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Timeline of the Summer World Polonia Games (1934–2015)

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Abstract

This paper provides a timeline of the 81-year history of the organization of the summer Polonia Sports Games in Poland in the years 1934–1991 and their continuation under a changed name as the World Polonia Games in the years 1997–2015.

The World Polonia Games are closely related to communities of the Polish diaspora, called Polonia, located in several dozen countries around the world. These people, generally maintaining a sense of connection with the Motherland, formed various social, religious, educational, cultural and youth associations. Among the latter, sports organizations played an important part.

The objectives of physical culture related Polonia associations usually emphasized the need for and the significance of their cooperation with the sports movement in the home country. It was established through central institutions representing the interests of the Polonia community. This cooperation was aimed at mutual support of both the Polonia sports and competitive sports in Poland.

The aim of this work is to present a timeline of events related to the organization and the course of the Summer World Polonia Games (1934–2015). The concept adopted by the authors stems not only from the extensive chronology, but also from the vastness of the source material.

Many athletes representing various Polish diaspora communities participated in the Polonia Sports Games, and later in the Summer World Polonia Games. The program of the Games underwent gradual changes. The initially determined sporting performance minimums, which were to determine who should qualify for the Games were lifted. Age categories were extended in order to enable young, middle-aged and older people to take part in the Games.

The Polonia Games gave impetus to association of Polish athletes in Polonia sports organizations abroad and contributed largely to the consolidation of Polish national life in exile. Polonia activists together with sports activists in Poland decided to continue the World Polonia Games for the sake of the whole Polish diaspora and Poles living in Poland.

Keywords: Polonia physical culture; World Polonia Games in Poland.

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Introduction

The World Polonia Games are closely related to communities of the Polish diaspora, called Polonia, located in several dozen countries around the world. According to data from 1934, Polish emigration amounted to 7,338,000 people, and by 1971 the numbers increased to more than 10 million people¹. In the 21st century the population of the Polish diaspora surpassed 20 million people. Half of them are inhabitants of the USA. Poland's integration with the European Union structures, the opening of borders and the legal and institutional changes triggered massive waves of economic migration to Western Europe. A significant part of them are young people with a secondary or higher education. The main Polonia population concentration is now found in London, where, according to demographers' estimates, more than one million Poles are currently living. Their trips are usually seasonal. The rate of overseas migration has decreased².

A significant contribution to research into the history of Polonia physical culture, including the World Polonia Games, has been made by physical culture historians, who presented

[...] the origins of organizations concerned with dissemination of sport by Poles in population centers of Polish emigration, participation of members of these organizations in the struggle for Poland's independence during the World War I, the integrative role of Polonia sport in strengthening ties between Poles abroad, the support of the country in strengthening the Polonia sports movement, and the help from Polish diaspora communities for athletes in Poland, e.g. on the occasion of the Olympic Games [transl. D. Kurczewski]³.

The subject of Polonia games in Poland has mainly been present at physical culture historians' symposia organized by the Faculty of Physical Culture in Gorzow Wielkopolski, a branch of the Poznan University School of Physical Education. In the years 1978–1990 it was the National Scientific Conference "Polonia Physical Culture" (5 sessions in Lubniewice and Rogi), and in the years

¹ Archiwum Akt Nowych, Światowy Związek Polaków z Zagranicy [Archive of New Files, the World Association of Poles from Abroad], No. 444, k. 67; *Polski Rocznik Statystyczny GUS* [Polish Statistical Yearbook of the Central Statistical Office], Warszawa 1971; B. Woltmann, *Cele i założenia polonijnych igrzysk sportowych. Zarys problematyki i stan badań*, [Aims and objectives of Polonia sports games. An outline of the problems and the state of research, [in:] J. Chelmecki (ed.), *Sport polonijny wczoraj i dziś* [Polonia sport yesterday and today], Warszawa 2005, p. 9.

² Statistical data concerning the Polonia populations on particular continents come from demographers' reports and information found on the website: www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl (link is external) [Dane statystyczne o populacji polonijnej na poszczególnych kontynentach pochodzą z raportów demografów oraz danych ze strony internetowej: www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl (link is external), [accessed: 29.03.2016]; <http://niepoprawni.pl/blog/wilre/polonia-swiata-co-trzeci-polak-zyje-w-diasporze> [accessed: 29.03.2016].

³ *Od redaktora tomu* [From the volume's editor], [in:] J. Chelmecki (ed.), op. cit., p. 5.

1997–2015 the National Scientific Conference “The recent history of physical culture in Poland”. Among the scientific papers published, there are articles on various issues concerning the World Polonia Games in Poland. Another symposium was inspired by the 12th World Polonia Games in Warsaw in 2005. The output is the publication entitled *Polonia Sport Yesterday and Today*, which contains 15 scientific articles devoted to the history of the World Polonia Games.

