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Skiing, Mountaineering and Mountain Tourism Practiced by the Soldiers of the Polish 2nd Rifle Division during the Internment in Switzerland between 1940–1945

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to describe physical activity of Polish soldiers in the field of skiing, mountaineering and mountain tourism during their internment in Switzerland between 1940–1945. Method of research. The following source materials were analysed: archival sources, the papers of the “Goniec Obozowy” [“The Camp Messenger”] published by the interned soldiers, relations of the interned soldiers and literature. Results. The Polish 2nd Rifle Division was formed in France from November 1939 until May 1940. In June 1940, the division, as a part of the 45th Corps of the 8th French Army, was sent into battle against the German Army near the Belfort district. After running out of ammunition in the exhausting battle, most of the soldiers of the division managed to break through to Switzerland, where they were interned. During the internment the soldiers were engaged to do many different kinds of work. In designated internment camps, they were allowed to continue their education which they began before the outbreak of the Second World War. In their free time, soldier took up different kinds of physical activity. The most popular were skiing and table tennis. Mountain tourism and mountaineering were common as well and Polish soldiers were quite successful in that field. Polish soldiers gained significant support from the Young Men's Christian Association, which provided them with sports equipment. Conclusion. Despite difficult living condition, Polish soldiers interned in Switzerland in the years 1940–1945, they went in for skiing, mountaineering and mountain touring.

Keywords: Second World War, sport in Polish Army, internment of Polish soldiers in Switzerland.

Introduction

The history of Polish soldiers of the 2nd Rifle Division during the Second World War has been the main research interest of more than a dozen authors.

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Treatises by J. Smoliński¹ and M. Matyja² are considered to be interesting works concerning the subject matter. The study by A. Blume³ comprise interesting source materials as well. The works of the aforesaid authors focus primarily on description of events relating to the formation of the Division, its battle route and terms of the internment in Switzerland. The daily life of Polish soldiers under the terms of internment, including its legal and social conditions, is especially well documented. However, the available studies on the subject provide little information on important part of their social activity, which was spending their free time on practising sport, treating it as a side issue. Only the treatise by J. Smoliński contains essential references to physical activity of the 2nd Rifle Division soldiers⁴. At the same time, in the field of sport historiography no study focused on the subject of sport activity of the 2nd Rifle Division soldiers could have been found. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to describe forms of sport and tourism activities in which the soldiers engaged during their internment in Switzerland in the years 1940–1945. Due to the extensiveness of the subject matter, the main purpose of this work is to describe physical activity of soldiers in the field of skiing, mountaineering and mountain tourism, while questions of formation of the unit, its battle route and terms of the internment are barely outlined. Broader portrayal of all the other sport disciplines and the sport activity in general shall be a matter of a separate study.

The findings described in this study were based on archival sources, especially those stored in Wowkonowicz's family archives⁵ in the Ski Museum in Cieklin near Jasło and family archives of Andrzej and Bartłomiej Zubek, containing memoirs of Józef Zubek⁶. The essential source of information was the sports section of "Goniec Obozowy"⁷ ["The Camp Messenger"] – a magazine produced and published by interned soldiers (all issues of the magazine were analysed). Published memoirs of the interned soldiers⁸ appeared useful as well. The above mentioned literature concerning the history of the 2nd Rifle Division

¹ J. Smoliński, *2 Dywizja Strzelców Pieszych*, Warszawa 1992.

² M. Matyja, *Niespełnione nadzieje, losy polskiej 2 Dywizji Strzelców Pieszych w latach 1940–1945*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2013.

³ A. Blum, *2 Dywizja strzelców Pieszych, początki internowania 1940–1941*, „Materiały, Dokumenty, Źródła, Archiwalia Instytutu Polskiego i Muzeum im. Generała Sikorskiego” 1991, vol. 7.

⁴ J. Smoliński, op. cit., pp. 131–133.

⁵ Tadeusz Wowkonowicz before the Second World War was a Polish ski racer and became soldier of the 2nd Rifle Division.

⁶ Józef Zubek likewise Tadeusz Wowkonowicz was a Polish ski racer and became soldier of the 2nd Rifle Division.

⁷ "Goniec Obozowy" was published between 1940–1945, excluding short period of time in 1941. Altogether 129 issues came out – as cited in J. Smoliński, op. cit., pp. 133–135.

