

# THE CULTURAL ROLE OF THE STATE POLICE. PRESS, SPORT, POLICE FAMILY

ALEKSANDER GŁOGOWSKI

## ABSTRACT

The Polish state police was, first of all, an institution guarding the state's security and public order before the Second World War. However, apart from performing the tasks related to this goal, it also conducted a number of activities for the benefit of the society. First of all, it was activity in the field of integrating the milieu of police families and caring for widows and orphans of fallen officers. In addition, the police also organized sports clubs, libraries and people's reading rooms. Especially these institutions played an important role in the promotion of sport and Polish culture in rural areas where there were no similar civil or local institutions. This was to serve not only to improve the image and build trust in the service, but also to modernize the society.

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**ALEKSANDER GŁOGOWSKI,  
ASSOC. PROFESSOR, DSC PHD**

Jagiellonian University

One of the basic problems faced by Poland, which was reborn after the years of partitions, was the actual unification of the inhabitants of the lands, until now belonging to three different countries. It should also be mentioned that the situation in which Poles had to function under foreign rule was very diverse. It looked best in former Galicia, where there were two universities (in Krakow and Lviv) and the Lviv Polytechnic, as well as numerous elementary and secondary schools with Polish as the language of instruction. The mother tongue was widely used in public spaces and administration, including in police formations. Cultural life flourished: theater, numerous books and press titles were published. However, the low level

of economic development meant that there was a high level of illiteracy, which limited the access of the poorer imperial subjects to these gains. Under German rule, education was universal, and thus also the vast majority of people could read and write. However, the official and lecture language was German, and attempts to publish books or press popularizing patriotic content and values were fought by the state. In the Russian partition, the tsarist authorities pursued a policy of brutal Russification, eliminating the Polish language from public space, and Poles, suspected of striving for independence, were persecuted and expelled from public administration. One of the main tasks of the reviving state

was to popularize education and popularize native culture, which was to popularize patriotic content and merge such a diverse society into one political nation. This process was a complete success, as evidenced by the dedicated attitude of Poles during the trial – in September 1939 and during the tragic years of the German and Soviet occupation.

An important role in the process of raising the level of education and disseminating patriotic values was also played by the State Police, which, apart from the Polish Army, was the only truly nationwide institution of the Second Republic of Poland, with which citizens had to deal with every day. The police uniform itself was often the only symbol of the state that the average Pole could see every day. From the point of view of the police, it was important to fill in the gaps in education and to popularize the knowledge of the Polish language in speech, especially in writing, among the officers. In the reality of the emergence of the reborn Polish state, there were quite low formal requirements for candidates for lower level officers: knowledge of Polish in speech and writing and the ability to count (Litwiński, 2010: 59). Raising these skills was a task assigned to the authorities of individual police districts. It was to be carried out by senior officers (according to the later nomenclature – officers). First of all, they were to do it by popularizing reading among their subordinates. To make it possible, libraries were organized in each district headquarters, in which the necessary book collections were gathered. To this day, popular online auction sites feature pre-war editions of popular literature with stamps from these libraries. The idea was to encourage officers and their families to use a book as a form of spending time, and thus become pro-

ficient in reading. Reading was also to be an important element of patriotic education. Police libraries were open: books were also borrowed from local civilians, which favored establishing non-service relations. In particular, it concerned contacts with local elites: state and local government officials, clergy, teachers, and doctors. Cooperation with them was recommended in textbooks for police officers, especially the Investigative Service, as helpful in detecting perpetrators of crimes, e.g. local doctors were to provide the only knowledge possible at that time about the nature of the injuries suffered by the victim or the causes of death. Representatives of local elites were also often natural informants for the police when investigating criminogenic circles. In the years 1919-1927 there were 83 police libraries, and in 1928 another 81 were established. They were used by a total of 24,349 people (Litwiński, 2010: 420). The purchase of the book collections was financed by voluntary contributions from police officers and civilians using the library (Razyhrayev, 2019: 354). This voluntary commitment, as in the case of the army officer corps, was often only formal and legal, because the payment of various contributions for social purposes was treated at that time as something obvious and in a good tone. Apart from libraries, there were also police clubs at police stations. In 1936 their number was estimated at 383 (Litwiński, 2010: 420). They were important cultural and social centers for both police officers and the local population. They contained pool tables, and more importantly, radio receivers, which favored integration and increased access to information on current social and political events (Razyhrayev, 2019: 351). In addition to reading the press or listening to the radio, one

could participate in numerous talks and lectures on various topics (Razyhrayev, 2019: 351). They were also a place to organize concerts of police orchestras, there were 12 of them in 1928, choirs and performances of theater groups (Litwiński, 2010: 420). Foreign language courses were also organized there, including Esperanto, which was popular at that time (Razyhrayev, 2019: 357-359).