The authors’ intention is to prepare a timeline of events related to the World Polonia Games in the years 1934–2016 in two parts. This division stems not only from the extensive chronology, but also from the vastness of material. The first part is concerned with the Summer World Polonia Games (1934–2015) and the second one with the World Polonia Winter Games (1986–2016).

The aim of this work is to present events related to the organization and the course of the Summer World Polonia Games (1934–2015).

Establishment and development of Polish organizations in foreign countries was extremely important to preserve Polish national identity. For this purpose, the Organizational Council of Poles from Abroad, based in Warsaw, was established at the 1st Congress of Poles from Abroad and the Free City of Gdańsk in July of 1929⁴. The patrons of the Congress were President Ignacy Mościcki, Marshal Józef Piłsudski and Primate August Hlond. The proceedings, with the participation of 97 delegates from 18 countries and visitors from Gdańsk, were held in the Sejm⁵.

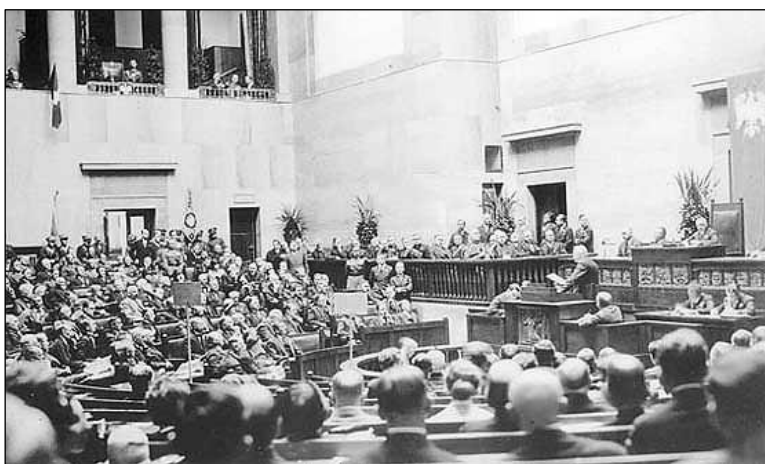


Photo 1. The venue of the 1st Congress of Poles from Abroad and the Free City of Gdańsk in July of 1929 in Warsaw

Source: http://wspolnotapolska.home.pl/swp2/indexef6b.html?id=kw7_1_03 [accessed: 17.11.2016].

⁴ *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe [Polonia Sports Games]*, Kraków 1974, p. 5; Z. Szafkowski, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe (1934–1997) [Polonia Sports Games (1934–1997)]*, Gorzów Wlkp. 1997.

⁵ http://wspolnotapolska.home.pl/swp2/indexef6b.html?id=kw7_1_03 [accessed: 17.11.2016].

1. Polonia Sports Games

At its 5th General Assembly in November 1933, the Organizational Council of Poles from Abroad passed a resolution to hold the 1st Sports Games for Poles from Abroad and the Free City of Gdańsk during the 2nd Congress of Poles from Abroad in early August 1934 in Warsaw. In order to implement the above resolution, the Organizing Committee was appointed, with the Presidium composed of Władysław Raczkiewicz (Speaker of the Senate, President of the Organizational Council of Poles from Abroad), Władysław Kiliński (Director of the State Office of Physical Education and Military Preparation), Julian Ulrych (President of the Union of Polish Sport Associations) and Kazimierz Głabisz (President of the Polish Olympic Committee)⁶. 381 athletes (348 men and 33 women) from 13 countries participated in the Games, representing an about 70 thousand strong group of Polonia athletes from around the world⁷.



Photo 2, 3. The poster for the 1st Sports Games for Poles from Abroad and the Free City of Gdańsk and the Games' opening ceremony on August 1, 1934, in the Polish Army Stadium in Warsaw

Source: Cover design Z. Sikora, [in:] J. Chełmecki (ed.), *Sport polonijny wczoraj i dziś [Polonia sport yesterday and today]*, Warszawa 2005, p. 1, 7.

The program of the 1st Games comprised seven disciplines; women, however, competed in only two of them: athletics and volleyball. Participants had to meet the qualification minimums established by the organizer. Track and field

⁶ B. Woltmann, *Cele i założenia...* [Aims and objectives...], p. 10.