⁸ J. Hajdukiewicz, *Góry mojej młodości*, Warszawa 1988; J. Rucki, *Na ziemi Wilhelma Tella*, Warszawa 1993.

complemented the analysis of source materials. The Internet served as a secondary source of information⁹.

Formation and battle route of 2nd rifle division. Terms of the internment in Switzerland

In the aftermath of unsuccessful defensive war against the Nazi Germany and annexation of eastern territories by the Soviet Union in September 1939 Polish authorities began to create new military formations in France. One of the newly formed units was the 2nd Rifle Division. The Division, which initially was called the “2nd Infantry Division” was being formed from 11 November 1939. By the order of Commander in Chief of 30 May 1940, Brigadier-General Bronisław Prugar-Ketling took command of the unit¹⁰, which from now on was called the “2nd Rifle Division”. The unit was being formed in north-western France, south of the Loire, near the town Parthenay, facing poor housing conditions and lack of arms and equipment¹¹. The Division was mainly recruited from Polish diaspora in France (76% of private soldiers) and Polish people who escaped to France from occupied Poland or from internment camps organized for Polish soldiers in Romania, Hungary and Latvia. Central Recruitment Bureau (Centralne Biuro Rekrutacyjne) managed the recruitment in Coëtquidan and Parthenay¹². On June 8, 1940 the Division had 15,883 soldiers¹³.

On May 10, 1940 German invasion of Belgium, Netherlands and France began. German army was moving fast¹⁴. In mid-May 1940, the 2nd Rifle Division was ordered to move near the front-line. The first train left on 19 May 1940 and on 25 May 1940 whole division reached Lorraine. Till 29 May 1940 soldiers of the Division arrived in the vicinity of Nancy¹⁵. They had been soon deployed (about 13 June 1940) on the southern section of the front-line, near Belfort¹⁶ where the Division was allocated to the Eight Army of France. Between 14–16 June 1940, the Division stayed on designated position and engaged in fighting

⁹ International Ski Federation official website [on-line:] <http://data.fis-ski.com/alpine-skiing/results.html?> [8.04.2016].

¹⁰ J. Smoliński, op. cit., pp. 8–9.

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 11–28.

¹² Ibidem, pp. 23–24.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 20.

¹⁴ On 15 May, the Netherlands officially signed the surrender, the city of Brussels was occupied by German Army on 17 May, Calais was conquered on 26 May. On 10 June 1940 Italy declared war on France. On 14 June, Paris fell and on 22 June the Armistice was signed by France and Germany – as cited in A. Albert (W. Roszkowski), *Najnowsza historia Polski 1918–1980*, London 1991, p. 335.

¹⁵ J. Smoliński, op. cit., pp. 36–37.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 38–39.

against the German forces. On 17 June 1940, the French Radio reported that Marshal Pétain asked for armistice with Germany. Invader's army was moving fast towards the south and Polish soldiers could have been easily surrounded by enemy troops, which made the situation more difficult. Subsequent heavy fighting took place 18 June 1940 on the Clos-du-Doubs hills. In the night of 18–19 June 1940 the Division retreated toward the France-Switzerland border¹⁷. Thereafter, in the night of 19–20 June 1940, Polish soldiers had managed to break through to Switzerland where they were interned¹⁸.

M. Matyja reports that in 1945 Polish soldiers were deployed in nearly 1000 different places all over Switzerland¹⁹. The policy of Swiss authorities on deployment of Polish detainees evolved throughout the time. Primarily, an attempt was made to create large camps housing up to several thousands interned soldiers. Due to some difficulties in maintaining the discipline among detainees, large camps failed to fulfil their function. Subsequently, smaller – scattered across the country – camps were formed, which facilitated the organization of work for detainees. Soldiers working in agriculture were often accommodated on farms. There were strict regulations on the terms of internment providing punishment for any kind of violation thereof. Among various kinds of penalties, internees could even be sent to a penal camp, that was used as a prison. Local authorities provided jobs for the interned soldiers. The salaries that internees received were modest. Most often they were engaged in road construction, deforestation, forest clearance and agriculture. The 2nd Rifle Division Command got permission to organize special internment camps – three of them were functioning as universities and one as a secondary school – where internees could return to their studies. In addition, Poles obtained permission to produce and publish magazine for interned soldiers called “Goniec Obozowy”. Despite harsh censorship “Goniec Obozowy” played essential role as the only source of information and political agitation tool. Articles on physical activity of interned soldiers were also published in the magazine.

