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Propaganda content in the Polish sports press of the 1950s

The aim of this preliminary study is to discuss, on the basis of selected examples, how the sports press of the 1950s covertly introduced content of a political and propaganda nature. It was a period of severe politicisation of sports and sports journalism, which was mitigated gradually in the following decades. What was particularly interesting was the act of intertwining into magazines messages the purpose of which was to present physical culture as something strongly bound with the development of the socialist state. I analysed selected sports periodicals, e.g. *Przegląd Sportowy*, *Głos Sportowca*, *Sport*, and *Sportowiec*: the study material consisted of ten randomly selected issues of the indicated periodicals from 1950–1959.

Physical culture in Poland developed relatively slowly. At the turn of the 20th century, any attempt at being physically active was considered as unbecoming of a serious person, or even as detrimental to one's health. Therefore, the activities of such social activists as Henryk Jordan were extremely important as they strove to increase people's knowledge on the topic of the development of the human body. Thanks to such efforts, by the outbreak of the Second World War, society's interest in sports had increased steadily. Activists were able to convince both politicians and some citizens that sport is the drive of the physical development of the nation and a method for gaining greater prestige in the international arena.¹ Today, it is even the subject of research. As Richard Espy noted, sport is a tool of diplomacy² used by most countries. Sports delegations sometimes preceded and facilitated the

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1 Cf. R. Siekiera, *Początki polskiej publicystyki sportowej w ujęciu genologicznym*. „Przegląd Sportowy” w latach 1921–1925, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2016.

2 R. Espy, “The Role and Importance of Sport in International Relations”, [in:] *Sport politics: An Introduction*, ed. J. Grix, Palgrave-Macmillan, London 2016, p. 17.

establishing of diplomatic relations. That is possible due to the assumed relationship between a country's sports potential and its political and economic strength.³ Since, in principle, sport features political neutrality, international rivalry in that field enables states to achieve symbolic victories which do not entail any serious political consequences. That is at least the theory, because, as Epsy indicated, at the turn of the 1970s, a series of football matches between El Salvador and Honduras led to many tensions, breaking off of diplomatic and economic relations between the neighbours, and, eventually, to a war.⁴

After the Second World War, in the People's Republic of Poland, the mass promotion of sport became a goal of the authorities.⁵ In September 1949, the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) issued a resolution on physical culture and sport giving the ruling party full control over the development of sports clubs and youth education. That was supposed to support further development of the socialist system. A vital element of that was the obedience of the masses, which, according to Marcin Moskalewicz, "constitute the subject and the world view basis of a regime."⁶ The resolution on physical culture posited that all forms of activities related to physical activity, from school gym classes to elite sports competitions, were supposed to serve the purpose of building a strong society composed of obedient citizens.

The sports press became a tool of influence. In the 1950s, it developed quickly, stimulated by the PZPR's keen interest in it. The creation of any new periodical required consent from the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, yet that posed no problem whatsoever. In 1949, a new illustrated periodical was created intended for the young: *Sportowiec* (before that, from 1945, *Start* was already in circulation). Thanks to state support for the promotion of physical culture, other periodicals emerged on the market, e.g. *Sport* and *Piłka Nożna*. After the Second World War, such periodicals as *Przegląd Sportowy*, *Wychowanie Fizyczne* (re-named in 1951 to *Kultura Fizyczna*), and *Taternik* renewed their activities. Other themed periodicals included *Piłkarz* (later *Głos Sportowca* and from 1959 *Tempo*), *Sport*

3 Ibidem, p. 18.

4 Ibidem, p. 17.

5 As Bogdan Tuszyński noted: "at the beginning of all grand changes only just starting, there existed the conviction that physical culture would serve biological and mental regeneration of the society the best, the education of the youth in particular" (B. Tuszyński, *Prasa i sport 1881-1981*, *Sport i Turystyka*, Warsaw 1981, p. 285). To learn more about the role of sport in shaping a political system vide: A. Pasko, *Sport wyczynowy w polityce państwa 1944-1989*, Wydawnictwo Avalon, Krakow 2012, or: L. Szymański, *Kultura fizyczna i turystyka w polityce Polski Ludowej 1944-1989*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego, Wrocław 2004.

6 M. Moskalewicz, *Totalitaryzm, narracja, tożsamość. Filozofia historii Hannah Arendt*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2013, p. 131 [unless indicated otherwise, English versions of quotations were translated from Polish].

Śląski, *Wychowanie Fizyczne i Sport*, *Sport Dla Wszystkich*, *Koło Sportowe*, *Sport i Wczasy*, and special-interest periodicals, e.g. *Boks*, *Szachy*, *Lekka Atletyka*, *Żagle i Jachting Motorowy*, *Koszykówka*, *Piłka Ręczna*, *Siatkówka*, and *Brydż*.⁷ Individual periodicals fitted more or less the programme of the ideologisation of both public and private lives. Mostly that was caused by sports officials, but also party officials who were invited by the editorial boards to collaborate with the periodicals. As Tuszyński noted, the representatives of all groups associated with the press agreed that the democratisation of physical culture and the successes of Polish sport would only be possible within the framework of the people's state.⁸

The orientation towards political goals did not prove beneficial for all periodicals, as professionalism and keen interest in sports was replaced by care for pretences and issues not directly related to the rivalry at stadiums. Especially in the initial years after the Second World War, some titles filled their pages with reports from the meetings and congresses of various bodies. Even *Przegląd Sportowy* was one of those periodicals. In the early-1950s, as Józef Hen reminisced, "the level of «Przegląd» was [...] very uneven. There were periods when journalists turned into dour reviewers who made sure that, God forbid, no report was «depoliticised». And since everything could be politicised and not everyone had the gift of political vigilance, that attitude led to the inclusion of many clichés, banalities, and unfounded formulations."⁹

As a result of that avoidance of depoliticisation, as Hen put it, journalists framed sports rivalry within a political-historical context. They mainly emphasised the co-occurrence of the dates of sports competitions with historical events, e.g.:

Tegoroczny sezon sportowy obfituje w wiele atrakcyjnych imprez niemal we wszystkich dyscyplinach sportu. W całym kraju sportowcy prowadzą intensywne przygotowania, aby dzień 22 lipca – Święto 10-lecia Polski Ludowej powitać jak największymi osiągnięciami.

