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Pioneers of Tourism and Sightseeing from Konin

Abstract. In Polish historiography, activities of promoters of tourism development in the city of Konin never attracted attention from regional historians or physical culture historians. More recently, however, there is a growing interest in this subject, e.g. a popular study discussing the 100-year tourist traditions in Konin has just been published. What is still missing are biographical studies of major promoters of tourism in Konin, and their particular contributions to the development of tourism in the interwar period and after World War II. The study presents short biographies of leading tourism activists from the industrial city of Konin, who were associated with various forms of tourism. The materials used in the study come from primary sources stored in the Konin National Archives, from magazine articles, memoirs, and various reports. The author included information from private collections or private chronicles, including personal correspondence and press clippings, in particular, materials written and collected by Andrzej Józef Miller.

Keywords: tourism, sightseeing, physical culture, history, biographies, Konin

1. Introduction

The following study is a biographical sketch of a number of leading activists from the industrial city of Konin in Poland, associated with various forms of tourism. The study is based on articles from weekly magazines published in Konin, Kalisz, Warsaw and Zakopane, including *Przegląd Koniński* (1979-2016), *Głos Koniński*

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(1921-1939), *Rocznik Koniński* (1972-2015), *Gazeta Kaliska* (1902-1919), *Rocznik Polskiego Towarzystwa Krajoznawczego*, *Ruch* (1909), *Polska Zbrojna* (1994), and *Tygodnik Zakopiański* (1904). Depictions of socio-economic, political and cultural events contained in these magazines only partially covered various initiatives related to tourism, sightseeing, sports, and recreation in Konin. The press provided information on social and organizational activities, as well as reports from outdoor trips and outings.

The literature about the life and activities of the first organizers of tourism and sightseeing in Konin is fairly limited, and popular sources have not been generally devoted to the topic [Miller 2013]. The area of the study covered the city of Konin and many other distant destinations visited by enthusiasts of tourism from Konin. The study is an attempt at a comprehensive analysis of all gathered data from the years 1913-1939.

In the past the definition of tourism tended to evolve [Dudek 2008: 50]. In 1905, tourism was defined as follows: “In all our kaleidoscopic journeys and wanderings, purposeless or following a friend’s advice or a Baedeker guide, it is not professional research into the life of other nations and the desire to learn from their greatest achievements that are the purpose of tourism. It is simply about seeing something different, glancing at foreign cultures, getting in touch with the glitter of modernity” [Col 1905: 722]. Tourism has been considered to be related to learning and sightseeing, i.e. two main forms of tourist activity. Larousse’s *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* defined tourism as “a set of rules regulating trips for pleasure” [Larousse 1927-1933, 6(133), after: Warszńska & Jackowski 1978: 21]. *The Dictionary of the Polish Language* from 1902 defined sightseeing as “a collection of all (not only geographical) information about a given country” [Karłowicz, Kryński & Niedźwiedzki 1902, 2: 953; cf. Jędrzejczyk 2013: 24 ff.].

In this study tourism and sightseeing are treated interchangeably.

2. The beginnings of tourism and sightseeing in Konin

The tourist movement in the Russian-controlled Kingdom of Poland emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. The organization which coordinated all efforts leading to the development of tourism was the Polish Sightseeing Association (PSA, *Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze* [PTK]) founded in Warsaw on 3 December 1906. By 1913, it had 528 new members [PTK 1913: 23], and a number of regional sections, including one in Konin [PTK 1913: 79]. The PSA Konin Section was established on 23 July 1913 with 56 members [PTK 1913: 79-80; *Gazeta Kaliska* 1919, 17]. Its activities were mostly political and cultural and

were aimed at the preservation of Polish national identity and public memory [Łobożewicz 1997: 25].

