participants of games and races on ice.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1870s attention of inhabitants of Warsaw was directed at the Saxon Garden, where next ice rink was constructed. In 1875 the preparations of ice games were handled by the first serious organizer of sport – “Warszawski Rzeczny Yacht-Klub” (WRY-K, Warsaw River Yacht Club), bringing together German clerks employed within the tsar’s apparatus of authority. WRY-K arranged ice rinks by Obozowa Street, in the Royal Łazienki and in the Saxon Garden<sup>4</sup>.

WRY-K successfully managed its ice rinks, especially the one in the Royal Łazienki. Its first speed skating competition was held there on 3 March 1881<sup>5</sup>. In 1882 Warszawskie Towarzystwo Wioślarskie (Warsaw Rowing Association, WTW) joined a group of organizers of ice skating. In January and February 1886 it organized ice skating competitions with prizes. The competitions were held on a WRY-K skating rink in the Saxon Garden<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historia\\_Warszawy](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historia_Warszawy) (accessed 10 August 2016).

<sup>2</sup> F. Galiński, *Gawędy o Warszawie*, Warsaw 1937, pp. 297.

<sup>3</sup> *Kurjer Warszawski* 1870, no. 42, pp. 3; no. 43, pp. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Kurjer Warszawski* 1877 no. 15, pp. 6; 1878 no 10, pp. 6; *Biesiada Literacka* 1879, no. 208, pp. 412.

<sup>5</sup> *Kurjer Warszawski* 1881 no. 45, pp. 7; no. 47, pp. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Kurjer Warszawski* 1886, no. 21a, pp. 2; no. 25, pp. 3-4; no. 46, pp. 3, 6; no. 48b, pp. 3.

In 1886 another association made its appearance among promoters of ice skating. It was Warszawskie Towarzystwo Cyklistów (Warsaw Cyclists Association, WTC) that, in the beginning, promoted skating on rollers - skating ring. Since 1888 WTC organized a series of events known as masquerades and competitions in “holendrowanie” (“sliding”), which, nowadays, is the equivalent of figure skating. Already then, a group of cyclist came up with the idea of setting up a separate association solely focused on skating<sup>7</sup>.

In the beginning of the 1890s there were few large and small ice rinks run by associations and private investors in Warsaw (the Saxon Garden – WRY-K and WTW, the Royal Łazienki – WRY-K, Oboźna Street, Mokotów, Czyste, Marymont – Promenada, Dynasy – WTC, Foksal, Nowa Szwajcaria).

As a result of a several years of undertaken efforts Warszawskie Towarzystwo Łyżwiarskie (WTŁ, Warsaw Skating Association)<sup>8</sup>, was called into existence in Dolina Szwajcarska in 1893. Its founders were skating enthusiasts, and Franciszek Olszewski, the editor of „Kurjer Warszawski”, was appointed as its first chairman. The members of the new association were recruited mostly from WTC. Since that moment, they competed against each other in sports competitions. Both associations were deeply engaged in organization of skating competitions – fast skating and figure skating. The culmination of the competition was in the period 1894 – 1902<sup>9</sup>.

In 1898 WTŁ became a member of the International Skating Union (ISU), placing Polish skating in the organized international structures and, simultaneously, raising skating sport to a higher level. The popularity of skating is proven by the fact that in 1899 the first weekly illustrated magazine devoted to i.a. skating was published in Warsaw. The „Kolarz, Wioślarz i Łyżwiarz” magazine was published until 1902. It was edited by W. Dzierzbicki, with Emil and Leopold Szyller as publishers. The latter ones also created *Warszawska Gazeta Sportowa*, which was a continuance of a weekly magazine mentioned above<sup>10</sup>.