Internment conditions were harsh in general but varied depending on particular camp. Treatises of M. Matyja, J. Smoliński and J. Rucki provide detailed information on the subject matter²⁰.

Skiing

The terrain conditions in Switzerland were splendid and ski facilities were already well developed in the 1940s. During the interwar period Switzerland

¹⁷ See: M. Matyja, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–41.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

²⁰ J. Rucki, *op. cit.*

hosted various world's foremost skiing competitions like the 1928 Winter Olympics (St. Moritz, Switzerland), FIS Alpine World Ski Championships 1931 (Mürren, Switzerland), FIS Alpine World Ski Championships 1934 (St. Moritz, Switzerland), FIS Alpine World Ski Championships 1935 (Mürren, Switzerland), FIS Alpine World Ski Championships 1938 (Engelberg, Switzerland)²¹ or famous Parsenn-Derby races.

There were many enthusiasts of skiing²² among interned Polish soldiers, the most famous of whom were Jan Kula, Jan Haratyk, Jerzy Hajdukiewicz, Tadeusz Wowkonowicz, Józef Zubek. Despite all the obstacles resulting from internment conditions, internees grasped every opportunity to ski. Getting adequate quality ski equipment was difficult enough but major concern was to receive a permission to be away from one's Internment Camp for a limited period of time. Obstacles, however, did not deter the soldiers from skiing, which they practised in various forms regardless of strict regulations on the terms of internment. In 1941 "Goniec Obozowy" reports:

Autumn and bad weather that came from above mountain peaks corralled sportspeople to the quarters and day rooms. Due to the recent snowfalls, skiing became the centre of attention of our soldiers. The presence of the mountains and Swiss people's skis – borrowed by all means – attached to Polish feet proved that our Highlanders are just as good at skiing. Unfortunately, we are currently not allowed to compete in skiing competitions in this land, but for those who know how to ski time brings us closer to our homeland and passes faster²³.

Skiing was very popular in special internment camps in Herisau²⁴ and Winttherthur²⁵, functioning as universities. From 1941, championships of the Herisau camp were held annually. The competition was organized by Polish student-soldiers on a hill that was named "Orion"²⁶.

While skiing as a recreational activity was within internees' easy reach, their participation in major skiing competitions faced numerous difficulties. The main challenge was to gain proper ski equipment. Polemical article published in "Goniec Obozowy" well described this problem:

[...] According to the Author, there existed some kind of intimacy between skiers. Does Mr J.U. know that several professional Polish skiers – such as Kula, Zubek, Wowkonowicz, Haratyk – remain detained in Switzerland? During FIS in Zakopane, Polish professional skiers made many friends from Switzerland. They have met here and talked about workouts and possibility of purchasing second hand skis – but it all came to nothing. Four pairs of skis that would allow Polish skiers to train couldn't be found anywhere

²¹ International Ski Federation official website [on-line:] <http://data.fis-ski.com/alpine-skiing/results.html?> [8.04.2016].

²² "Goniec Obozowy" ["Camp Messenger"] 1941, No. 7, p. 22.

²³ "Goniec Obozowy" ["Camp Messenger"] 1941, No. 5, p. 5 (own translation).

²⁴ "Goniec Obozowy" ["Camp Messenger"] 1942, No. 8, p. 10.

²⁵ "Goniec Obozowy" ["Camp Messenger"] 1943, No. 3, p. 9; see also: J. Hajdukiewicz, op. cit., p. 97.

²⁶ "Goniec Obozowy" ["Camp Messenger"] 1943, No. 7, p. 10.

in Switzerland. Not only our Swiss friends from 5 years could not find any equipment for Poles, but representatives of Attenhofer's factory in response to their polite request pointed out that as far as they knew internees were not allowed to ski²⁷.

Memoirs of Józef Zubek contain accurate description of soldier-skiers position during the time of internment. According to him, despite the presence of Aleksander Bobkowski²⁸, the President of Polish Ski Federation, in Switzerland skiing activity of internees was not performed under any form of organization. Aleksander Bobkowski made contact with Swiss-Ski (German: Schweizerischer Skiverband) in order to enable Polish skiers to resume trainings and to participate in skiing competitions. Józef Zubek mentions Colonel Hans Stuber, Elza Rot, Adolf Freiburghaus's alumni, Victor Demarmes, Tony and Eddy Romminger among the Swiss who supported Poles in their efforts to remain active on the field of skiing. Józef Zubek reports on their activity:

their form of organization was to take every opportunity to gain equipment and to wheedle out permissions to leave the internment camps. There were no presidents, secretaries, full members and honorary members. The main goal was obviously to ski and to teach other inmates how to ski²⁹.