[The current sports season is filled with many attractive events in almost every sport. Throughout the country, athletes are preparing intensively to celebrate the 22nd of July, or the 10th Anniversary of People's Poland, with their greatest achievements.]¹⁰

7 To learn more about the periodicals circulated in Poland in the discussed period, vide also: M. Jasińska, *Bibliografia czasopism sportowych w Polsce 1881–1981*, Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warsaw 1983.

8 B. Tuszyński, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

9 J. Hen, *Jeden z tysięcy*, [as quoted in:] B. Tuszyński, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

10 *Głos Sportowca* 1954, issue 19, p. 2 [hereinafter: GS].

or

Przybycie kolarzy z 12 państw, biorących udział w Wyścigu Pokoju do Morawskiej Ostrawy, zbiegło się z szóstą rocznicą oswobodzenia tego miasta przez Armię Radziecką.

[The arrival in Moravska Ostrava of cyclists from 12 countries participating in the Peace Race occurred on the sixth anniversary of the liberation of the city by the Soviet Army.]¹¹

Further in the second of the quoted articles (with the telling title “Łączy nas wspólna wola utrzymania pokoju” [We are unified by the common intention to maintain peace]), the author discussed the banners which appeared along the route of the race:

Na Zimowy Stadion Sportowy, udekorowany flagami państw, biorących udział w Wyścigu oraz transparentami, na których m. in. czytamy: „Żądamy zawarcia paktu pokojowego pięciu mocarstw”, „Walczcie o pokój z taką zaciętością, z jaką walczyliście na trasie Wyścigu Warszawa–Praga”, przybyli kierownicy drużyn i zawodnicy, biorący udział w Wyścigu.

[Into the Winter Sports Stadium, decorated with the flags of the countries taking part in the Race and banners which read, for example: “We demand a peace accord between the five superpowers”, “Fight for peace as fiercely as you fight in the Warsaw–Prague Race”, there arrived team managers and athletes participating in the Race.]¹²

The publications often included implicit political content in the form of stressing the goal of organising a tournament. Usually, this appeared as statements of intent to fight for peace and equality of all nations. Sometimes it was also perceived as proof of the legitimacy of the socialist ideology (e.g. the democratisation of sport) and the engagement of the masses in the sports movement. Consider the following example:

Pełniąc niestrudzenie zaszczytną rolę agitatorów pokoju, zorganizowali członkowie LZS pow. krakowskiego kolarski Raid Pokoju na trasie 100 km z Libertowa [...] do Swoszowic. [...] Szczególnie imponująco wypadły te manifestacje pokojowe w Wieliczce, gdzie na rynku zgromadziły się nieprzejrzone tłumy, młodzież

¹¹ *Przegląd Sportowy* 1951, issue 36, p. 3 [hereinafter: PS].

¹² *Ibid.*

szkolna i górnicy z tamtejszej żupy solnej [...] i [w] Skawinie, gdzie do zebranych przemawiała córka zamordowanego w Oświęcimiu więźnia hitlerowskiego [...] Pelagia Suder.

[While tirelessly fulfilling the honourable role of proponents of peace, the members of LZS of the Krakow district organised a 100 km bicycle Peace Rally from Libertów [...] do Swoszowice. [...] Particularly impressive were those peace manifestations in Wieliczka, where in the town square a dense crowd of school children and miners from the local salt mine [...] gathered, and in Skawina, where the crowds listened to the speech of Pelagia Suder, the daughter of a murdered prisoner of the Nazi camp in Auschwitz [...].]¹³

Such a report offered virtually no information on how the race proceeded. The reporter focussed entirely on reporting on the crowds, marches and performances, forgetting about the sports aspect of the event. The very title of the text indicated the author's focus point: *Podpisy na karcie plebiscytowej to skuteczna broń w walce o pokój* [Signatures on the plebiscite card are an effective weapon in the fight for peace].

Naturally, one cannot omit the fact that many sports competitions in countries of the people's democracy were planned specifically as a mode of ideological and political demonstration. The results were unimportant (though in the case of international competitions, victories over capitalist countries were treated as proof of the legitimacy of socialist principles). In the Polish context, political significance applied not only to the Peace Race, but also to various cycling rallies, runs and marches along the routes of the "Resurgent Polish Army and the invincible Soviet Army"¹⁴ (the so-called Autumn Marches along the Paths of Victories).

The admiration for both the socialist system and the achievements of USSR athletes sometimes reached grotesque proportions in the Polish press and by today's standards it could be considered as preposterous. An example of that was a text by Jerzy Zmarzlik published in the 89th issue of *Przegląd Sportowy* of 1951. The author described in it the parade organised at the Berlin stadium opening an international athletics tournament:

Defilada młodych bojowników o pokój, którzy zjechali do Berlina, by zmanifestować swą wolę walki z imperializmem anglo-amerykańskim, z podżegaczami wojennymi na całym świecie, zbliżała się do końca. Przemaszerowali przedstawiciele kilkudziesięciu państw, owacyjnie witani przez wielojęzyczną, blisko stutysięczną widownię.

¹³ PS 1951, issue 41, p. 4.

¹⁴ PS 1951, issue 89, p. 2.

[The parade of young fighters for peace who assembled in Berlin to manifest their eagerness to fight against Anglo-American imperialism and with war mongers throughout the world was coming to an end. The representatives of several dozen countries marched, greeted enthusiastically by a multinational crowd of nearly 100,000 people.]¹⁵

The biggest applause accompanied, of course, the representatives of the USSR (“indescribable enthusiasm which could not be expressed in words spread through the Walter Ulbricht Stadium”¹⁶). Their appearance in the sports arena triggered in the audience a sudden influx of feelings towards the leader of the Soviet State:

Stalin, Stalin, Stalin!!! Okrzyki płynące z serc, z duszy, obiegały cały Berlin, rozbrzmiewały głośno i radośnie na ulicach i placach. Przebijała w nich pewność i wiara, wiara w zwycięstwo ideałów, myśli i celów narodu, który prowadzi od zwycięstwa do zwycięstwa – Józef Stalin.