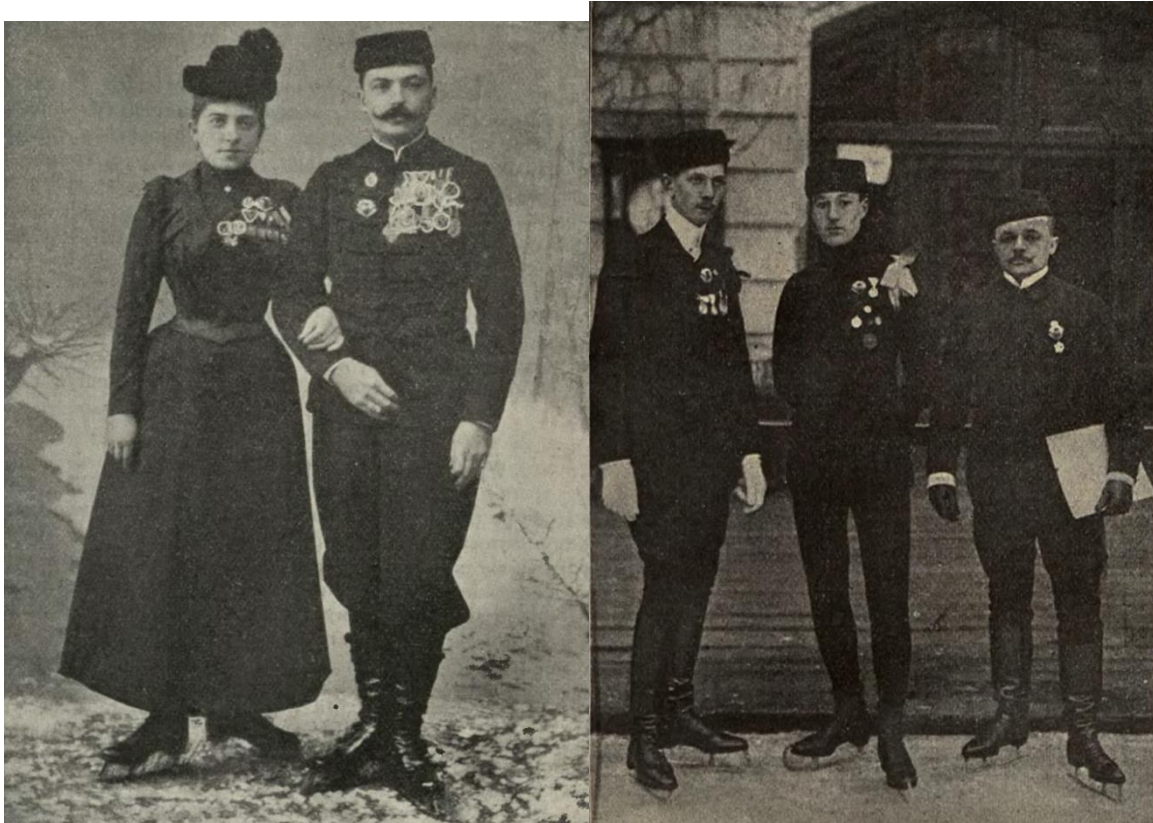
---

<sup>7</sup>*Gazeta Warszawska* 1889, no. 325, pp. 2.

<sup>8</sup>*Mała Encyklopedia Sportu*, vol. 2, Warsaw 1986, pp. 115.

<sup>9</sup> J. ŻEMANTOWSKI, L. UŁASIEWICZ, *ŁYŻWIARSKI JUBILEUSZ – 80 LAT POLSKIEGO ZWIĄZKU ŁYŻWIARSTWA SZYBKIEGO*, WARSAW 2001, PP. 8; R. GAWKOWSKI, *ENCYKLOPEDIA KLUBÓW SPORTOWYCH WARSZAWY I JEJ NAJBLIŻSZYCH OKOLIC W LATACH 1918-39*, WARSAW 2007, PP. 250.

<sup>10</sup>*Kolarz, Wioślarz i Łyżwiarz* 1899, pp. 1; *Warszawska Gazeta Sportowa* 1902, pp. 1.



Pic. 1-2. On the left are the Alexanders, a skating married couple, Vienna's figure skaters on WTŁ skating rink in 1900, on the right European championship in figure skating in 1908 on WTŁ skating rink, competitors from Lviv: Przedzimirski, Wróbel, referee Uleniecki, source *Sport* 1900, no. 7, pp. 29; *Nowości Ilustrowane* 1908, no. 4, pp. 15.

In 1908 the first international skating competition was held on the WTC ice rink in Dolina Służewiecka. Apart from the local sportspeople, the competitors from Lviv, Petersburg and Vienna participated in it. The title of the winner in European championship in figure skating belonged to Ernst Hertz from Vienna, Nikolaj Panin from Petersburg came second and Henryk Przedzimirski from Lviv occupied the third place<sup>11</sup>.

A significant role in international structures was played by WTŁ activists, i.a. Piotr Weryho PhD was a referee already during a competition in London in 1902 and during European championship in 1908. In the latter one, Karol Bevens and Zygmunt Nowakowski were also appointed into the group of referees<sup>12</sup>.