Apart from the PSA section, on 6 May 1900 a group of Konin intellectuals established the Water Rescue Society (WRS, Towarzystwo Ratowania Tonących), renamed the Konin Rowing Association (KRA, Konińskie Towarzystwo Wioślarskie) in 1909 [Dudek 1907, 97: 1; Kalendarz Informacyjno-encyklopedyczny 1904: 402, 511; Meller 1925; Strzemżalski]. Its members promoted rowing, provided assistance and aid to flood victims, organized outdoor games, concerts, lectures, and performances. They also established reading rooms and organized swimming and ice skating classes¹ [Meller 1925]. The WRS also organized trips [Gazeta Kaliska 1902, 210: 2], e.g. in 1909 a canoeing trip on the Warta River from Sieradz through Koło, Konin, Pyzdry to Poznań, together with rowers from Kalisz [Gazeta Kaliska 1909, 23: 5; 1909, 122: 2; Ruch 1909, 14: 11]. The participants visited historic sites in the Konin and Słupca districts and met with local residents. Beside their educational qualities, those activities also had some practical outcomes, e.g. the examination of the Warta water bed or the creation of an accurate hydrographic map of the area [Strzemżalski]. KRA members also took part in regattas organized by the Kalisz Rowing Association and Warsaw Rowing Association, e.g. in 1905 in Kalisz, and belonged to several cultural, sightseeing and sport organizations [Gazeta Kaliska 1905, 236: 1; 1905, 237: 1; 1910, 165: 2].

Even during World War I, KRA rowers continued to arrange canoeing trips on the Warta River [Rybczyński 1989: 7]. In 1917 *Gazeta Kaliska* reported: “Due to the spring flooding of the town commons the downtown resembled a river island [...] despite sunny weather, the wind made huge waves on the water” [Gazeta Kaliska 1917, 38: 5].

3. Research question

The main aim of the present study was to examine whether Konin residents were involved – and if so, to what extent – in the promotion of tourism and sightseeing. Research of the biographical material of five outstanding Konin inhabitants was conducted using deductive and inductive methods.

¹ Statut Towarzystwa Ratowania Tonących (The Statute of the Water Rescue Society).

4. Pioneers of tourism and sightseeing from Konin

One of the most renowned Konin residents was **Zofia Kamila Urbanowska**, born on 15 May 1849 in Kowalewko in the Rzgów community [Hejman 2004: 2]. Her father Wincenty rented a farm, and Zofia spent her childhood years in the country in Laskówiec near Mikorzyn. She began her school education in 1860, and attended a middle school for girls known at that time as the Government Institute in Kalisz, and then the Ursuline School in Poznań [Poznański 1976: 15], graduating in 1869 [Rusin 2008: 378-380]. In 1865 Zofia's mother bought a manor in Konin, which Zofia inherited ten years later [Miller 2013: 65].

Because of her parents' financial problems in the years 1870-1873, Zofia Urbanowska had to take up the job of a columnist in *Gazeta Polska*. She also contributed to *Przegląd Tygodniowy* (1885-1889) and *Wieczory Rodzinne* (1889-1900). In 1874 she moved to Warsaw and worked in Józef Sikorski's printing office as a proofreader. Soon afterwards she published her novels and novellas: *Znakomitość* (*Excellence*) (1874), *Cudzoziemka* (*Foreign Lady*) (1883), *Gucio zaczarowany* (*Enchanted Guccio*) (1884), *Księżniczka* (*Princess*) (1886), *Wyspa Atlanta* (*The Island of Atlanta*) (1890), *Wszechmocni* (*The Almighty Ones*) (1892), and *Róża bez kolców* (*A Rose with No Thorns*) (1903) [Miller 2013: 69].

The last novel was a display of Zofia Urbanowska's profound knowledge of the Polish Tatra mountains. At the time of her cooperation with a children's magazine *Wieczory Rodzinne* (*Family Evenings*), 1889-1892, Urbanowska was in charge of the magazine's nature section and contacts with readers. She wrote a series of popular science snippets titled *Korespondencja z Zakopanego* (*Letters from Zakopane*) [Poznański 1976: 17]. *Róża bez kolców* contains elaborate descriptions of the Tatra flora and fauna as well as various picturesque mountain passes and valleys. She also collected local folk songs and described the traditional customs and attire of Polish highlanders [Miller 2013: 69]. The Tatra mountains were frequently visited by physicians, poets, writers, and clergymen. The image of Zakopane in the novel is one of a "sovereign Polish capital at the time of partitions" and a place of freedom and solace [Poznański 1976: 27]. The main characters in the book are historical figures associated with Zakopane, such as Dr. Tytus Chałubiński (organizer of pleasurable hiking trips, physician, pioneer of tuberculosis sanatoria, and a keen naturalist), Jan Krzeptowski "Sabała" (a highlander from Zakopane and Chałubiński's travelling companion, musician and story teller), Stanisław Witkiewicz (author of the famous novel *Na przełęczy* (*On the Mountain Pass*)), Władysław Matlakowski, Bronisław Dembowski and Father Józef Stolarczyk (mountaineer, co-founder of the Tatra Society, and the