⁷ Idem, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe [Polonia Sports Games]*, [in:] B. Woltmann (ed.), *Z dziejów kultury fizycznej w organizacjach polonijnych [From the history of physical culture in Polish diaspora organizations]*, Warszawa 1989 (hereafter: B. Woltmann, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe [Polonia Sports Games]*, p. 199; *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe "Kraków 1974" [Polonia Sports Games "Cracow 1974"]*, Wyd. Tow. Łączności z Polonią Zagraniczną "Polonia" [The Publishing House of the Society for Liaison with Poles Abroad "Polonia"], Kraków 1976, p. 6.

enjoyed the greatest popularity, because of the enormous interest in the anticipated appearance of the world record holder and Olympic champion from Los Angeles Stanisława Walasiewicz. At the Sports Games for Poles from Abroad and the Free City of Gdańsk she won four gold medals: 100 m (12.2 sec.), 200 m (24.5 sec.), javelin (32.61 m), and discus (33.78 m).

Polonia from France won the overall classification of the Games, ahead of the teams from the Free City of Gdańsk, Czechoslovakia, Germany, the USA, Romania, Belgium, Latvia, Canada and Austria. The representatives of Brazil, Manchuria and the Netherlands, who came only in symbolic groups, did not score any points⁸.

Immediately after the Games (August 7–8, 1934), competitions between the teams of Poland and Polonia were held. Polonia athletes lost those meetings on points as a team, but individually they achieved victories in some disciplines, e.g. in athletics: Władysław Janiak (100 m and 4 × 100 m), Alwin Golankiewicz, Józef Baca, Paweł Klinkowski (4 × 100 m) and Jan Wąsowicz (pole vault).



Mecz lekkoatletyczny reprezentacji Polska-Emigracja odbyty w ramach I Igrzysk Sportowych Polaków z Zagranicy i W.M. Gdańska w Warszawie w 1934 roku. Na zdjęciu finisz Władysława Janiaka (USA) przed Wojciechem Trojanowskim na 100 m. (Fot. Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej)

Photo 4. The athletic meeting between the teams of Poland and Polonia in Warsaw in 1934

Source: J. Chelmecki (ed.), op. cit., p. 58.

In the opinion of the organizers and athletes, the 1st Sports Games achieved their intended goal: closer relations of sporting youth from abroad with the broad masses of athletes in their home country. Moreover, they contributed to the consolidation of national life in exile and spurred further association of young people in clubs started by Polish communities.

Considering the successes achieved – in the fields of organization, propaganda, and sports – on December 28, 1934, at a meeting of the Sports Committee of the World Association of Poles from Abroad, it was decided that the 2nd

⁸ *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe [Polonia Sports Games]*, Kraków 1974, p. 7.

Sports Games should be organized in 1937 in Warsaw⁹. However, deteriorating conditions inside the country and the growing external threat related to preparations for the war resulted in postponement of the date of the Games at the requests of some Polonia communities to the following years, until they were finally canceled¹⁰.

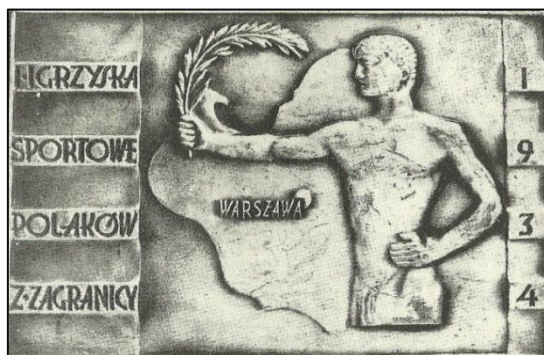


Photo 5. The badge of the 1st Polonia Sports Games held in Warsaw in 1934

Source: *Polonijne igrzyska sportowe "Cracow 1974"* [*Polonia Sports Games, Kraków "1974"*], Wyd. Tow. Łączności z Polonią Zagraniczną "Polonia" [The Publishing House of the Society for Liaison with Poles Abroad "Polonia"], Kraków 1976, p. 8.

Only as late as forty years after the memorable 1934 Games, the initiative of the Sports Committee for further continuation of the summer sports games was brought to fruition.

A motion in this regard was proposed at the 2nd World Assembly of Polonia Activists of the Polish Olympic Committee (PKOl) in Cetniewo (1971), and concrete decisions were made during the following Assembly in Solina on July 28, 1973¹¹. Point "E" of the resolution of the 3rd World Assembly of Polonia Activists reads as follows:

⁹ Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW), Państwowy Urząd Wychowania Fizycznego i Przystosowania Wojskowego (PUWFIPW) [Central Military Archive (CMA), State Office of Physical Education and Military Preparation (SOPEMP)], No. 31: Znaczenie I Igrzysk Sportowych Polaków z Zagranicy dla dalszej pracy wychowania fizycznego wśród emigracji [The significance of the 1st Sports Games for Poles from Abroad for further physical education among the diaspora], p. 7, ibidem, No. 2: Wytoczne pracy wychowania fizycznego i sportu polskiego za granicą 1936/37 [The operational guidelines work of physical education and Polish sport abroad 1936/37], p. 3; B. Woltmann, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe* [*Polonia Sports Games*], p. 201.