In the beginning of the 20th century WTŁ tried to introduce Warsaw sports circle to new forms of skating. The first tennis on ice show was performed in the first days of January 1901 in Dolina Służewiecka. The players were, of course, equipped with skates. Four

<sup>11</sup>*Nowości Ilustrowane* 1908, no. 4, pp. 15.

<sup>12</sup>*Sport* 1902, no. 9, pp. 20; no. 10, pp. 4; *Nowości Ilustrowane* 1908, no. 4, pp. 15.

members of WTŁ participated in this game and as one of the players, Henryk York, stated “*the ball bounced quite well, and the spins performed by skaters were truly skillful*”<sup>13</sup>. Successful ice tennis trials persuaded WTŁ sportspeople to organize other games in the same month. On *Sport* pages York expressed his hope for the development of another sport on skates - ice hockey. The WTŁ activist wrote: “*we have high hopes that 16 players required for a game of hockey will be found among our sporty teenagers and that by the end of the winter season we will be able to play one match of this fashionable abroad game on ice*”<sup>14</sup>.

In that time introducing hockey to the calendar of sports events was unsuccessful. The next initiative in this direction was undertaken by WTC in 1903 when it offered its teenagers free group trainings of hockey among other sports while preparing a sports exhibition. The aim of a training was “*to extend and prepare a group of teenagers, eager to participate in games, matches and sporting shows*”<sup>15</sup>. Around 1912 various attempts at organizing ice hockey were undertaken among WTC members. Its most eager promoter was Edmund Lindeman. These were basically the only attempts at introducing ice hockey in Warsaw before the First World War. Włodzimierz Krygier, an ex-player of Warsaw’s Polonia, claimed that ice hockey was present in Warsaw only in the Second Polish Republic. His statement, however, was contradicted by Tadeusz Grabowski. Grabowski, having been a high school student at the time and a famous player of Polonia later on, meticulously reminisces his first ice hockey game in Dynasy on 11 February, 1917 stating that it “*was the first “real” game of ice hockey played on the territory of Kingdom of Poland*”<sup>16</sup>.

In the period 1911- 12 at Nowy Świat 19, behind Kossakowkich Square, Palais de Glace was built. It was an artificial ice rink designed by an architect Stefan Szyller. The building had a steel construction and housed an ice rink hall 57 m long, 26 m wide and 18 m high. The ice rink was equipped with a cooling system designed by an engineer Adam Słucki. Pipes pumping seltzer cooled to minus 10 degrees Celsius were built in below the ice surface. The first artificial ice rink in Warsaw did not last long. The investment was expensive and didn’t withstand the competition of much cheaper and more popular WTŁ ice rink in Dolina Służewiecka. In July 1914 Palais de Glace building was redone into a roller rink<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>13</sup>*Sport* 1901, no. 3, pp. 19-20.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.20.

<sup>15</sup>*Sport* 1903, no. 3, pp. 21.

<sup>16</sup> W. Krygier, *Hokej na lodzie*, Warsaw 1935, pp. 7; T. Grabowski, *Z lamusa warszawskiego sportu*, Warsaw 1957, pp. 299-302.

<sup>17</sup> J. MAJEWSKI, *SŁYNNE LODOWISKO SPRZED STU LAT: NA NOWYM ŚWIECIE*, [HTTP://WARSZAWA.WYBORCZA.PL/WARSZAWA/1,34889,13112573,SLYNNE\\_LODOWISKO\\_SPRZED\\_STU\\_LAT\\_\\_NA\\_NOWYM\\_SWIECIE.HTML](http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34889,13112573,SLYNNE_LODOWISKO_SPRZED_STU_LAT__NA_NOWYM_SWIECIE.html) (ACCESSED 10 AUGUST 2016).

The next new form of ice skating, ice-skate sailing, was introduced by WTC in February 1913 on its Dynasy ice rink. The attempt at a new discipline was successful, though the redaction of *Sport* magazine stipulated that the true joy from doing this sport may be accomplished only on a pond or a lake, as only this type of terrain can provide suitable wind<sup>18</sup>.

At the end of the period in question the skating was not as popular as few years earlier. In 1914 Warsaw's *Sport* magazine wrote that "*surprisingly, only few years ago Warsaw had a dozen or so ice rinks spread across various city districts. They were all crowded with military music accompanying in turns till late hours at night; with skaters skating enthusiastically. We used to see excellent older and younger skaters there. Nowadays, nearly all ice rinks have vanished, along with the artificial Palais de Glace, and the remaining ice rinks in Dolina and at Cyklistów remain unusually empty recently*"<sup>19</sup>.