The first attempt at skiing classes was made in Moosbach – an internment camp for officers – where Jan Haratyk, Tadeusz Wowkonowicz, Jan Kula, Zygmunt Góralczyk and Józef Zubek were placed as an auxiliary staff. In the summer of 1941 they were all assigned to a Heavy Machine-Gun Company quartered in Grunematt. Thereafter, the Company was involved in road construction and moved to Rhäzüns in the Swiss Canton of Graubünden. Later skiers were separated and sent out to several smaller internment camps, including Conters – situated close to famous piste in Parsenn. J. Zubek describes the risks that resulted from violation of strict regulations of the terms of internment, risks that Polish soldiers regularly took. He recalled:

Thereafter (meaning: after the Company was moved to Graubünden – AN) a lot of trips – both hiking and skiing – headed to Berner Alpen. The above mentioned escapades quite often reached places very close to the Swiss-Austrian border. Needless to say that those trips were very emotional and quite often associated with providing assistance to refugees from Nazi Germany. Thus, they often resulted in imprisonment for several weeks, as Jan Kula may surely confirm³⁰.

Descriptions given by J. Zubek are complemented by the source materials collected by Tadeusz Wowkonowicz, especially numerous photographs³¹ and

²⁷ "Goniec Obozowy" ["Camp Messenger"] 1944, No. 18, p. 8 (own translation).

²⁸ Aleksander Bobkowski was son-in-law to President of Poland Ignacy Mościcki and accompanied him during his escape from Poland in September 1939 and then settled with him in Geneva.

²⁹ Józef Zubek's report on the internment period, recording from the family archives of Andrzej and Bartłomiej Zubek (own translation).

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Archiwum Muzeum Narciarstwa w Cieklinie [Archives of Ski Museum in Cieklin], signature: Z1, pp. 1–130, T. Wowkonowicz, photographs taken during the internment in Switzerland; Ar-

notes he made during the internment. Together with other interned skiers, Tadeusz Wowkonowicz arranged skiing trips, ski courses and trainings³². They repeatedly participated in both, international competitions – including Parsenn Derby in 1945³³ – and those organized by local skiing organizations. Poles were successful in college championships as well³⁴. Sometimes their sport achievements were outstanding. Józef Smoleński wrote:

the 2nd Rifle Division sportsmen, famous Polish skiers Kula and Haratyk among others, could certainly be proud of excellent but unofficial achievements. During one of the international ski jumping competitions – held with participation of German ski jumpers – Jan Kula residing in Leysin Camp got permission to partake in the event, but his score was not to be included in the standings. An incident unpleasant to the competition hosts has occurred during the event. The Pole made unofficial record of the hill, beating the famous German ski jumper – of Austrian origins – Josef Bradl. The name of Polish skier was publicised and in response an official protest was made by the German embassy³⁵.

Wojciech Szatkowski provides a broader description of the event³⁶.

Mountaneering and mountain tourism

In 1942 the Alpine Club of Camp Winterthur was founded by Jerzy Hajdukiewicz and Maciej Mischke, and supported by a Swiss officer, Herman Siegrist. The first founding meeting took place on 12 April 1942. On 24 April 1942, camp authorities approved the articles for the Alpine Club of Camp Winterthur. One of the purpose of the Club was: “to take magnificent alpine expeditions”³⁷. “Goniec Obozowy” reports on the foundation of the Club:

The 15th day of March, 1942 – the trip to Piz Sol (2.849 m) taken by a group of five people – may be considered the date of creation of the Club. The first founding meeting took place on 12 April. The Club consisted of 12 members. During the Alpine season 12 trips were organised – including 2 skiing trips, 6 training trips and 2 ice climbing trips. There were 22 summit ascents – including 11 three thousand meter and 1 four-thousand meter high mountains. The Club had two difficulties to overcome of both administrative and financial nature. With the use of their own means they put together climbing equipment worth 300 Fr., excluding the cost of members’ personal equipment. The general assembly of members was held in presence of lieutenant colonel R. on 14 October 1942 and new board was appointed. Taking into consideration the functioning conditions of the Club,

chives of Ski Museum in Cieklin, signature: Z2, pp. 1–529, photographs taken during the internment in Switzerland.