¹⁰ Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Ambasada RP w Berlinie [Archive of New Files (ANF), Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Berlin], No. 2040, k. 67; AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu [ANF, Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Opole], No. 111, k. 85 and 105. Okólnik nr 3 w sprawie II Igrzysk, z dn. 08.03.1939 r. [Circular No. 3 on the 2nd Games of March 8, 1939].

¹¹ B. Woltmann, *Cele i założenia...* [*Aims and objectives...*], p. 11.

[...] In reference to the resolution adopted in Cetniewo, and following the pre-war tradition, it is proposed that the Polonia Sports Games should be organized in 1974, along with the Festival of Polonia Folk Groups. The following organizational guidelines are proposed for them:

- 1) The Games shall be based on the Olympic idea,
- 2) Participation, and not the result, is the most important issue,
- 3) The participants do not represent countries, but Polonia communities and organizations,
- 4) Qualification minimums shall not be established, and the regulations shall be based on the principles of the General Sports Badge,
- 5) No age limits shall be set – depending on the applications, different groups with respect to age might be created,
- 6) Alongside sports events, contests in the field of culture and art shall be organized,
- 7) Preliminary data concerning the number of disciplines shall be sent in from the countries of residence to the PKOl by the end of September 1973 [transl. D. Kurczewski]¹².

The organization of the Games was taken on by the Society for Liaison with Poles Abroad “Polonia”, the Polish Olympic Committee, and the editorial office of *Przegląd Sportowy*¹³.

It was also decided that the Games would be held regularly every three years.

The 2nd Polonia Sports Games (hereinafter: PSG), were held on July 17–21, 1974 in Kraków. They were attended by 319 athletes from 13 countries, by far the most numerous teams being those from France and Czechoslovakia, which accounted for 56% of the participants.

Unlike at the competition of 1934, at the post-war Games, in accordance with the resolution of the 3rd Assembly of Polonia Activists of the Polish Olympic Committee¹⁴, team scoring was abandoned and individual sports disciplines were divided into age categories in order to enable older people to take part. The most successful were the representatives of the Polish Cultural and Educational Association from Czechoslovakia, and after them the athletes from France, the UK and the USA. The highlight of the Games was the appearance of Irena Debrunner from Switzerland, a participant of the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, who set several PSG records in swimming¹⁵.

The 3rd Polonia Sports Games were held on July 17–20, 1977 in Kraków. They had a record number of 687 participants (571 men and 116 women) from 15 countries. The team from France was very large (159 people, i.e. 23% of all the participants).

¹² *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe [Polonia Sports Games]*, Kraków 1974, p. 9–10.

¹³ B. Woltmann, *Cele i założenia...* [Aims and objectives...], p. 11.

¹⁴ The guidelines for the games stated among others: “1. The Games shall be based on the Olympic idea; 2. Participation, and not the result, is the most important issue; 3. The participants do not represent countries, but Polonia communities and organizations [...]” [transl. D. Kurczewski]. See “Biuletyn PKOl” 1973, No. 2, p. 21.

¹⁵ *Krótką historia igrzysk polonijnych – igrzyska polonijne [A Short History of Polonia Games – Polonia Games]*, available on the Internet: www.igrzyskapolonijne.ca/PL/a1.php [accessed: 7.04.2016].

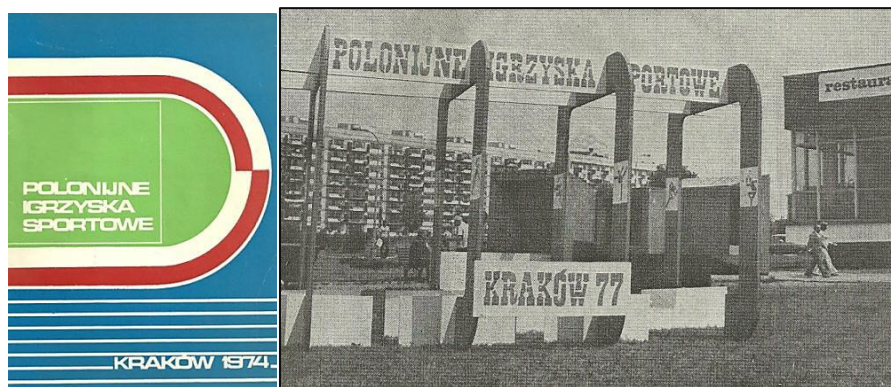


Photo 6, 7. The 2nd Polonia Sports Games in Kraków (1974) and the 3rd Polonia Sports Games in Kraków (1977), [in:] “Biuletyn PKOl” 1980, No. 9, p. 25

Source: private collection of the authors.