Pic. 3. Tennis on ice in WTŁ in 1901, source: *Sport* 1901, no. 3, pp. 8.

---

<sup>18</sup>*Sport* 1913, no. 5, pp. 6.

<sup>19</sup>*Sport* 1914, no. 1, pp. 4.



Pic. 4. WTL ice rink in Dolina Szwajcarska in February 1913, source: *Świat* 1913, no. 11, pp. 26.

### Skiing

There is no doubt that the beginning of skiing on the territory of Poland trace back to Galicia. In this region skiing advanced the most before the First World War. Despite the fact that the third city as to the number of citizens in the Russian Empire did not have especially good skiing terrains, the first skies were delivered to Warsaw relatively early. Zenobiusz Pręgowski claimed in *Dzieje narciarstwa polskiego do 1914 roku* that the first accounts of skies in Warsaw date back to the beginning of the 19th century. However, he did not provide more precise information<sup>20</sup>. Skies used for sport certainly emerged in Warsaw in winter 1892. They might have been introduced by sportsmen from Moscow – Aleksander Łobanow and Teodor Żemliczka. They were mainly known for cycling races organized by Warszawskie Towarzystwo Cyklistów (WTC). In 1892 Łobanow won the title of the Master of Cycling of the Kingdom of Poland and Żemliczka finished this race on the third place<sup>21</sup>.

Slightly different information on the topic of introducing skies to Warsaw was provided by Warsaw's weekly *Głos* in December 1892. It was written in it that "*our brave cyclists with the beginning of winter season moved to a skating confession, however*

<sup>20</sup> Z. Pręgowski, *Dzieje narciarstwa polskiego do 1914 roku*, Warsaw 1994, pp. 5.

<sup>21</sup> B. Tuszyński, *100 lat Warszawskiego Towarzystwa Cyklistów Kolarstwa Polskiego*, Warsaw 1986, pp. 29.

remembering their summer failure they brought skies (a type of skates) from far Sweden. The idea was very good and it will help to quickly neutralize all dangerous opponents<sup>22</sup>”.

Next information on WTC skiers was published by *Gazeta Warszawska* on 24 December, 1892. It stated that “the group of amateurs of Swedish skates called skies, eagerly awaits more heavy snowfalls to organize games and races on skates not known here before<sup>23</sup>”.

On 31 January, 1893 local WTC organized the first in Warsaw Norwegian ski race apart from traditionally organized skating competition on Dynasy rink. Unfortunately, there is no information whether the race took place and who, if that was the case, came first<sup>24</sup>.

The next mention on ski use by Warsaw sportsmen was published by *Kurjer Warszawskion* 16 December, 1894. It stated that “yesterday on the square near previous water supply reservoir on Dobra Street, by Vistula river, a group of sportsmen tried snow skates known as skies. Despite the shallow layer of snow the trial proved successful proving to be one of the easier sports<sup>25</sup>”. Following ski trials were announced. They were supposed to take place on a vast meadow. With the Saska Kępa inhabitants’ agreement, a chalet for skiers was to be built there. The interest in a new winter sport must have risen then in Warsaw as in 1894 for the first time a merchant Jan Hilkner advertised in a local press new Norwegian snow skies. One year later he offered not only Norwegian, but also Finnish skies<sup>26</sup>.

However, the fascination of inhabitants of Wasaw in the new type of sport was short lived. In 1895 one of the readers of *Wędrowiec* asked the redaction to provide him with information on the topic of skies. As a result it was stated that “shops in Warsaw do not have ski skates in stock, as they have to pre-order them. The price of skies is unknown<sup>27</sup>”. For a long time there was no information on this type of winter activity in press.

Skiing was still practiced by the members of Warszawskie Towarzystwo Łyżwiarckie (WTL). Some alternations were made in WTL statute from 1990 that indicated that the association still organized skiing classes<sup>28</sup>.

The true state of skiing in Warsaw at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is well described by the dispute between a journalist Franciszek Karpiński and the article on winter sports by Eugeniusz Piasecki PhD that was published in *Przegląd Zakopiański* in 1900. The

---

<sup>22</sup>*Głos* 1892, no. 51, pp. 603.

<sup>23</sup>*Gazeta Warszawska* 1892, no. 344, pp. 3.