first parish priest of Zakopane). Urbanowska also wrote about the poet Katarzyna Sobczakówna and one of her sisters, who, in the 19th century, managed the Sobczakówna boarding house (present-day Cicha Villa) [Miller 2013: 69]. The book *Róża bez kolców* had a great emotional impact on the Polish writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, instilling in him a fondness for the Tatras and the Podhale region [Poznański 1976: 28].

In 1910 Zofia Urbanowska returned to Konin, where she became actively involved in the city's public life [Poznański 1976: 17; *Wielkopolski alfabet* 2012]. She signed a petition to establish a local school of commerce and trade, supported the activities of the Society for Propagation of Waterways, and became a member of the Konin Section of the Polish Sightseeing Association. In 1939 Konin authorities granted her honorary citizenship. Zofia Urbanowska died on 1 January 1939 [Miller 2013: 68] and was buried in the Konin parish cemetery [Rusin 2008: 388-389].

In 2009 the Polish Sightseeing and Tourist Society in Konin organized a hiking trip to the Tatras named "In the Footsteps of Rose with No Thorns", and Society members placed a copy of the last edition of the novel on the Krzyżne pass. On 16 May 2009, as part of the celebrations of Konin Days and Zofia Urbanowska Year, *Gazeta Polska* organized a city tour of the sites described in Urbanowska's novels [Rusin 2008: 70-71].

Stefania Lucja Esse was born on 17 May 1876 in Konin into the middle-class Petschke family of Czech descent. She graduated from the Grammar School for Girls in Kalisz in 1893, and then continued her education in the Institute for Secondary School Teacher Training in Saint Petersburg, where she became a certified teacher of French and German. After returning to Konin she worked as a teacher of foreign languages and mathematics in Helena Semadenowa's boarding house in the years 1897-1901 [*Gazeta Kaliska* 1901, 143].² In 1901 Stefania Esse moved to Kalisz together with Helena Semadenowa [*Gazeta Kaliska* 1902, 210: 1].³ After her husband's death in 1909 she came back to Konin and pursued her teaching career at Janina Komornicka's boarding house and the Commerce School for Boys (1915-1918) – under the management of Father Włodzimierz Jasiński, the later bishop of Łódź – which was transformed into the Middle School of Humanities headed by Father Stanisław Szabelski (1918-1922). She also taught foreign languages in the Mathematical-Scientific Gymnasium for Girls, transformed from J. Komornicka's defunct boarding house [Gołdyn 2012: 51]. From 1922 until her retirement in 1933 she was also a teacher in the Queen Jadwiga Grammar School for Girls under the supervision of J. Pieniążkowa.

² Helena Semadenowa's boarding house was moved to Kalisz on 20 July 1901.

³ Stefania's husband Teodor Esse became a member of the Kalisz Rowing Association in July 1902.

Esse was a member of the Polish Sightseeing Association in Konin from its very foundation and the secretary of the Association's Supervisory Board [PTK 1913: 79]. In the first year of the PSA activities she organized two out of thirteen sightseeing trips (to Żychlin, Konin, Rzgów, Pyzdry, Łąd, Kawnice, Gosławice, Ślesin, Ignacewo, Licheń, Wyszyna, Stare Miasto, Bieniszewo, Kazimierz Biskupi, Słupca, Koło, and the Gosławice sugar factory) [*Gazeta Kaliska* 1914, 35: 2].⁴ Before World War I she also belonged to the Water Rescue Society and the Konin Rowing Association. Her husband, Teodor Esse, a notary public, was a co-founder of both organizations and the first president of the former [Łuczak 1988, 12: 9].⁵ He presented the Konin Rowing Association with the first flat-bottomed boat with oars for leisure trips. She was named "Teodor" after her benefactor [Zdzieniecki 1987, 4: 7].⁶ In the years 1939-1943 Stefania Esse taught clandestine school lessons in Nazi-occupied Konin [PTK 1913: 79]. She died on 25 December 1959 [*Konin moje miasto* 1986: 13].