Traditionally, the most popular was the soccer tournament, which attracted 15 teams from 8 countries. Also, the arrival of the four times gold medalist of the 1934 Games, Stanisława Walasiewicz-Olson, after a 43-year break, and her registration for the athletic contests aroused great interest. The 66-year-old once again amazed the world with a great athletic form, covering the distance of 60 m in 10.0 seconds. Thus, she joined the stream of masters who went on practicing sport after finishing their sporting careers. The sports laurels were won mainly by competitors from Czechoslovakia, France, the UK, the USA and West Germany¹⁶.



Photo 8. Stanisława Walasiewicz in 1938

Source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanisława_Walasiewicz [accessed: 12.04.2016].

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 204; *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe. Kraków '77* [Polonia Sports Games. Cracow '77], Warszawa 1978.



Photo 9. The 3rd Polonia Sports Games in Kraków (1977). Stanisława Walasiewicz-Olson (66 years old) on the podium.

Source: “Biuletyn PKOl” 1981, No. 2, p. 1.

The 4th Polonia Sports Games were once again held in Kraków on July 15–19, 1981. The economic crisis and sociopolitical unrest in Poland contributed to lower attendance. Some Polonia centers were represented by very few competitors, and Canadians did not send a team at all. The Games were attended by 383 athletes from 12 countries, and the lower turnout resulted in a marked decline in the sports level.



Photo10, 11. The 4th Polonia Sports Games in Kraków (1981); the 5th Polonia Sports Games in Warsaw (1984)

Source: private collection of the authors.

The 5th Polonia Sports Games were organized in the jubilee year of the 50th anniversary of the Polonia Sports Games and the 40th anniversary of the Polish People’s Republic. They were held in Warsaw on July 15–20, 1984 and brought together 495 athletes from 15 countries. Considering all (14) disciplines, the

greatest achievements in the 5th PSG were recorded by competitors from Czechoslovakia. Good results were obtained also by athletes from West Germany and France, who were followed by contestants from Belgium, the USA and the Netherlands¹⁷.



Photo 12, 13, 14. The set of medals for the 5th Polonia Sports Games in the Jubilee Year: the 50th anniversary of the Polonia Sports Games and the 40th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic (Warsaw 1984)

Source: private collection of the authors.

A new feature of the Games was the introduction of sports competitions in four disciplines (athletics, swimming, table tennis and soccer) for participants of Polonia summer camps, which were attended by about 400 children from 18 countries, and an open 1-mile Compatriots Race, in which 35 people aged 19 to 65 took part¹⁸.

The next, 6th PSG took place traditionally at the sports venues of Kraków. They started on July 26, 1987 and gathered about 1,300 athletes and their families from 29 countries and 72 Polonia clubs. They competed in 16 sports disciplines, and the most popular were invariably athletics, swimming and tennis.

¹⁷ B. Woltmann, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe [Polonia Sports Games]*, p. 209; Z. Szafkowski, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe (1934–1997) [Polonia Sports Games (1934–1997)]*, Gorzów Wlkp. 1997, p. 34.

¹⁸ B. Woltmann, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe [Polonia Sports Games]*, p. 209. Statement of the Central Committee of Sports concerning competitions for children – participants of the Polonia summer camps. “Biuletyn Igrzysk” 1984, No 5, of Jul 19].



Photo 15, 16. Commemorative medallion (obverse and reverse) of the 5th Polonia Sports Games in the Jubilee Year: the 50th anniversary of the Polonia Sports Games and the 40th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic (Warsaw 1984)

Source: private collection of the authors.

In 1990, the Society for Liaison with Poles Abroad “Polonia” was transformed into the Association “Polish Community”, and its presidency was conferred to the Speaker of the Senate Professor Andrzej Stelmachowski. Under the auspices of the Association, the 7th PSG were held on August 4–12, 1991, also at the sports venues of Kraków. They were attended by 271 athletes from 14 countries, who competed in 12 sports disciplines.

Table 1. Numerical summary of the summer Polonia Sports Games in the years 1934–1991

Polonia Sports Games in the years 1934–1991				
Consecutive number of the Games	Year and place of the Games	Number of diaspora countries	Number of disciplines	Number of participants
1 st	1934 Warsaw	13	7	381
2 nd	1974 Cracow	13	11	319
3 rd	1977 Cracow	15	12	687
4 th	1981 Cracow	12	11	383
5 th	1984 Warsaw	15	14	495
6 th	1987 Cracow	29	16	1300
7 th	1991 Cracow	14	12	271

Source: the authors' own elaboration.

In the 7th PSG, Polonia from the east participated for the first time, representing clubs from Belarus (Grodno), Lithuania (Vilnius), Russia (Moscow), Ukraine (Lviv) and Latvia. Not only did Poles from the former Soviet republics mark their presence, but they achieved many significant sporting successes. The second place in the medal ranking taken by the Lviv team should be considered a great accomplishment. Polonia athletes from Germany and Australia were absent, though. Due to financial reasons (high costs of travel to Poland) there was

a small number of participants. A characteristic feature of the 7th Games was the participation of many competitors belonging to the older generation¹⁹. Hence, sports results were not outstanding.