<sup>24</sup>*Gazeta Warszawska* 1893, no. 25, pp. 3.

<sup>25</sup>*Kurjer Warszawski* 1894, no. 347, pp. 3.

<sup>26</sup>*Kurjer Warszawski* 1894, no. 351, pp. 16; 1896, no. 16, pp. 8; 1896, no. 344, pp. 18.

<sup>27</sup>*Wędrowiec* 1895, no. 8, pp. 167.

<sup>28</sup>*Sport* 1900, no. 11, pp. 21.



editor of Warsaw's weekly illustrated magazine *Sport* stated that "in Norway and Finland snow skates known as skis are well-known and used, whereas in Poland, despite many attempts, this sport referred to by Nansen as "the king of sports", haven't found its enthusiasts yet"<sup>29</sup>.

After few years, in 1907, another journalist from Warsaw, Władysław Kozłowski, expressed his hopes in *Ruch* magazine that skiing should find broader use in the substantial part of the Kingdom<sup>30</sup>. The publicist also compared the development of skiing between Scandinavia, Galicia and the Kingdom. While analyzing the territory of Austrian Partition, the author stated that "the Świątokrzyskie Mountains, the area near Suwałki and Lublin are well suited for the development of skiing. As long as there is snow, there will be enough place even in other areas. The only thing required to do was to familiarize oneself both with the skiing technique and the skis themselves. If skiing becomes widespread, the skis will certainly become cheap and available to everyone"<sup>31</sup>.



Pic. 5. The practice of skiers from Warszawskie Koło Sportowe (WKS) in Agrykola Park in 1910, source: *Nowości Illustrowane* 1910, no. 8, pp. 12.

<sup>29</sup>*Sport* 1900, no. 50, pp. 1-2.

<sup>30</sup>*Ruch* 1907, no. 1, pp. 15.

<sup>31</sup>*Ruch* 1907, no. 2, pp. 19.

The next attempt at raising skiing in Warsaw to the next level was undertaken by WKS. The association proclaimed its plan to organize skiing “*for which mountains and natural slopes of Agrykola Park are perfectly suited*”<sup>32</sup> in winter season 1910/1911<sup>33</sup>.

That attempt did not bring required results in the form of the development of skiing in Warsaw. Disappointed with the situation, Aleksander Drac, the editor of *Sport* magazine and the participant of skiing trips in Galicia wrote: “*I had the opportunity to participate in few major trip of this type and until now I still reminiscence on the nice moments spent skiing, on numerous and various adventures and feelings I got afterwards. Being influenced by them I ask you a question: why don't we adapt this sport in our country?*”<sup>34</sup>



Pic. 6. One of the skiers from Warsaw on Agrykola's slopes in 1912, source: *TygodnikIllustrowany*1912, no. 4, pp. 78.

---

<sup>32</sup>*Sport* 1910, no. 3, pp. 4.

<sup>33</sup>*Nowości Illustrowane* 1910, no. 8, pp. 16.

<sup>34</sup>*Sport* 1911, no. 17, pp. 5.

Skiing in Agrykola Park was described by mentioned above Tadeusz Grabowski. He pointed at Jan Gebethner as the first skier, who used skies from Switzerland he borrowed from his friend. Grabowski recalled that “*we jumped at the first skier in Warsaw who was very proud of his downhill. Jaś showed us his binding, the width of skies, and finally he unfastened his skies and run up the slop to repeat the downhill*”<sup>35</sup>.

The development of skiing on a bigger scale in Warsaw proved to be impossible before the outbreak of the Second World War. At the end of the period discussed only one shop, owned by Alexander Leutner and located on Senatorska 27 had skies for sale<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, the inhabitants of Warsaw who were interested in this sport more and more eagerly went skiing to Zakopane.

## Luge

The sport of luge developed the fastest among Polish population under partition in Galicia. It was encouraged both by the occupant who provided ticket discounts and convenient train links and excellent natural conditions for practicing winter sports. Sportspeople from Lviv and Cracow also successfully competed in luge and bobsleigh tournaments in Austria and Switzerland. It was much more difficult to organize luge in the Kingdom of Poland. Krzysztof Szujecki believes that the sport of luge has been practiced in Warsaw already since 1906: “*reaching back to the beginning of luge, one should point at 1906 and competitions organized in Warsaw on an “ice mountain” in Agrykola since 1914*”<sup>37</sup>. However, it was impossible to confirm this data. Luge was definitely practiced there, however it happened a bit later on. Russian occupant did not allow the organizing of sports associations and a limited number of those that existed such as WTW had to act in a restricted way. In the context of analyzing the development of the sport of luge it has to be admitted that Warsaw at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century did not vibrated with sports life as it was under close scrutiny of clerks who discouraged Poles from undertaking any sports initiatives. The events of 1905 and the introduction of the martial law consequently resulted in a failure of those attempts.