[Stalin, Stalin, Stalin!!! The cheers flowing from the hearts and souls spread through all Berlin, resonating loudly and cheerfully in the streets and squares. They carried trust and belief, belief in the victory of the principles, thoughts and goals of the nation being led from victory to victory by Józef Stalin.]¹⁷

The author’s zeal in embellishing the scene was also visible further in the text when he quoted his interview with Otto Kramer, a young worker from Leipzig. The 19-year-old German supposedly stated that:

Nie tylko ja mam tak wiele uczucia dla ludzi radzieckich. Wszyscy w naszej fabryce nauczyli się cenić radzieckiego robotnika, artystę, sportowca, cały naród. Opowiadano u nas dużo o metodach pracy ludzi radzieckich, o ich osiągnięciach, o stachanowcach. Byli tacy, co nie bardzo wierzyli, by można osiągać takie sukcesy produkcyjne.

[It is not just me who has so much passion for the Soviet people. Everyone at our factory has learnt to appreciate the Soviet worker, artist, athlete, the entire nation. We were told often about the methods of work of the Soviet people, about their achievements, about udarniks. There were some who couldn’t believe it was possible to achieve such production results.]¹⁸

¹⁵ PS 1951, issue 89, p. 3.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

Apparently, the sceptics were convinced when faced with a show of the skills of one Bykow, a Soviet turner, who before the perplexed Germans' eyes perfectly turned a perfectly even piece of metal for a machine which even the best German turners were not able to produce. As per Kramer's account:

– To cud! – wykrzyknął jeden z młodych robotników – to prawdziwy cud!

Bykow poprosił, by mu przetłumaczyć, co powiedział młody robotnik.

– To nie cud – odpowiedział – to dlatego, że mam dobrego, najlepszego na świecie nauczyciela – Józefa Wissarionowicza Stalina.

[“It's a miracle!” shouted one of the young workers. “It's a true miracle!”

Bykow asked for someone to translate for him what the young worker said.

“It's no miracle,” he responded, “it's only because I have a good teacher, the best one in the world: Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin”.]¹⁹

Zmarzlik's article, full of similar enthusiastic anecdotes, concluded with a similarly pretentious paragraph:

I dlatego sportowcy Związku Radzieckiego cieszyli się takim samym szacunkiem, jak Bykow wśród lipskich robotników, jak artyści radzieccy, jak cały naród radziecki otoczony jest miłością i szacunkiem przez uczciwych ludzi na całym świecie.

[That is why the athletes from the Soviet Union enjoyed the same respect as Bykow among the Leipzig workers, like Soviet artists, like the entire Soviet nation, surrounded by love and respect by the fair people of the world.]²⁰

Though the sports press of the 1950s was not entirely filled with only such praise of the Soviet lifestyle, especially in the initial years of the decade it was common to find articles, or entire issues, devoted to political issues. Similar importance was assigned to history, which was recalled especially in celebration of anniversaries of events important from the ideological point of view.

Following Arendt, Moskalewicz posited that “scientific rationalisation means the creation of history as an intentional project in such a way that the entire world together becomes the intentional product of *homo faber*. Reality becomes fabricated

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem.

as per specific rules, according to a model. [...] As a result, the mental fiction constitutes part of the reality.”²¹ Such fabrication of history existed in the case of PZPR propaganda. Its evident traces could also be found in the sports press of the 1950s. An historic event, filtered through the Stalinist ideology, acquired a new interpretation in which it was the Soviet Union that gave the world peace:

Bez Rewolucji Październikowej nie byłoby zwycięstwa nad faszyzmem w drugiej wojnie światowej, nie byłoby wyzwolenia z potwornego, faszystowskiego ucisku narodów Polski i Czechosłowacji, Węgier, Rumunii, Bułgarii i Albanii. Niemożliwe byłoby zrzućenie imperialistycznego jarzma przez półmiliardowe masy chińskiego narodu, niemożliwe byłoby odrodzenie się narodu niemieckiego.

[Without the October Revolution, there would be no victory over fascism in the Second World War, there would be no liberation from the horrible fascist oppression of the nations of Poland and Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. It would not be possible for the 500-million strong mass of the Chinese nation to shatter the imperialist shackles, or for the German nation to become reborn.]²²

And he continued:

W obecnej sytuacji międzynarodowej, kiedy anglo-saski imperializm grozi światu nową pożąną wojenną, coraz wyraźniej widoczna jest wielka rola Związku Radzieckiego, jako głównego obrońcy pokoju, coraz powszechniej rozumiany jest przez cały postępowy świat sens wielkiej Październikowej Rewolucji, jako naszej rewolucji, w naszym interesie dokonanej. [...] Szczególnie głęboko odczuwają to polskie masy pracujące, które mogą budować u siebie socjalizm, właśnie dzięki Rewolucji Październikowej, dzięki Związkowi Radzieckiemu.

[In the current international situation, when the imperialism of the English-speaking world threatens the world with the fire of a new war, the grand role of the Soviet Union as the main defender of peace is becoming ever so clear, the progressive part of the world is beginning to widely understand the grand meaning of the October Revolution as our revolution, completed for our benefit. [...] It is particularly strongly sensed by the Polish working masses, who are able to build their socialism precisely thanks to the October Revolution, thanks to the Soviet Union.]²³

²¹ M. Moskalewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

²² PS 1950, issue 88, p. 2.

²³ *Ibidem*.

Through indoctrination readers were being convinced of the role which the athletes of the Soviet Union had played in the fight for peace, and continued to play in the building of the new order based on work:

Radzieccy sportowcy w czasie wojny dawali tysiące przykładów bohaterstwa i wytrwałości, a w czasie pokoju przodują w twórczej pracy. Za ich przykładem polscy sportowcy dają dowody, że kultura fizyczna rzeczywiście przyczynia się do zwiększenia obronności kraju i wydajności pracy.

[During the war, Soviet athletes offered thousands of examples of bravery and resilience, and during the time of peace they lead in building. Following their example, Polish athletes give evidence that physical culture truly helps increase the country's defence capabilities and work performance.]²⁴

Texts also offered a false-mirror image of the period of the Second Polish Republic, treated with aversion by the communist authorities. Those mostly emphasised the insufficient focus on the democratisation and promotion of sport, and development of infrastructure. An example of that was an article published in *Sport* entitled “W 8 rocznicę wyzwolenia” [On the 8th anniversary of liberation]²⁵ devoted both to the liberation of Katowice by the Red Army and the reconstruction of the entire area of Silesia by the people's government. As the author stated:

troska Państwa Ludowego o zdrowie i bezpieczeństwo świata pracy stworzyła warunki, o jakich w przedwrześniowej Polsce nie myślano. Bujnie rozkwitło życie kulturalne i sportowe. Masowy wszechstronny sport świata pracy stał się faktem.