³² Archiwum Muzeum Narciarstwa w Cieklinie [Archives of the Ski Museum in Cieklin], signature: Notes, b.p., T. Wowkonowicz’ notes.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ J. Hajdukiewicz, op. cit., p. 104.

³⁵ J. Smoleński op. cit., pp. 131–132.

³⁶ W. Szatkowski, *Od Marusarza do Małysza*, Zakopane 2003, pp. 79–80.

³⁷ J. Hajdukiewicz, op. cit., p. 98.

its activity in summer 1942 may be considered as highly successful –in both, sports and propaganda of Polish tourism³⁸.

Between 1942-1945 members of the Alpine Club of Camp Winterthur arranged numerous successful attempts to reach Alpine four-thousanders. J. Hajdukiewicz covered climbing of the first peak of that height (October, 1942, Piz Bernina 4049 m)³⁹ and his report was published in “Goniec Obozowy” in 1 February 1943. Memoirs of J. Hajdukiewicz contain broader reports of activities and achievements of members of the Club⁴⁰.

Mountain tourism was also a very popular form of activity among soldiers in other internment camps⁴¹. Their motivation to take part in tourist trips was well documented:

To stay amidst the mountains and to traverse their peaks only with one's eye is not enough. Therefore we spend our free time on hikes either individually or in small groups. Mountain trails became crowded with our tourists. Higher and farther... One beautiful Sunday in May we arranged a trip heading to the glacier in Maderanertal valley – the whole camp attended. The story goes: after several hours of climbing, overcoming precipices that got on our way, breaking through the spindrift cloud formed under the waterfall and guarding the way to the glacier, we stood completely soaked on an enormous iceberg... We left with regret but we were singing songs while going back to our camp where superbly prepared supper awaited us. The main dish – that after the trip proved to be extraordinarily delicious – was pasta⁴².

T. Wowkonowicz captured numerous mountain trips of various internment camps⁴³. Vast set of his photographs is available in the Ski Museum in Cieklin near Jasło⁴⁴. J. Rucki also describes this form of activity of Polish soldiers⁴⁵.

Skiing, mountaineering and mountain tourism activity in internment camps in Switzerland – conditions

The circumstances of internment were not favourable for all kind of sport activeness. There was no sport equipment or proper clothing. Those difficulties

³⁸ “Goniec Obozowy” [“Camp Messenger”] 1943, No. 3, p. 9.

³⁹ Ibidem, pp. 9–10.

⁴⁰ J. Hajdukiewicz, op. cit., pp. 95–172.

⁴¹ “Goniec Obozowy” [“Camp Messenger”] 1942, No. 15, p. 8; “Goniec Obozowy” 1942, No. 19, p. 12; J. Rucki, op. cit., pp. 114–115.

⁴² “Goniec Obozowy” [“Camp Messenger”] 1942, No. 16, p. 9 (own translation).

⁴³ Archiwum Muzeum Narciarstwa w Cieklinie [Archives of Ski Museum in Cieklin], signature: Notes, b.p., T. Wowkonowicz’ notes. Z1, pp. 1–130, T. Wowkonowicz, photographs taken during the internment in Switzerland signature: Z2, pp. 1–529.

⁴⁴ See: Muzeum Narciarstwa w Cieklinie [Ski Museum in Cieklin] <http://www.muzeum-narciarstwa.pl/> [8.04.2016].

⁴⁵ J. Rucki, op. cit., pp. 122–127.

were gradually overcome. The funds for purchasing ski and mountaineering equipment came from interned soldiers' savings, and they were occasionally acquired during money raising collections. Furthermore some efforts were made to receive the funding for this purpose from the Command. Additionally, local Swiss authorities and sports organisations provided relevant support. Sports people regularly received great financial support from YMCA⁴⁶. The foundation of workshops in Münchenbuchsee near Bern also had a significant impact on the situation of the internees⁴⁷.

Conclusion

Sports activity of Polish soldiers during the internment in Switzerland between 1940 and 1945 was subjected to numerous constraints. The main obstacles were: strict regulations on the terms of internment, shortage of funds, lack of proper facilities and sport equipment. In general, Swiss authorities did not discourage sport activity of Poles within internment camps, however Poles' contact with local sport enthusiasts was very limited. The magazine produced and published by Polish internees provided information on that subject matter several times, for instance mentioning the ban on skiing.