The edition of Warsaw’s magazine *Ruch* from April 1907 announced the establishment of an association named Koło Sportowe (Sports Circle) with its interest focused on horse riding, shooting sport, tennis and football. The association really developed its sports

---

<sup>35</sup> T. Grabowski, *Z lamusa ...*, op. cit., pp. 28.

<sup>36</sup> *Sport* 1912, no 6, pp. 8.

<sup>37</sup> K. Szujecki, *Początki sportów zimowych*, <http://www.sportowahistoria.pl/index.php/10-artykuy/sport/108-pocztki-sportow-zimowych> (accessed 12 February 2013).

activities but luge was not mentioned in the beginning at all<sup>38</sup>. The first mention of luge appeared in a biweekly magazine in December 1908 in an article popularizing it. The article stated that *“the luge is a generally neglected sport here. The luge was introduced to the inhabitants of Lviv a few years ago. Only in this city it was accepted and even today gives its participants possibility to thrive while constantly going down along perfect slopes that are in such abundance in this city near Kiliński park. Outside Lviv the sport of luge is not known well; from time to time some attempts are made at it in Galicia. However, the citizens of the Kingdom know nearly nothing about this healthy and pleasant sport. In here, the luge still is a street game eagerly practiced by boys on steep streets on surrounding slopes”*<sup>39</sup>.

The luge in a form of competing that resembled Lviv competitions was started in Agrykola in the winter season 1908/1909. The luge track that was built there did not last long<sup>40</sup> as the luge track slope was too mild and the track was too dangerous. Moreover, the members of WKS which organized the luge track tended to choose Zakopane in winter as it offered them more winter attractions<sup>41</sup>.



Pic. 7. Luge track in Agrykola in Warsaw in 1909.

<sup>38</sup>Ruch 1907, no. 7 (25), pp. 76.

<sup>39</sup>Ruch 1908, no. 23 (65), pp. 257.

<sup>40</sup>Tygodnik Ilustrowany 1909, no. 8, pp. 150.

<sup>41</sup>Pływaczki, piłkarze. Sportowcy na starych zdjęciach,

<http://warszawa.gazeta.pl/warszawa/2029020,34862,13054881.html> (accessed 12 February 2012).

Those findings were also confirmed by the article by Tadeusz Grabowski which was published in *Stolica*. It stated that the premier of the luge sport in Agrykola took place in 1909<sup>42</sup>. The luge track was protected with banks that were placed along the main avenue of Koło Sportowe (Sports Circle). They were filled with icy tiles cut out from the nearby pond and refilled with water. In 1909 WKS bought few pairs of luge sleds so called petersburgs which were low, very heavy, soft padded, known as toboggans or skeletons. It has to be added that when the track was closed due to the coming spring, in its place “Swedish mountains” were built with narrow-gauge railway and wagons<sup>43</sup>.



Pic. 8. The sport of luge in Agrykola in Warsaw in 1909, source: personal archive.

In the following year, 1910, luge sleds called „Americans” were bought. They were higher, lighter, bigger and had enough room to accommodate up to 4 people. At the turn of December and January of winter season 1909/1910 the second luge track was built for more proficient users. It was 600 meters long and located on the slopes in the western part of the Park, near the wall surrounding Ujazdowski Hospital. The speed of the luge was around 70 kilometers per hour<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> T. Grabowski, *Qui pro quo na saneczkach w Agrykoli*, *Stolica* 1975, no. 11, pp. 16.

<sup>43</sup> *Głos Warszawski* 1909, no. 74, pp. 2.

<sup>44</sup> T. Grabowski, *Qui pro quo...*, op. cit., pp. 16.

The new track had, however, proven to be dangerous due to the frequency of injuries, fractures and a fatal accident. Therefore, Tsarist police prohibited from using this facility<sup>45</sup> in 1911. However, no more than a year later the luge track in Agrykola Park was advertised in the local press: "Kolo Sportowe from Warsaw announces the opening of an ice track for lunge (toboggans) which is 2100 meters long and joined by two 8,5 meters high ice towers. The second track will be opened on Thursday, 18 January, 1912. It will be located on the slopes of local mountains and it will be 28,5 meters high, 1600 feet long and with 40 degree curve. The slide on a luge track will cost 3 or 5 kopek each. 100 luge sleds to rent on spot. The entrance available from Myśliwiecka 1<sup>46</sup>".