Another member of the Konin PSA and KRA was **Antoni Ślepowroński**, born in 1864 in Sieradz. He attended a middle school in Kalisz and the Warsaw Veterinary Institute. Then he worked in Konin as a municipal and district veterinarian for 30 years. Ślepowroński was actively involved in the social, cultural, tourist and sports life of the city of Konin [PTK 1913: 79-80; *Gazeta Kaliska* 1919, 17].

One of the greatest propagators of sightseeing, tourism and sport was lieutenant colonel and engineer **Witold Sztark** (1894-1992). He was born into a family of traders. At the age of ten he began his education at the commerce school in Kalisz. After graduation he studied three years at the University of Technology in Kiev, and from April 1925 at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the University of Technology in Lvov, where he received a professional title of B.Sc.

From 23 July 1913 Witold Sztark was a member of the Konin Section of the Polish Sightseeing Association [PTK 1913: 80]. He organized outdoor trips, e.g. in 1914 to the Gosławice sugar factory [*Gazeta Kaliska* 1914, 35: 2], and belonged to the Konin Rowing Association [*Gazeta Kaliska* 1914, 35: 2]. Witold Sztark's extensive library of more than 3,000 volumes was described by Edward Chwalewik [Miller 2013: 61].

Sztark was drafted into the Russian army in 1915. He studied in the Academy of Artillery in Odessa, and took part in the campaign on the Russian-German front.

⁴ S. Esse was also a guide on the trip to Stare Miasto.

⁵ In 1900 the Association had 188 members.

⁶ Soon the Konin Rowing Association purchased a few kayaks and sculls, two skiffs and one outrigger canoe. The KRA members took part in regattas in Kalisz, Włocławek, Lake Gopło, and Poznań.

At the beginning of 1918 he returned to Konin. Together with a men's rowing team he took part in a men's pair rowing event at the Kalisz regatta in August 1918, won by the Kalisz team and then by the Konin team [*Gazeta Kaliska* 1918, 86: 1].

After completing a short artillery course in Rembertów (from 23 November 1918) Witold Sztark fought in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1921, where he commanded an independent platoon of the 7th Field Artillery Regiment. In August 1919 he suffered a head injury in the battle of Sienkiewicze. After recovery, Sztark continued to command an artillery battery. For his heroic actions he was awarded the War Order of *Virtuti Militari* and the Cross of Valor.

With his extensive academic background gained from the University of Technology in Lvov Sztark became a lecturer in Toruń, where he taught mechanical engineering, structure of artillery equipment, and artillery shooting theory. For six months he was research director and then, for three years, deputy commandant of the Artillery Cadet School. Witold Sztark wrote a number of works on exterior ballistics. He contributed to the *Przegląd Artyleryjski* magazine, and in 1935 published a textbook *Zarys mechaniki jako wstęp do balistyki* (*Outline of mechanics as an introduction to ballistics*) [Sztark 1935, vol. 1]. Between 1930 and 1935 Witold Sztark was the commander of the 5th Light Artillery Regiment in Lvov and deputy commander of the 6th Heavy Artillery Regiment. Until 1938 he also worked in the Artillery Training Center in Toruń.

In June 1938 Witold Sztark became the commander of the 18th Light Artillery Regiment stationed in Komorów near Ostrów Mazowiecka.⁷ Units of his division were assigned to provide artillery cover for the Operational Group "Narew" during the German invasion of Poland in 1939 [Żuralski 1994a].

On 24 August 1939 Sztark's regiment left the barracks and took designated defensive positions. After being surrounded by the Germans in Andrzejewo (near Zambrów) on 13 September 1939 he surrendered as the last commander of the 18th Infantry Division [Życie Warszawy 1969, 277: 37]. Following a bomb blast Witold Sztark suffered from hearing problems.⁸

He was taken prisoner and brought to Oflag II in Woldenberg.⁹ After the war, embittered and hounded by the Polish communist authorities, he became

⁷ On the order of the Ministry of Military Affairs, Józef Piłsudski, from 31 December 1931, all field artillery regiments were renamed light artillery regiments. The 18th Light Artillery Regiment in Komorowo was a unit of the 18th Infantry Division.