The internees were allowed to move only within strict boundaries. Swiss authorities prohibited Poles visiting certain locations and required them to be indoors at specific times. Those regulations hindered activeness of internees, such as skiing, tourism or mountaineering. Moving outside the designated area required a leave, which was not easy to acquire. The analysis of vast source material leads to the conclusion that Polish skiers, climbers and tourists quite often breached restrictions on freedom of movement⁴⁸, and were punished as a result.

The fight against the shortage of funds was done in many different ways. Significant financial support was received from Service d'Aide organized by YMCA. Despite the above mentioned obstacles, the interned Polish soldiers practised skiing in various forms. Both individual and group ski trips were organised. The Alpine skiing was also a popular form of activity among those sol-

⁴⁶ YMCA Board in cooperation with several other organisations formed special Committee called Service d'Aide aux Internes Militaires, which was responsible for education and cultural life of interned soldiers in Switzerland. A special central bureau maintaining files and records concerning cultural, social and sport activity internees, was created at the end of January 1942 in Münchenbuchsee. The Committee remained in touch with the Swiss authorities, Polish Legation in Bern and the Commander of the 2nd Rifle Division who provided significant support for this organization. More information on the help provided by YMCA for interned soldiers shall be a matter of a separate study on all the other sport disciplines and the sport activity in general.

⁴⁷ "Goniec Obozowy" ["Camp Messenger"] 1945, No. 15, p. 4.

⁴⁸ See: J. Rucki, *op. cit.* p. 129; see also: Józef Zubek's report on the internment period, recording from the family archives of Andrzej and Bartłomiej Zubek.

diers, whose camps of internment were situated in the proximity of a ski resort having ski lifts. Moreover Polish skiers successfully competed in skiing competitions in the field of both Nordic skiing and Alpine skiing. Undoubtedly the reason of such a large number of sport achievements of Polish interned soldiers was that there were many professional skiers – representatives of Poland before the War – in the 2nd Rifle Division. Despite the fact that activeness in the field of mountaineering was limited to several internees associated in Alpine Club of Camp Wintertuhr, this form of sport was also successfully practised. It was much more popular for the soldiers to traverse mountain trails during long trips.

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Narciarstwo, alpinizm i turystyka górską uprawiane przez żołnierzy 2 Dywizji Strzelców Pieszych internowanych w Szwajcarii w latach 1940–1945

Streszczenie

Celem pracy było opisanie aktywności fizycznej żołnierzy 2 Dywizji Strzelców Pieszych w zakresie uprawiania narciarstwa, alpinizmu i turystyki górskiej podczas ich internowania w Szwajcarii w latach 1940–1945. Dokonano analizy następujących materiałów źródłowych: źródeł archiwalnych, wydawanego przez internowanych żołnierzy pisma „Goniec Obozowy”, wspomnień internowanych żołnierzy oraz literatury. Druga Dywizja Strzelców Pieszych była formowana we Francji od listopada 1939 r. W czerwcu 1940 r. została skierowana, w składzie 45 Korpusu 8 Armii Francuskiej, do walki z armią niemiecką. Po ciężkich walkach w okolicach miasta Belfort i po wyczerpaniu amunicji, większość żołnierzy dywizji przekroczyła granicę szwajcarską i została internowana. W czasie internowania żołnierze polscy byli zatrudniani do wielu rodzajów prac. Mieli również możliwość kontynuowania nauki, rozpoczętej przed wybuchem II wojny światowej, w wyznaczonych obozach internowania. W czasie wolnym żołnierze podejmowali różne rodzaje aktywności fizycznej. Popularne było uprawianie narciarstwa oraz tenisa stołowego. Uprawiano również turystykę górską oraz alpinizm, osiągając w tym zakresie znaczne sukcesy. Polscy żołnierze-sportowcy uzyskali znaczącą pomoc od Young Mens Christian Association, dzięki której pozyskiwano sprzęt sportowy. Pomimo trudnych warunków, w jakich przebywali internowani polscy żołnierze w Szwajcarii w latach 1940–1945, w czasie wolnym czynnie uprawiali oni narciarstwo, alpinizm i turystykę górską.

Słowa kluczowe: II wojna światowa, sport w polskim wojsku, internowanie żołnierzy polskich w Szwajcarii.