[...] Drugim wspaniałym przykładem stylu budownictwa socjalistycznego dla dobra wszystkich mieszkańców przemysłowego okręgu jest Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku. Czołowe miejsce zajmują w nim inwestycje sportowe. Stadion-gigant na 80.000 widzów jest obiektem, na który śląscy sportowcy czekali od wielu lat, a którego budowa w międzywojennym dwudziestoleciu była nieziszczalnym marzeniem.

[the care of the People's State for the health and safety of the working world created conditions which had never been considered in the pre-September Poland. The cultural and sports life has blossomed. The mass multi-directional world of sports became a fact.

[...] The Voivodship Culture and Recreation Park is another wonderful example of the style of socialist construction for the good of all inhabitants of the industrial

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ *Sport* 1953, issue 8, p. 1 [hereinafter: SP].

district. Sports investments occupy a major place in it. The giant stadium for 80,000 spectators is an arena for which Silesian athletes have waited for many years, and the construction of which in the interwar period had been an impossible dream.²⁶

On occasion, one could find historically-themed articles which outlined and emphasised the legitimate version of events (e.g. the text “Przeciwko wrogom i zdrajcom narodu o szczęście ludu polskiego walczyła Polska Partia Robotnicza”²⁷ [Against the nation’s enemies and traitors, the Polish Workers’ Party fought for the happiness of the Polish nation], which discussed the creation of the People’s Guard and its activities in the occupation years).

On special occasions, entire issues of periodicals devoted to history were released, especially in celebration of the anniversaries of the October Revolution and the end of the Second World War. Issues published after Stalin’s death included both announcements by the Central Committees of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the PZPR, a resolution regarding the continuity of rule in the USSR, the typescripts of the speeches by Edward Ochab and Włodzimierz Reczek (president of the Main Committee of Physical Culture), comments by Polish athletes (e.g. Stanisław Maruszak), appeals by the Main Committee of Physical Culture and by the Council of State to the citizens, and other texts which in various ways related to the death of the president of the CPSU. Pages 2 and 6 of *Przegląd Sportowy* of 9 March 1953 included headlines which in a few words summarised the contents of the issue: “Zmarł Wielki Stalin – Jego nauka żyje i zwycięża” [The Great Stalin is dead – His teachings live and remain victorious] and “Wieczysta chwała Józefowi Stalinowi wyzwolicielowi narodu Polskiego” [Eternal glory to Joseph Stalin, the liberator of the Polish nation], respectively. Then, issue 20 of *Sport* from the same day, featured articles with such titles as: “Cała postępowo ludzkość składa hołd u trumny Józefa Stalina” [All progressive humanity pays tribute at Joseph Stalin’s coffin], “Sprawa Józefa Stalina jest nieśmiertelna” [Joseph Stalin’s purpose is immortal], and “Sport polski w żałobie” [Polish sports world in mourning].

Political engagement was displayed by the sports press also at election time. Though seemingly the issue is in no manner connected with sport, editors made sure to include statements of support for the righteous cause. The dedication of Polish athletes to socialist principles was an element in building an impression of general unity among the citizens. All sports activities were presented as efforts for the glory of the homeland and reinforcing the position of the PZPR. Polish athletes were supposed to be role models of a responsible patriotic attitude. As was argued in the press, the sporting masses had lifted and carried on their shoulders the load as they realised the gravity of the moment:

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ PS 1952, issue 8, p. 3.

W tym historycznym okresie przed wyborami do Sejmu, sportowcy Polski Ludowej zdają egzamin swej politycznej dojrzałości. I można powiedzieć z niemalą dumą, że wśród czołowych zawodników, wśród działaczy i wszystkich obywateli uprawiających sport [...] wszędzie panował duch jedności, zrozumienia wagi chwili, świadomości zbliżającego się wielkiego momentu – powszechnego głosowania.

Polski sportowiec odda swój głos za Frontem Narodowym, będąc głęboko przeświadczony o słuszności tej decyzji. Dziś, realizując swe zobowiązania przedwyborcze i na cześć XIX Zjazdu KPZR sportowcy polscy czują się na śmierć i życie związani z budową socjalizmu, z walką o pokój i szczęście narodu.

[In this historic period prior to the Sejm election, the athletes of People's Poland passed the exam in political maturity. And one could say with considerable pride that among the leading athletes, among the sports officials and all the citizens practising sports [...] there was everywhere the spirit of unity, an understanding of the gravity of the moment, recognition of the coming grand moment: the popular vote.

Polish athletes will cast their votes in favour of the National Front, having a deep conviction in the justness of the decision. Today, fulfilling their pre-election commitments and in celebration of the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Polish athletes feel bound for life or death with the building of socialism, with the fight for peace and the happiness of the nation.]²⁸

Publications which seemed to be entirely devoted to sporting events also sometimes included political reports, though on a much smaller scale. Apart from the obvious commendations for teams and athletes from socialist states, the attitude towards western countries is noteworthy. Even though the press did not have a problem with complimenting their athletes, their cultures and the socio-political conditions were usually presented in not the best of lights. Authors mainly indicated instances of social inequality:

Na okładce amerykańskiego czasopisma „Ring” jest przedstawiony w aureoli błyszczącego dolara były bokserski mistrz świata Joe Louis. [...] Do czego doszedł Louis – dobrze wiemy. A inni „bogacze” sportowi? Fred Jets, były mistrz Anglii w szachach, umarł z głodu, Al Brown, były bokserski mistrz świata w wadze koguciej, umarł w nędzy, Gertruda Ederle, pierwsza kobieta, która przepłynęła kanał La Manche, umarła w przytułku dla starców. Jak w każdej dziedzinie życia, także w sporcie, społeczna nierówność w krajach kapitalistycznych jest normalnym zjawiskiem. [...] Jaki by nie wziąć rodzaj sportu, na każdą, wysokoopłacaną znakomitość, znajdują się dziesiątki tysięcy sportowców-biedaków.

[The cover of the American *Ring* periodical features the boxing world champion Joe Louis in a halo of the dollar. [...] What Louis got from all that – we know well enough.

²⁸ *Sportowiec* 1952, issue 42, p. 6 [hereinafter: SPC].