Pic. 9. Female lungers on a track in Agrykola in 1912, source: *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1912, no. 4, pp. 78.

<sup>45</sup> T. Grabowski, *Z lamusa ...*, op. cit., pp. 29.

<sup>46</sup> *Kurjer Warszawski* 1912, no. 16, pp. 1. T. Grabowski, in the article *Qui pro quo...*, committed a mistake in a date of the opening of ice tracks, stating 1910 as a year of their premiere.



Pic. 10. Members of Kolo Sportowe on a luge track in Agrykola in 1912, source: *Świat* 1912, no. 5, pp.15.

Before the outbreak of the First World War there was only one track opened for female lungers. Warsaw's press expressed its regret in 1912 by writing that the sport of luge *"haven't won the citizenship rights here yet, although our security authorities would definitely look with outrage at the luge sleds going fast down the streets. At the same time no one perceives them as something sinful, no one sees them as an attack against public security. At the dawn the streets in all Swiss towns are covered with sleds and joyful laughter and loud voices can be heard"*<sup>47</sup>.

### Summary

The stages of the development of winter sports in their early days in Warsaw resembled those i.a. in Galicia. The scale of the development was most certainly different, as were the conditions in which the first attempts at introducing new sports disciplines were undertaken. The inhabitants of Warsaw mainly had strict Tsarist law as an obstacle that made setting associations up difficult. The initiatives relating to skating sports and undertaken by local entrepreneurs were directed at local inhabitants. The second half of the 19th century was the golden era for ski rinks in Warsaw and brought the establishment of WTC and WTŁ, which made ice games more attractive by organizing sports rivalry in speed and figure skating. At the end of the 19th century WTŁ in a decisive way took the lead in organizing skating not only in Warsaw, but on the Polish territory under Partition. The attempts at

<sup>47</sup>*Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1912, no. 4, pp. 78.

adopting other disciplines of ice skating sports before the First World War such as hokey, tennis or ice-sailing were either unsuccessful or didn't receive much attention from inhabitants.

Skies were in Warsaw relatively early, in 1892, but apart from unique attempts made by the members of WTC they did not adapt among general public. The next initiative to introduce skies in Agrykola Park was undertaken in 1910 by WKS. Despite few-years-long attempts of the members of Koło, Agrykola did not become an arena of skiing. It was partially a result of the fact that Warsaw's elites preferred active recreation in Zakopane.

So called ice mountains designed for luge tracks functioned in the same Park for a few years after 1909. The inhabitants of Warsaw gathered to practice this sport until a fatal accident in which a woman died. Tsarist police forbid hazardous luge slides. Only one luge track was opened after 1912. Despite the interest of a sport circle in WKS the sport of luge was never as popular as for example in Lviv, where junior high school students organized luge competitions already since 1906.

## **Summary**

### **The beginnings of winter sports before the First World War in Warsaw**

The beginnings of winter sports in Warsaw should be tracked back to ice rinks organized at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Powązki, Marymont, Izabelin, the Royal Łazienki and later on Ordynacki Pond, in the Saxon Garden and on Vistula river. Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century several larger and smaller ice rinks functioned in Warsaw and its area. In 1893 the activists of WTC called into existence WTŁ, which became the largest skating organization on Polish territory. It has been a part of ISU since 1898.

The first sporting attempt at initiating skiing took place in 1892 by the activists of WTC who used skies near Dobra Street. Rediscovery of skies by the inhabitants of Warsaw happened in 1910 in Agrykola by WKS.

Luge made its debut in Agrykola Park in 1909. Until 1912 it was mostly practiced by WKS. The sport of luge, skiing, tennis and ice hockey were not appreciated by Warsaw public as it preferred outings to Zakopane.