2. World Polonia Games

After a six-year break, the 8th Games were held on August 24–31, 1997, and the name was changed to World Polonia Games²⁰ (hereinafter: WPG). The organizers of the World Polonia Games in Lublin had a song prepared: *Polonia, Polonia, sports camp, the best wins, but all exult...*, which became a hit among all sporting Polonia people. Composed by the group Budka Suflera, the Games anthem is their musical trademark²¹.

Since 1997, the Summer World Polonia Games (8th–17th) have been held every two years, and by 2015 they had already taken place ten times. Lublin was twice the organizer of this greatest sports event for Polish diaspora communities (1997, 1999). In 1997, 600 people from 24 countries participated in the Games, including Albania, Egypt, Macedonia, Morocco, South Africa and Canada. The disciplines were: equestrian sports, cycling, basketball, athletics, soccer, swimming, ringo, volleyball, shooting, chess, tennis, table tennis and fishing. The 9th WPG (August 23–29, 1999) in turn was attended by 350 athletes from 16 countries. The disciplines were: canoeing, cycling, basketball, athletics, soccer, swimming, volleyball, shooting, chess, tennis, table tennis, fishing²². Sopot (2001), Poznań (2003), Warszawa (2005), Słupsk (2007), Toruń (2009), Wrocław (2011), Kielce (2013), Chorzów, Rybnik, Sosnowiec, and Wodzisław Śląski (2015)²³ hosted the summer Games only once.

The 10th WPG in Sopot took place from July 29 until August 6, 2001 and coincided with the 100th anniversary of granting municipal rights to the city of Sopot. The competition was attended by over 500 athletes from 21 countries, including the Czech Republic, South Africa, Madagascar, Moldova and Canada. Disciplines: golf, equestrian, basketball, cycling MTB, bowling, athletics, swimming, soccer, volleyball, beach volleyball, shooting, tennis, table tennis,

¹⁹ Z. Szafkowski, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe (1934–1997)* [*Polonia Sports Games (1934–1997)*], p. 54.

²⁰ Idem, *Światowe Igrzyska Polonijne z lat 1999–2000* [*World Polonia Games in the years 1999–2000*], [in:] B. Woltmann (red.), *Z najnowszej historii kultury fizycznej w Polsce* [*From the most recent history of physical culture in Poland*], vol. 5, Gorzów Wlkp. 2002, p. 628.

²¹ www.igrzyskapolonijne.sns.pl/strony/z_czterech_swiata_stron [accessed: 30.03.2016].

²² <http://poloniafc.com.ar/pl/noticias> [accessed: 12.04.2016].

²³ https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Światowe_Igrzyska_Polonijne [accessed: 29.03.2016].

multi-discipline family tournament, all-round strength competition, deep sea fishing and sea sailing²⁴.

In the 11th World Polonia Games in Poznań (July 26 through August 2, 2003) about 700 athletes participated, including teams from China and Croatia. The athletes competed in 16 sports disciplines: bowling, golf, cycling MTB, basketball, athletics, soccer, swimming, ringo, volleyball, beach volleyball, dragon boats, shooting, family tournament, tennis, table tennis and fishing²⁵.



Photo 17. The badge of the 12th WPG. Warsaw 2005.

Source: cover design Z. Sikora, [in:] J. Chelmecki (ed.), *Sport polonijny wczoraj i dziś* [Polonia sport yesterday and today], Warszawa 2005].

The 12th WPG took place in Warsaw from August 6 until August 14, 2005. A record number of 1,000 athletes from 28 countries took part in them. The honorary patronage over the Games was assumed by the President of Warsaw Lech Kaczyński²⁶. The Games program comprised 18 disciplines: badminton, billiards, bowling, golf, equestrian, cycling MTB, basketball, athletics, soccer, swimming, volleyball, beach volleyball, shooting, tennis, table tennis, power lifting, fishing and sailing²⁷.

The 13th WPG were held from July 28 until August 4, 2007 in Słupsk. They were attended by about 1,200 athletes from 28 countries. The number of disciplines has increased to twenty-one: badminton, bridge, canoeing, cycling MTB, basketball, athletics, archery, soccer, swimming, ringo, volleyball, beach volleyball, shooting, chess, tennis, table tennis, deep sea fishing, float fishing, multi-discipline family tournament, windsurfing and sailing²⁸.

²⁴ <http://poloniafc.com.ar/pl/noticias> [accessed: 29.03.2016].

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ www.google.pl/search?q=xii+swiatowe+igrzyska+polonijne+warszawa+6-14+sierpnia+2005 [accessed: 29.03.2016].