What about other “richmen” athletes? Fred Yates, the former English chess master, died of hunger, Al Brown, a former bantamweight boxing champion, died in poverty, and Gertrude Ederle, the first woman to swim across the English Channel, died in an old people’s home. In sports, just as in any other domain of life, social inequality in the capitalist states is something normal. [...] Whichever sport you consider, for every highly-paid personality there are tens of thousands of beggar athletes.]²⁹

Polish sports journalists also reported with aversion on the policies of capitalist countries, trying to humiliate them or present them as detrimental and threatening world peace. One could say that it was part of the socialist strategy of shaping the geopolitical system. The Soviet Union and its allies occupied a central place in it as the main forces striving to maintain order, international balance and the respect for the rights of all nations, while the Western Bloc caused, through its ill-considered actions, tensions in world politics, which increased the threat of another war of global reach. Even seemingly minor incidents related to athletes could be used as a pretext for such suggestions, e.g.:

Stosowana obecnie w USA tzw. Ustawa Mc Carrana, na mocy której zabrania się rybakom zawijać do portów USA bez specjalnych wiz wjazdowych i przesłuchań – dotknęła piłkarzy austriackich, udających się niedawno na tournée po Ameryce Południowej.

Tajna policja FBI zatrzymała w areszcie drużynę sportową, przeprowadzając szczegółowe dochodzenie, prawdopodobnie w sprawie... połowu bramek na kontynencie Ameryki Łacińskiej. [...] W Anglii sportowa opinia publiczna zaniepokojona jest coraz wyraźniejszym zaniedbywaniem sprawy rozbudowy urządzeń sportowych [...] prasa londyńska, pisząc o kosztach utrzymania naczelnego dowództwa tzw. Armii Renu, wylicza, że za tę rujnującą kwotę 12 milionów funtów można by wybudować 5.000 nowych domów, 115 boisk piłkarskich [...]. Można by, tak jak można by również nie aresztować i nie przesłuchiwać sportowców udających się na mecz, ale inne są rozkazy atlantyckich dyspozytorów, którzy ustalają swoją „linię postępowania” wszędzie tam, gdzie widzą możliwość walki z postępem, możliwość podsycania „zimnej wojny”.

[The US so-called McCarran Act, under which fishermen are prohibited from entering US ports without special entry visas and interrogations, affected Austrian football players recently *en route* for a tour of South America.

²⁹ SPC 1952, issue 41, p. 12. In fact, neither Yates, who worked as a journalist, nor Ederle, who went on the stage, ever made any money from their achievements. Yates died from asphyxiation due to a gas leak, while Ederle, only in her 40s at the time of publication, did, ironically, end her life in an old people’s home, but did not die until 2003.

The FBI secret police held the sporting team in jail and conducted a detailed investigation into what might only seem as fishing for goals in the Latin American continent. [...] In England, the opinion of the sports public has become alarmed by the increasingly visible neglecting of the issue of expanding sports facilities [...] when discussing the costs of maintaining the headquarters of the so-called British Army of the Rhine, the London-based press calculated that for the ruinous amount of 12 million pounds it would be possible to build 5,000 new houses, 115 football pitches [...] It would be possible, just as it would be possible not to arrest or interrogate athletes *en route* to a match, but that is a matter of different orders by Atlantic marshals who define their “line of action” everywhere where they see an opportunity to oppose progress and fuel the “cold war”.]³⁰

Another form of politicisation of the sports press was their condemnation of the behaviour of western fans and the media. Their reactions to various occurrences or their general attitudes were eagerly used by editorial officials, as indicated in the following examples:

Stanowisko publiczności i fachowców angielskich do tenisistki, która „tak brzydko wygląda i tak dobrze gra w tenisa” było różne. Ideologia rasistowska nigdy nie znajdowała w Anglii podatnego podłoża. Tym niemniej nie można zaprzeczyć, że Brytyjczycy, twórcy potężnego nie tak dawno systemu kolonialnego mają dumę władczego narodu i niechętnie widzieli sukcesy Murzynki, stanowiące wyłom w dotychczasowej tradycji Wimbledonu.

[The attitudes of the audience and English specialists towards the tennis player who “looks so poorly yet plays tennis so well” varied. The racist ideology had never found a good environment for growth in England. Despite that, it would be difficult to negate the fact that the British, the creators of the not-so-long-gone powerful colonial system, possess the pride of a ruling nation and were unwilling to see the successes of the Negro, which constituted a crack in the existing traditions of Wimbledon.]³¹

and

W Anglii nie wszyscy wiedzą o Wyścigu Pokoju. Bojkot prasy kapitalistycznej działa. Ale kto już o nim wie, ten się nim bardzo interesuje.

[In England, not everyone knows about the Peace Race. The capitalist press boycott works. However, anyone who knows about it, is keenly interested in it.]³²

³⁰ SPC 1953, issue 1, p. 3.

³¹ SP 1957, issue 82, p. 2.

³² SPC 1954, issue 18, p. 6.

Such remarks remained outside the main course of propaganda activities, though they clearly complemented it well. Even though, as research has shown, the quoted words of Józef Hen, that editors made sure that no report was depoliticised, could be considered somewhat exaggerated, there was truth in it, as even informative texts sometimes included such political interjections.

Reports from sports competitions sometimes began with an outline of the situation frame, in which the most important element was the cordial welcoming of the arriving teams, emphasising the joy among the hosts at their visit, and the statement on the genuineness of the friendship between the nations:

Serdecznie witali opolanie młodzieżową reprezentację ZSRR w piłce siatkowej, która w piątek przybyła do Opola. [...] Gości radzieckich serdecznie powitał w imieniu Opolszczyzny sekretarz WKKF – Romańczyk, wręczając im pamiątkowy proporczyk. Kierownik drużyny radzieckiej w odpowiedzi na powitanie podkreślił, że pobyt siatkarzy radzieckich przyczyni się do dalszego jeszcze zacieśnienia więzów braterstwa i przyjaźni między obu narodami.