⁸ Instytut Historyczny im. gen. W. Sikorskiego (Władysław Sikorski Historical Institute) B I 14F, 18P.A.L., *Ppłk Witold Sztark do mgr Włodzimierza Kozłowskiego. Wyciąg z listu z dnia 4 lipca 1968 r.* (from a letter of Witold Sztark to Włodzimierz Kozłowski, 4 July 1968): 10.

⁹ From a report from the Central Military Archives in Rembertów: "Formidable and righteous character guided by a moral code [...]. Outstanding intelligence and skills, especially in shooting tra-

a math teacher in the Secondary School in Konin [Żuralski 1994b: 4] and also organized outdoor geometry classes in the city park [Przybycin 2013: 18].¹⁰ In the 1960s he moved to Wrocław. Witold Sztark died on 22 February 1992 in Wrocław on the eve of his 98th birthday.

Another figure in the history of tourism and sightseeing in Konin was Dr. **Roman Ostrzycki** – a chief physician in the Konin municipal hospital and in the Polish Railways Hospital [*Głos Koniński* 1921, 13]. Ostrzycki was born on 25 of August 1851 in Ceków in the Kalisz district. His father Ignacy was a mayor of Ceków. Having finished a middle school in Kalisz Roman Ostrzycki studied medicine at the University of Warsaw. He then completed internships in Vilnius and Saint Petersburg. From around 1880 he resided in Konin, and between 1894 and 1898 in Koło. During World War One he worked as the director of the Holy Spirit Municipal Hospital in Konin.

Roman Ostrzycki combined his professional activities with a passion for sightseeing. His trip to the Tatra mountain lake of Morskie Oko in July 1904 was even reported in the local press [*Tygodnik Zakopiański* 1904, 47: 357]. Ostrzycki was a co-founder of the Konin Section of the Polish Sightseeing Association and served as its first president.

In the years 1911-1920 he was the head of a Voluntary Fire Brigade in Konin. He provided medical services to the city's rich and poor, and often donated his wages to those in need so they could buy the necessary medicaments. Roman Ostrzycki died on 12 September 1921 in Konin after contracting typhus fever [Gruszczyński].

5. Conclusions

The common bond for residents of Konin in partitioned Poland was their active involvement in tourism and sightseeing, and then after Poland regained independence in 1918, in the development of patriotic attitudes and physical activity by way of visiting and learning about natural and cultural attractions of the region, Poland, and Europe.

ining. An expert with very good preparation and experience". Opinion from 23 January 1946: "He can be deployed as a regiment commander, like before the war."

¹⁰ "He was distinguished by his behavior. He conducted his geometry classes like a commander in a training field [...]. His love of the military was shared by some of our colleagues, and a few of them became professional soldiers."

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Życie Warszawy, 1969, 277, 37 [Spotkanie kombatantów 18 PAL (Reunion of 18th Light Artillery Regiment veterans)].

Pionierzy turystyki krajoznawczej z Konina

Streszczenie. W polskiej historiografii działalność propagatorów rozwoju turystyki w Koninie nigdy nie była przedmiotem zainteresowania regionalnych historyków ani historyków kultury fizycznej. Ostatnio jednak zainteresowanie to wydaje się rosnać. Świadczy o tym popularne opracowanie omawiające 100-letnie tradycje turystyczne w Koninie. Wciąż brakuje jednak badań biograficznych najważniejszych animatorów turystyki w Koninie i ich szczególnego wkładu w rozwój turystyki w okresie międzywojennym i po drugiej wojnie światowej. W opracowaniu przedstawiono krótkie biografie czołowych działaczy turystyki z przemysłowego miasta Konina, związanych z różnymi formami turystyki. Materiały wykorzystane w badaniu pochodzą z archiwum państwowego w Koninie, artykułów z czasopism, wspomnień i różnych raportów. Wykorzystywano także dane ze zbiorów prywatnych, w tym korespondencję osobistą i wycinki prasowe, w szczególności materiały autorstwa Andrzeja Józefa Millera.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka, zwiedzania, kultura fizyczna, historia, biografie, Konin