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**BOOK REVIEWS**

Piotr Godlewski, *Sport w Polsce na tle politycznej rzeczywistości lat 1944–1956*, (Sport in Poland Against the Background of Political Reality in the Period of 1944–1956), AWF Poznań, 2006, 519 pp.

Piotr Godlewski's extensive publication successfully fills a significant historiographic gap in the Polish scholarly historical writing focusing upon the most recent period of the history of physical culture, so closely connected with the equivalent period in the history of Poland. The extensiveness of the book is neither a value nor a deficiency of the work. The book is read easily and with interest, not only because of the topic it discusses, but also because of a considerably high narrative level the readers can enjoy.

The book consists of five chapters: *Sport in Eastern Block Countries after 1945*; *Regeneration and Extension of Sport Structures in 1948–1949*; *Stalinism-infected Sport and International Sport Competition*; and *The Epilogue – Sport in October 1956: an Attempt of Closing Balance*). It begins with a methodologically valuable introduction, followed by the main body of the text and an iconographic appendix. The remaining part of the work is an extensive bibliography, which includes vast archival sources.

The Introduction contains the justification of the topic, outline of the book's contents and presentation of the state of research on the topic of the work. The Author has slightly subdued the critical aspects concerning the analysis of valuable archival materials, mostly the analysis of the formal, linguistic and propagandist value of the selected sources, especially the ones that refer to the Stalinist period and its influence on various aspects of physical culture in Poland (until the end of 1956).

The book includes a valuable critical analysis of the newspapers although the Author did not seem to demonstrate his own point of view on the propagandist triumph of form over content in the Stalinist period. He also ignored the generally low quality of narration, so characteristics of the then daily papers such as *Trybuna Ludu* (People's Tribune), between 1949 and 1956. As all those

interested in the topic know, the situation of sport journalism in Poland at that time resulted from the geopolitical and systemic conditions of all Central and Eastern European countries as well as general servility of the journalism of the time. Many journalists actively applied the language of Stalinist political propaganda, invincible to all those recognized to be 'outside' the existing system, even if the latter were not openly against the changes proposed by the system.

In the final part of the Introduction the Author takes a note of the destructive activities by the Department of Propaganda and Campaigning of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in regard to management and schooling of the Polish sport staff as well as the ambiguous role performed by Włodzimierz Reczek, who actively approved of the ideas and experiences of pre-war leftist movement (Polish Socialist Party). Reczek after 1945 was not able to break with the post-Soviet model of systemic solutions in sport, in this way accepting the Soviet decision of the Political Bureau from September 28, 1949 concerning the organization of physical culture.

Piotr Godlewski did a tremendous job documenting a great quantity of archival sources as well as a considerable number of printed sources, including daily newspapers, normative documents, statistical publications and, finally, appropriately selected reports, assessments and opinions. Another set of bibliographical sources in the book consists of selected memoirs. Finally, the bibliographical list also contains personal eye-witness reports.

One has to admit that Godlewski's work is to be recognized as a presentation of substantially new facts and analyses, especially concerning the interrelations between Polish sport and politics between 1944 and 1956. It makes the book even more worthwhile to all those interested in modern history of Poland.

Chapter One of Godlewski's work *Sport in East Block Countries after 1945* as well as Chapter Three *Reorganization of Sport Structures in 1948–1949* and Chapter Four *Stalinization of Sport in 1950–1956* form a coherent unity. It concludes with substantially appropriate Chapter Five *Political and Social Aspects of International Competition*.

One of P. Godlewski's most interesting comments on the topic is that the structure of Polish professional sport was based on voluntary sport movement. In his discussion of this aspect of physical culture, the Author mentions among others, the popularity of extracurricular sports, practiced in trade union, folk and academic sport clubs. It is a pity that the Author of such an exceptional monograph in modern historiography of Polish physical culture and modern history of Poland, has not written a separate sub-chapter on numerous and popular sport associations, such as LZS (Popular Sport Teams).

Another interesting aspect of Godlewski's publication is a brief but clearly matter-of-fact presentation of the function of propaganda in respect to the Olympics, especially the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki and Z. Chychla's gold medal won in a heroic boxing contest. Chychla's victory over a Soviet boxer resulted in "a heavy blow at the hitherto brotherly and neighborly conditions between Poland and the Soviet Union." One has to agree with the assertion placed in *The Epilogue* that after March 1953 "Polish sport associations were still not ready to accept certain changes (...)" and the political changes that

occurred in Autumn 1956 also resulted in certain modifications in the "concept of nationalization of sport movement (...)"

It is a pity that some attempts of reactivation of pre-war sport, e.g. the revival of the Gymnastic Society "Sokół" (The Falcon) between 1956 and 1957, are not presented in the book. On the other hand, it seems obvious that inclusion of such a description would clearly exceed the substantial as well as chronological limits of this monograph. It is, however, an important indication of a necessity to open a new research area of the history of physical culture in Poland.

Piotr Godlewski's book on sport in Poland in the period of 1944-1956 should be regarded as an obligatory book for university students interested in Poland's modern history as well as for physical education students of all PE departments in all Academies of Physical Education and Technical Universities in Poland. If possible it should be translated into one of international languages, especially English, to inform Western scholars about many interesting facts usually unknown or even ignored outside Poland. The book is an original study which presents a useful and valuable synthesis of the interdependencies between sport and politics in Poland and – at the same time – in post-WWII Europe.

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