## Literature

1. Chełmecki J. (2016), *Działalność konspiracyjna Gniazda XI „Sokoła” im. Jana Kilińskiego w Warszawie w latach 1907-1914, Z najnowszej historii kultury fizycznej w Polsce*, vol. 12, edited by J. Eider, L. Nowak, R. Urban, Gorzów Wlkp.
2. Chełmecki J. (2010), *Etapy rozwoju sportu na ziemiach polskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku, Społeczno-edukacyjne oblicza współczesnego sportu i olimpizmu: aktywność fizyczna dzieci, młodzieży i dorosłych na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, edited by J. Nowocień, J. Chełmecki, Warsaw.
3. Chełmecki J. (2012), *Społeczne i polityczne uwarunkowania rozwoju sportu w Rosji i Królestwie Polskim na przełomie XIX i XX wieku, Kultura fizyczna i sport w zwierniadle nauk społecznych*, edited by W. J. Cynarski, J. Kosiewicz, K. Obodyński, Rzeszów.
4. Drozdek-Małołepsza T., Małołepszy E. (2015), *Działalność Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1905-1914, Teoretyczne i praktyczne uwarunkowania kultury fizycznej i turystyki*, edited by T. Drozdek-Małołepsza, A. Buková, Częstochowa.
5. Drozdowski M. M., Zahorski A. (1972), *Historia Warszawy*, Warsaw.
6. Dżereń J. (2009), *Przyczynek do stanu badań nad historią Mazowsza – ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem dziejów kultury fizycznej do 1918 roku (zarys problematyki)*, Prace Naukowe Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie „Kultura Fizyczna”, vol. 8.
7. Galiński F. (1937), *Gawędy o Warszawie*, Warsaw.
8. Gawkowski R. (2007), *Encyklopedia klubów sportowych Warszawy i jej najbliższych okolic w latach 1918-39*, Warsaw.
9. Grabowski T. A. (1975), *Qui pro quo na saneczkach w Agrykoli, Stolica*.
10. Grabowski T. A. (1957), *Z lamusa warszawskiego sportu*, Warsaw.
11. Jankowski J. (1935), *Łyżwiarstwo*, Warsaw.
12. Kieniewicz S. (1987), *Historia Polski 1795-1918*, Warsaw.
13. Krasowski R., Nadolski W., Król P. (2014), *”Ice-skating in Lviv in 1869-1899”*, *”Scientific Review of Physical Culture”*, vol. 4, no. 2.
14. Krygier W. (1935), *Hokej na lodzie*, Warsaw.
15. *Mała Encyklopedia Sportu*, (1986), vol. 2, Warsaw.
16. Pręgowski Z. (1994), *Dzieje narciarstwa polskiego do 1914 roku*, Warsaw.
17. Starosta W. (1967), *Łyżwiarstwo: metodyka nauczania, technika, historia*, Warsaw.

18. Tuszyński B. (1986), *100 lat Warszawskiego Towarzystwa Cyklistów – 100 lat kolarstwa polskiego*, Warsaw.
19. Żemantowski J., Ułasiewicz L. (2001), *Łyżwiarski Jubileusz – 80 lat Polskiego Związku Łyżwiarstwa Szybkiego*, Warsaw.

### Press

1. *Biesiada Literacka* 1879.
2. *Gazeta Warszawska* 1889-1893.
3. *Głos* 1892.
4. *Głos Warszawski* 1909.
5. *Kolarz, Wioślarz i Łyżwiarz* 1899.
6. *Kurjer Warszawski* 1870-1914.
7. *Nowości Illustrowane* 1908-1910.
8. *Ruch* 1907-1908.
9. *Sport* 1900-1914.
10. *Sport Zimowy* 1932.
11. *Świat* 1912-1913.
12. *Tygodnik Illustrowany* 1909-1912.
13. *Warszawska Gazeta Sportowa* 1902.
14. *Wędrowiec* 1895.

### The Internet

1. Majewski J., *Słynne lodowisko sprzed stu lat: na Nowym Świecie*, [http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34889,13112573,Slynnelodowisko\\_sprzed\\_stu\\_lat\\_na\\_Nowym\\_Swiecie.html](http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34889,13112573,Slynnelodowisko_sprzed_stu_lat_na_Nowym_Swiecie.html) (accessed 10 August 2016).
2. Szujecki K., *Początki sportów zimowych* <http://www.sportowahistoria.pl/index.php/10-artykuy/sport/108-pocztki-sportow-zimowych> (accessed 12 February 2013).
3. *Pływaczki, piłkarze. Sportowcy na starych zdjęciach*, <http://warszawa.gazeta.pl/warszawa/2029020,34862,13054881.html> (accessed 12 February 2012).
4. [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historia\\_Warszawy](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historia_Warszawy) (accessed 10 August 2016).