²⁷ <http://poloniafc.com.ar/pl/noticias> [accessed: 30.03.2016].

²⁸ Ibidem.

The 14th WPG in Toruń were held from August 1 until August 9, 2009. They were attended by about 1,500 people from 28 countries. The competition featured twenty-three disciplines: badminton, bowling, bridge, duathlon, futsal, golf, equestrian, road cycling, basketball, athletics, soccer, swimming, ringo, volleyball, beach volleyball, shooting, chess, fencing, tennis, table tennis, family tournament, fishing and sailing. For the first time in history the representatives of the Canadian Polonia competed under the name “Team Canada Toruń 2009” and took second place behind the team from Germany²⁹.

From July 29 through August 06, 2011 the 15th WPG took place in Wrocław. The Games were record-breaking in many respects. The number of participants was around 1,800. There were twenty-eight disciplines: badminton, beach soccer, bowling, bridge, duathlon, ergometers, golf, equestrian, canoeing, cycling MTB, road cycling, basketball, athletics, archery, soccer, volleyball, swimming, ringo, beach volleyball, shooting, chess, fencing, table tennis, tennis, family tournament, fishing, sailing and, outside the medal ranking, an integration race. The most numerous team was “Team Canada” (211 people). The Polish diaspora from Lithuania registered 6 teams for the basketball competition, and the Canadian Polonia 3 soccer teams. The Georgian Polonia team was represented by 4 brothers, who won all the athletic track events, from 100 to 10,000 meters. In the athletic program of the Games, pole vault was restored, and ergometers (dry rowing) were introduced to the program for the first time. In the team classification Polonia from Germany won the greatest number of points³⁰.

The 16th WPG took place in Kielce from August 3 until August 10, 2013. Over 1,000 athletes from 30 countries competed in 18 disciplines: badminton, bridge, cycling MTB, basketball, athletics, archery, soccer, volleyball, beach volleyball, handball, swimming, ringo, chess, table tennis, tennis, family tournament, and two newly introduced disciplines: Nordic walking and billiards pool. For the first time problems with the organization of the Games occurred. There were fewer participants and disciplines in the sports competition program³¹. During the opening ceremony, there were Olympic elements, e.g. a parade of the delegations from 30 countries, starting with Greece and ending with the Polonia team from Italy. The Lithuanian Polonia was represented by the largest group: about 240 athletes. The pride of the delegation from Canada was 96-year-old Mieczysław Lutczyk, a soldier from gen. Stanisław Maczek’s Brigade, who competed in chess. In the final medal standings of the 16th Summer World Polonia Games the Polonia team from the Czech Republic took the first place with 158 medals (43 gold, 62 silver, 53 bronze); Polonia from Lithuania was the runner-up with 116 medals (43 – 42 – 31); Canadian Polonia, who won 100 medals, finished in third (41 – 34 – 25)³².

²⁹ www.igrzyskapolonijne.toru.pl [accessed: 12.04.2016].

³⁰ <http://poloniafc.com.ar/pl/noticias> [accessed: 30.03.2016].

³¹ <http://www.igrzyskapolonijne.kielce.eu> [accessed: 12.04.2016].

³² *Ibidem*.

The 17th World Polonia Games took place in Silesia (Chorzów Rybnik, Sosnowiec, Wodzisław Śląski) from August 2 until August 8, 2015. The official opening ceremony and parade of about 800 athletes from 29 countries, taking the oath by the competitors and judges, raising the flag and ceremonial lighting of the flame took place at the Municipal Stadium in Rybnik. The program of the Games comprised 20 disciplines: badminton, bridge, golf, canoeing, cycling MTB, basketball, athletics, mini-games, Nordic walking, soccer, volleyball, beach volleyball, swimming, ringo, shooting, chess, table tennis, tennis, family tournament and windsurfing³³. In the medal classification the first place went to Polonia from the Czech Republic (143 medals: 44 – 53 – 46), the second place was taken by the team from Lithuania (139 medals: 48 – 45 – 46) and the third by Belarus (137 medals: 67 – 39 – 31)³⁴.



Photo 18. The occasional poster for the WPG. Silesia 2015

Source: <http://igrzyskaletnie.wspolnotapolska.org.pl> [accessed: 12.04.2016].

Table 2. Numerical summary of the summer World Polonia Games in the years 1997–2015

World Polonia Games in the years 1997–2015				
Consecutive number of the Games	Year and place of the Games	Number of diaspora countries	Number of disciplines	Number of participants
8 th	1997 Lublin	24	13	600
9 th	1999 Lublin	16	12	350
10 th	2001 Sopot	21	17	500
11 th	2003 Poznań	—	16	700
12 th	2005 Warsaw	28	18	1000
13 th	2007 Słupsk	28	21	1200
14 th	2009 Toruń	28	23	1500
15 th	2011 Wrocław	31	28	1800
16 th	2013 Kielce	30	18	1000

³³ <http://igrzyskaletnie.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/wyniki> [accessed: 11.04.2016].