[The inhabitants of Opole cordially welcomed the youth volleyball team of the USSR which arrived in Opole on Friday. [...] The Soviet guests were cordially welcomed on behalf of the entire Opole region by Romańczyk, secretary of WKKF [Voivodeship Committee of Physical Culture], presenting them with a commemorative burgee. In response, the manager of the Soviet team emphasised that the Soviet volleyball players' visit will help further tighten the brotherly and friendly bonds between the two nations.]³³

Periodicals also eagerly quoted Polish athletes, who described displays of heroic attitudes and said how big a pleasure for them the very thought of the visit of the friends from Czechoslovakia, the USSR or the DDR was. Sometimes, the sporting aspects of such meetings were considered as secondary (though even then authors stressed, e.g. the benefits of having the opportunity to compare Polish teams to their opponents, worthy of imitation).

The celebrations of Polish-Soviet friendship months were usually accompanied by celebratory texts in which journalists appealed to people to demonstrate their sympathy for the eastern neighbour and stressed how much the Polish nation owed to Stalin. They also promoted a further promotion of physical culture among the masses and the need to capitalise on the Soviet experience. They reported on the contributions of Polish sports to such celebrations:

[...] rozpoczynający się miesiąc Pogłębiania Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej ma w tym roku szczególnie doniosłe znaczenie. Sport polski zamanifestuje swą przyjaźń

³³ PS 1952, issue 101, p. 2.

i łączność ze sportem radzieckim przez popularyzowanie jego wielkich osiągnięć i metod na polu umasowienia i podniesienia poziomu kultury fizycznej, przez pogadanki, imprezy, gazetki ścienne.

Najlepszą formą zmanifestowania przyjaźni polsko-radzieckiej będzie właściwe wykorzystanie doświadczeń i dorobku radzieckich sportowców w budowie socjalistycznej kultury fizycznej, w przygotowaniu młodzieży do pracy i obrony.

[...] the month for the Deepening of the Polish-Soviet Friendship which has just started is particularly important this year. Polish sport is going to declare its friendship and connection with Soviet sport by promoting the latter's grand achievements and methods of popularising and improving the level of physical culture during chats, events, and in brochures.

The best form of declaring the Polish-Soviet friendship will be to properly apply the experiences and achievements of Soviet athletes in the building of socialist physical culture, and in the preparation of the youth for work and defence.]³⁴

As visible in the quoted fragment, physical culture, just like other domains of life, was supposed to be socialist in nature. Therefore, the point was not to simply promote physical activity – it had to be closely associated with the only legitimate ideology.

For that purpose, authors also, apart from the already-mentioned devices, used Soviet sport as a role model (cf. the rather straight-forward title: “Socjalistyczny sport w Związku Radzieckim wzorem dla naszych sportowców”³⁵ [Socialist sport in the Soviet Union as a role model for our athletes]). The perfect model of a successful hero was a Soviet athlete – utterly devoted to striving for perfection, but also someone who works very hard. Even the advancements in individual disciplines in Poland were sometimes associated with the influence of Soviet sport. Domestic successes might have been inspired by Russian training methods, visits of coaches and sports officials from the USSR, friendly games or even demonstration events with athletes from the Soviet State:

Międzynarodowe sukcesy polskich ciężarowców zwróciły uwagę na tę niedocenianą do niedawna dyscyplinę sportu. Od występów sztangistów radzieckich datuje się u nas rewolucyjny przełom i skuteczna pogoń za czołówką światową.

[The international successes of Polish weightlifters drew focus onto this once underappreciated sport. The revolution and the successful pursuit of the global leaders began with events which featured Soviet weightlifters.]³⁶

³⁴ PS 1950, issue 88, p. 2.

³⁵ PS 1950, issue 88, p. 3.

³⁶ SP 1957, issue 5, p. 2.

In the case of international tournaments, the press not only reported on the results of Polish athletes, but they also emphasised Soviet successes:

Kuc nie jest jednak jedynym przedstawicielem lekkoatletyki radzieckiej, która w ciągu tego roku zrobiła ogromny skok naprzód, ugruntowała zdecydowanie swoją przodującą pozycję w Europie oraz wyrosła na groźnego już partnera dla bezkonkurencyjnych jeszcze przed dwoma laty Amerykanów. Oczywiście mowa tutaj o konkurencjach męskich, gdyż w kobiecych prymat zawodniczek radzieckich został od dawna ugruntowany.

[Kuc is not, however, the only representative of Soviet athletics, which within the last year has made a huge leap forward, reinforced its leading position in Europe, and grown to become a formidable opponent for the Americans, who, as little as two years ago, were still unchallenged. Of course, this applies to men's disciplines, as in women's disciplines, the supremacy of Soviet female athletes has long been established.]³⁷

The press was also eager to publish reports on the stages in the development of various disciplines in the USSR. Obviously, those were devoid of any criticism or objectivity and everything that was discussed from the infrastructure, through training methods, to the results being achieved was considered commendable and worthy of imitation. Such texts referred to the project of the development of the socialist system – the ability to fit individual disciplines into that project was considered a feature of the organisational-state structures of the USSR:

Przeglądając pisma radzieckie „Sport” poświęcone wszystkim odmianom sportów oraz „Koniowódstwo” (Hodowla Koni), wyspecjalizowane w dziedzinie hodowli koni, nie możemy nie zauważyć, że sport konny w Związku Radzieckim zajmuje miejsce wcale nie na szarym końcu długiego szeregu innych uprawianych tam sportów [...]

Jak i w innych dyscyplinach sportowych, radziecki sport jeździecki wyłania co roku swoich mistrzów płci obojga, co jest jeszcze jednym dowodem, że w Związku Radzieckim stosunek do jeździectwa jest traktowany poważnie, a jego podstawy budowane są planowo. Oprócz tego, przykład Związku Radzieckiego udowadnia, że sport jeździecki odpowiednio zorganizowany doskonale harmonizuje się z układem życia socjalistycznego.

[When browsing the Soviet *Sport* periodical, which discusses all forms of sport, and *Koniowódstwo* (horse breeding), which specialises in the theme of horse breeding, one cannot omit the fact that equestrian sports in the Soviet Union do not actually occupy the last places in the long list of sports practised there [...]

³⁷ PS 1954, issue 83, p. 6.