³⁴ http://igrzyskaletnie.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/klasyfikacja_medalowa [accessed: 12.04.2016].

17 th	2015 Silesia (Chorzów, Rybnik, Sosnowiec, Wodzisław Śląski)	29	20	800
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Source: the authors' own elaboration.

Summing up the organization and course of the summer World Polonia Games in Poland it should be stated that the number of countries and participants depended largely on the sports program and the attractiveness of accompanying events, including the number of disciplines, competition venues and a reliable flow of information to the participants about the planned Games. The number of countries (the places of Poles' settlement) ranged from 13 to 31 and the number of participants from 800 to 1,800 athletes. To this number accompanying persons should be added, including children (about 150–500). The number of sports disciplines, which depended on the technical and sports facilities provided by the organizers, ranged from 7 to 28. Nevertheless, the total number of disciplines featured in the Games programs was 32. Among them were:

the integration run, badminton, beach soccer, bowling, bridge, duathlon, ergometers, golf, equestrian, canoeing, cycling MTB, road cycling, basketball, athletics, archery, mini-games, Nordic walking, soccer, volleyball, indoor handball, swimming, ringo, beach volleyball, shooting, chess, fencing, table tennis, tennis, family tournament, fishing, windsurfing, sailing³⁵.

It should be noted that the intended goal of the summer World Polonia Games was achieved. They gave impetus to association of Polish athletes in Polish sports organizations abroad and contributed largely to the consolidation of the Polish national life in exile.

They were also the source of many added values, as they provided an opportunity to improve the knowledge of the Polish language, learn about the country of the ancestors and its achievements in various fields of social, cultural, and sports life.

During the Games, Polonia activists together with sports activists living in Poland, discussed the future of Polonia sports events, which they decided to continue to organize for the sake of the whole Polish diaspora and Poles living in Poland.

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³⁵ A. Kempa, [in:] <http://poloniasport.com> [accessed: 12.04.2016].

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Kalendarium Letnich Światowych Igrzysk Polonijnych (1934–2015)

Streszczenie

W niniejszym opracowaniu przedstawiono kalendarium wydarzeń 81-letniej organizacji Polonijnych Igrzysk Sportowych w Polsce w latach 1934–1991 i ich kontynuację w zmienionej nazwie – jako Światowe Igrzyska Polonijne w latach 1997–2015.

Światowe Igrzyska Polonijne są ściśle związane ze zbiorowościami polskiego pochodzenia, zwanymi Polonią, które znajdują się w kilkudziesięciu krajach świata. Ludność ta, zachowując na

ogół poczucie łączności z Ojczyzną, tworzyła różne stowarzyszenia: społeczne, religijne, oświatowe, kulturalne i młodzieżowe. Wśród tych ostatnich ważne znaczenie odgrywały organizacje sportowe.

W założeniach polonijnych stowarzyszeń kultury fizycznej podkreślano z reguły potrzebę i znaczenie ich współpracy z ruchem sportowym w kraju macierzystym. Nawiązywano ją za pośrednictwem centralnych instytucji reprezentujących interesy Polonii. Współpraca ta miała na celu wzajemne wspieranie działań zarówno w zakresie sportu polonijnego, jak i sportu wyczynowego w Polsce.

Celem opracowania jest przedstawienie kalendarium wydarzeń związanych z organizacją i przebiegiem Letnich Światowych Igrzysk Polonijnych (1934–2015). Przyjęta przez autorów koncepcja wynika nie tylko z rozpiętości czasowej, ale też ze względu na obszerność materiału źródłowego.

W Polonijnych Igrzyskach Sportowych, a następnie Światowych Igrzyskach Polonijnych – letnich uczestniczyło wielu sportowców reprezentujących różne środowiska polonijne. Program Igrzysk ulegał stopniowym przemianom. Początkowe określone minima sportowe pozwalające na zakwalifikowanie do Igrzysk zostały zniesione. Rozszerzono kategorie wiekowe pozwalające na start w Igrzyskach osobom młodym, w średnim i starszym wieku.

Igrzyska polonijne dały impuls do zrzeszania się polskich sportowców w polonijnych organizacjach sportowych za granicą i przyczyniły się w dużym stopniu do konsolidacji polskiego życia narodowego na obczyźnie. Działacze polonijni wspólnie z działaczami sportowymi w kraju postanowili kontynuować Światowe Igrzyska Polonijne dla dobra całej polonijnej społeczności i Polaków mieszkających w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: polonijna kultura fizyczna; Światowe Igrzyska Polonijne w Polsce.