Similarly to other sports disciplines, Soviet equestrian sports produce champions of both sexes every year, which is yet another proof that in the Soviet Union the approach to equestrian sports is treated seriously and its basis is being developed with a pre-determined plan. Additionally, the example of the Soviet Union proves that properly organised equestrian sports perfectly match the arrangement of socialist life.]³⁸

Sporadically, after a tournament marked by the USSR's successes, the press released short reviews of the foreign press including, obviously, only the highest praise, e.g. after the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, Polish periodicals quoted the British, French, Japanese, Italian and Brazilian press. *Sportowiec* even published a centrefold with the heading: "ZSRR – sukcesy XV Igrzysk Olimpijskich" [USSR – successes at the 15th Olympic Games], which included the photographs of Russian athletes with the descriptions of their achievements.³⁹ At the same time, the press was eager to indicate that the keen interest in Olympic events was triggered not only by the excellent achievements of athletes, but also by the very participation of the Soviet team.

The image of the world painted by the contemporary press was dominated by a conviction that all honest nations admired the socialist system and followed the example of the states of people's democracy. The fixation on Soviet solutions was also manifested in systematic reporting on the results of league matches in the USSR, while it would be a futile effort to seek similarly periodically appearing texts devoted to events held in countries located west of the Iron Curtain. Another focus point were the changes in training methods, tactical modifications and alterations to the systems of play in team sports (e.g. text *Piłkarze radzieccy modyfikują system W-M*⁴⁰ [Soviet footballers modify W-M system]).

A considerable place in the sports press of the 1950s was occupied by the propaganda of success, within which even minor events if successful had to be complimented and elevated to the status of a major achievement of Polish sport. That was particularly visible in titles, which emphasised selected positive aspects of the events being discussed: "Rekordowa obsada zimowego turnieju piłki ręcznej w Katowicach"⁴¹ [Record participation in the winter handball tournament in Katowice], 'Grad nowych rekordów na II Letniej Spartakiadzie OW Kraków'⁴² [Hailstorm of new records at the 2nd Summer OW Krakow Spartakiad], "Na znak solidarności z Wyścigiem Pokoju dziesiątki tysięcy kolarzy w całym kraju wzięło

38 PS 1950, issue 53, p. 2.

39 SPC 1952, issue 31, pp. 8–9.

40 SPC 1956, issue 21, p. 7.

41 PS 1951, issue 104, p. 4.

42 PS 1952, issue 67, p. 4.

udział w wyścigach powiatowych”⁴³ [In solidarity with the Peace Race thousands of cyclists throughout the country took part in poviast races], “Koszykarze na najlepszej drodze do dalszych postępów”⁴⁴ [Basketball players on the best path to further progress]. Allow me to add that journalists also strove to notice the successes of foreign athletes, of course those representing other states of the Eastern Bloc, e.g.:

Zeszłoroczny turniej przynosi więc reprezentacjom krajów demokracji ludowej poważny sukces sportowy. Na 6 uczestniczących drużyn 4 zajęły w swoich grupach pierwsze miejsca, jedna (Polska) – trzecie i jedna (NRD) – czwarte. Sukces ten jest tym większy, że 4 z tych zespołów brały udział po raz pierwszy w ogóle, a tylko drużyna NRD – grała po raz drugi, a Węgry po raz trzeci.

[Therefore, last year’s tournament ensured for the national teams of the countries of people’s democracy a major sports success. Out of the 6 teams which participated in it, 4 took first places in their groups, one third (Poland), and one fourth (DDR). The success was even greater considering the fact that 4 out of those teams took part in the tournament for the first time ever, and only the DDR’s team were playing in it for the second time, and the Hungarian team for the third time.]⁴⁵

The sports press was similarly eager to report on the fulfilment of the commitments and activities for the development and reinforcing of the socialist system. To celebrate various state holidays or congresses of the PZPR, athletes usually committed to improve their personal bests—they promised that they would run faster, defeat more opponents, or break another record. Then, when they actually managed to achieve an intended result, journalists, in turn, wrote about that as if they wrote about some grand achievements and depicted the athletes as citizens worth imitating (or *udarniks*), e.g.:

Po przemówieniu przew. Reczka [...] głos zabrał rekordzista Polski [...], ślubując w imieniu braci sportowej dotrzymania zobowiązania złożonego Prezesowi Rady Ministrów Bierutowi w czasie Zlotu Młodych Przodowników Budowniczych Polski Ludowej, że sportowcy staną do walki o jeszcze większe i lepsze osiągnięcia na polu kultury fizycznej. Za przykładem przyjaciół swoich z ZSRR sportowcy polscy dążyć będą do podwyższenia swych kwalifikacji, polepszenia rekordów, do powiększenia aktywu sportowego, zrealizowania również na odcinku kultury fizycznej hasła łączności miasta ze wsią i pomocy dla LZS oraz spółdzielni produkcyjnych.

⁴³ PS 1952, issue 34, p. 2.

⁴⁴ PS 1959, issue 43, p. 2.

⁴⁵ PS 1956, issue 38, p. 4.

Upowszechniając kulturę fizyczną, sportowcy polscy z honorem wypełnią testament Wodza ludzkości Józefa Stalina.

[After the speech by president Reczek [...] the Polish record breaker [...] took to the stage to pledge on behalf of his fellow athletes to keep the commitment they made to Chairman Bierut during the Congress of Young Construction Udamniks of the People's Poland that athletes will take up the fight for even bigger and better achievements in the area of physical culture. Following the example of their USSR friends, the Polish athletes shall strive to elevate their qualifications, improve their personal bests, expand the ranks of the sporting community, as well as to fulfil within the area of physical culture the slogan of the connection between the city and the countryside, and to aid People's Sporting Associations and production co-operatives. By promoting physical culture, Polish athletes shall honourably fulfil the testament of Joseph Stalin, the leader of mankind.]⁴⁶

They also reported on the commitments undertaken in terms of the expansion of the infrastructure or the fulfilment of production plans at their industrial plants, e.g.:

Meldunki o podejmowaniu zobowiązań przez sportowców wsi i miast naszego województwa napływają coraz szerszym strumieniem. [...] sportowcy wielu kół włączają się do walki o przedterminowe wykonanie planów produkcyjnych, o wyższe plony, przystępują do budownictwa sportowego siłami społecznymi.

[Reports of commitments undertaken by the athletes from the villages and cities of our voivodeship have been streaming in. [...] the athletes from many centres join the fight for early fulfilment of production plans or larger harvests, and they join the sports development through social power.]⁴⁷

and

Zawodnicy Sparty z Nowego Sącza podjęli cenne zobowiązania dla uczczenia Święta 1 Maja. Postanowili oni m.in. przepracować 800 roboczogodzin przy budowie stadionu klubowego, gremialnie złożyć podpisy pod Apelem Wiedeńskim, zdobyć ponad plan 50 odznak SPO i BSPO.

[The athletes of Sparta from Nowy Sącz made a valuable commitment in celebration of the Holiday of the 1st of May. They undertook to work 800 man-hours at the construction of the club's stadium, collectively sign the Vienna Appeal, and exceed the plan by 50 SPO and BSPO plaques.]⁴⁸

⁴⁶ SP 1953, issue 22, p. 1.

⁴⁷ GS 1954, issue 13, p. 2.

⁴⁸ SPC 1955, issue 14, p. 3.

The model attitude was sometimes even praised by indicating specific persons:

Tymczasem przypatrzmy się, jak Śląsk wprowadza w czyn wytyczne Z.G. Kolejarz, które uchwalono na I Krajowej Naradzie. [...] Przede wszystkim masowość! [...] Teraz [...] władze okręgu przygotowują się do rozpoczęcia wielkiej bitwy o masowość. Przewodniczący Zarządu, wicedyrektor DOKP planuje plan strategiczny pod hasłem „Wszyscy kolejarze śląscy są czynnymi sportowcami”. [...] ZMP-owcy dokładają wielu starań, aby powierzona im praca na odcinku szkolenia ideologicznego została wykonana bez reszty. Na szczególne wyróżnienie zasługuje ZMP-owiec Bączek, doskonały aktywista, wychowawca kolejarzy-sportowców w Sosnowcu.

[In the meantime, let us see how Silesia is implementing the guidelines of Z.G. Kolejarz, which were approved at the 1st National Council. [...] Mass participation is the key! [...] Now [...] the authorities of our district are preparing to begin the battle for mass participation. The president of the Management, the deputy director of the State Railways District Directorate is planning a strategic plan under the heading: “Wszyscy kolejarze śląscy są czynnymi sportowcami” [All Silesian railwaymen are active athletes]. [...] Members of the Union of Polish Youth have been making every effort to fulfil every little element of the work with which they have been entrusted in the area of ideological training. Member Bączek, an excellent activist, and a coach of railwaymen/athletes in Sosnowiec, deserves particular praise.]⁴⁹

A relatively large space was devoted to reporting on congresses of various committees, commissions and plenums (apart from the Central Committee of the PZPR, there were also, e.g. Krajowa Narada Aktywu Sportowego [National Council of the Sporting Community], Główny Komitet Kultury Fizycznej [Main Committee of Physical Culture] and Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych [Central Council of Trade Unions]). Naturally, journalists were most interested in all the sport-related decisions made there. In this case, the press played the role of the official body responsible for propagating knowledge of the resolutions being passed. At the same time, its task was to convince readers about the legitimacy of the planned changes and actions. Another important element of those texts was the explanations of the main assumptions of the plans for developing physical culture.

For example, the report “Poprawa sytuacji w dziedzinie wychowania fizycznego i sportu młodzieży szkolnej ważnym i pilnym zadaniem” [Improving the situation in physical education and sports of school children is a major and urgent task], published after the meeting of the Plenum of the Main Committee of Physical Culture, discussed the Plenum’s resolution in detail indicating that it was necessary

⁴⁹ PS 1950, issue 52, p. 5.

to: train, by 1965, a sufficient number of physical education teachers to ensure sufficient teaching personnel in schools at every level; render available facilities and equipment for physical education lessons for both schools and organisations; equip all schools with the infrastructure for outdoor physical exercises; systematically increase the number of persons covered by the programme of voluntary physical education and sport; study the utilisation of physical exercises as a form of active recreation at work; coordinate (in cooperation with the Ministry of National Defence) the activities of the sports League of Soldier's Friends with all the accompanying activities in terms of physical culture and sport in Poland; increase state expenditure on the development of physical culture; develop pro-active targeted propaganda of physical education and mass forms of sports work, mainly using the press, radio and television and popular publishing houses. The main criteria of evaluation of said goals were supposed to include: the number of persons covered by regular activities in terms of physical education and sport, and the level of average physical fitness among the young and adults in various communities (calculated based on applicable studies).⁵⁰

The sports press of the 1950s actively participated in the development of a socialist society, not only through reporting on the sporting events which carried a propaganda significance, but mainly by constantly combining sport and politics, emphasising the role of the former in the civil education of the youth. A particular focus was placed on the Polish-Soviet friendship which was supposed to be cemented by sports rivalry in the spirit of brotherhood and community. Finally, the Soviet Union was depicted as a role model, be it in terms of training methods, tactics and hard work, or the skill in transplanting socialist principles into the area of sport.

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Rafał Siekiera

Propaganda w polskiej prasie sportowej lat 1950–1959

Streszczenie

Artykuł opisuje najważniejsze postaci propagandy socjalistycznej występujące w polskiej prasie sportowej lat 1950–1959. Jak wynika z analizy materiału badawczego, pisma sportowe, mimo pozornej odległości tematycznej od kwestii politycznych, stały się narzędziami wpływu na społeczeństwo. Główna siła oddziaływania skupiała się w tekstach powstających typowo w celach propagandowych, jednak również wypowiedzi poświęcone samym zawodom sportowym (np. sprawozdania) zawierały elementy polityczne. Najważniejszymi przejawami propagandy w prasie sportowej były mieszanie sportu z polityką, promowanie radzieckich wzorów szkoleniowych i taktycznych, nadmierne podkreślanie sukcesów, informowanie o zobowiązaniach podejmowanych przez sportowców z okazji świąt państwowych oraz krytykowanie warunków społeczno-politycznych w krajach kapitalistycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: propaganda, sport, socjalizm, totalitaryzm, prasa PRL.

Propaganda content in the Polish sports press of the 1950s

Summary

The article describes main forms of socialist propaganda in Polish sports press of the 1950's decade. As the analysis shows, sports magazines, despite their apparent thematic distance from political issues, had become tools of social impact. The main force of influence was concentrated in texts created typically for propaganda purposes, but also texts devoted to sports competitions (i.e. reports) contained political components. The most important manifestations of propaganda in the sports press were the mixing of sport with politics, promoting Soviet training and tactical patterns, over-emphasizing successes, informing about the socialist commitments made by athletes on public holidays, as well as criticizing social and political conditions in capitalist countries.

Keywords: propaganda, sport, socialism, totalitarianism, PRL press.

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