The role of the press was noticed quite quickly in the police community as a tool for communication and exchange of experiences between officers and the dissemination of basic expertise. Even before the establishment of the State Police, the "Milicjant" weekly was established in Warsaw in 1918, being a body of the trade union of the City Militia officers of the capital city of Warsaw, which, after the establishment of the PP in 1919, changed its title to "Policjant" (Smolak, 2003: 47-54). Initially, he met with the favor of his superiors, but the trade union character caused a change in this situation, because, obviously, trade unionists raised issues critical to the management of the Police in the magazine. Therefore, after its liquidation, the Main Headquarters of the PP decided to publish its own periodical entitled "Gazeta Policji Państwowej", which began to appear in December 1919. It was not only an educational journal, but also the official publisher of the legal acts of the Commander-in-Chief. It published important and valuable texts written by PPO officers and recognized legal authorities (Smolak, 2003: 54-59). The title was published until 1922 and enjoyed considerable recognition. In the same year, its field of interest was expanded, and thus also the title for "Gazeta Policji Administracji Państwowej" (Smolak, 2003: 47-54). In 1927 it became the official

monthly magazine of the Ministry of the Interior. Articles on topics related to the protection of public safety and order still prevailed. In 1936, the concept of publishing a separate professional periodical for the State Police was returned. It was published independently of the "Gazeta Policji i Administracji Państwowej" as a bimonthly under the title "Przegląd Policyjny". Quite quickly, the officers of the Main Headquarters noticed not only the advantages, but also the disadvantages of the previous magazines: the very high substantive level and often scientific nature of the articles made "Gazeta Policji Państwowej" become an elite magazine, whose readers were mostly officers. Therefore, it could not fulfill the task of popularizing reading and basic police knowledge for lower officers whose level of general knowledge was rather low (usually basic or even incomplete basic education). Therefore, it was decided to issue a separate title for them: the weekly "Na Posterunku". It was a popular magazine, covering a wide variety of topics, and along with technological progress, also enriched with illustrations and photographs (Smolak, 2003: 62). In addition to didactic texts, which were used to convey professional knowledge useful for lower officials, the weekly also published reports and columns aimed at shaping the service ethos, e.g. texts related to historical anniversaries or information about heroic deeds performed in the service. There were also published poems and sketches of policemen's work, as well as information about the activities of the police community and even crosswords. The content related to hygiene, spending free time, and methods of preserving uniforms and equipment, e.g. patterns for sewing a regular winter hat, was also popularized. In the ordinances of voivodeship com-

manders, one can find those that ordered the commanders of the posts to ensure that the weekly "Na Posterunku" was not only subscribed, but also read by officers during office service. Until the formation of a formal training system, it was the only educational material that police officers in the field had contact with (Razyhrayev, 2019: 302).

Another educational and integration element implemented within the State Police was the environmental activity within the Police Family association. It was established on June 20, 1929. It performed a number of very important functions. First of all, it integrated the police community at the level of county headquarters. Moreover, it looked after the widows and orphans of policemen who died in the service (Litwiński, 2010: 415). It also ensured recreation for policemen and their families – it was maintained by numerous sanatoriums and holiday centers in many places in Poland at that time. It also organized summer camps for policemen's children. It also played the role of integrating police families with the local population, as various circles of interest gathered in police clubs were open to civilians, especially to women who met policemen's wives there and spent their time together (in the author's collection). Amateur theater performances and charity campaigns were organized, such as raffles as part of winter aid for the poor.

The Police Health Homes Association, established in 1921, provided assistance in the physical and mental regeneration of officers. In 1928, it had 25,000 members of the (nl., Police House of Health, 1928: 3). It maintained rest homes, sanatoriums and treatment houses, as well as summer camps for children. They were used by policemen with their families, police pensioners, and in case of vacancies, also by

other state officials with their families (nl, Police House of Health, 1928: 5). In 1928, Police Health Centers were located in Otwock, Busko, Druskienniki, Tatarow, Zakopane, Krynica (nl, Police House of Health, 1928: 7-14). Later, each police district tried to have such a center in its area.

Police sports clubs were another important form of activity of the police community, serving both the development of skills useful in the service and integration with the local population. Their activity intensified especially after 1926 as part of the military orientation of the State Police, when a model of physical education was implemented in this formation referring to the one known in the Polish Army. Efforts were made to establish Police Sports Clubs in all districts. In 1929, there were 101 of them, with 9,891 members, operating in 272 sections (Litwiński 2010: 434). This action had the best effects in the Eastern Borderlands. The local clubs Wilja Wilno in 1921 played in class A, but dropped to class B, and in 1925 returned to class A and took 3rd place there; a year later the club took the last 6th place again and fell to the box office B and PKS Łuck were close to promotion to the national football league, which is the equivalent of the current Extraleague, of which the club from Volhynia four times.

Another representative of the Volyn District, PKS Równe, also played for several years at the back of the national tournaments. PKS Katowice, established in 1924 in 1928-1930, and in 1931 in class A and in PKS Będzin in 1932 and 1933 in class A, was also strong, later transferred to Sosnowiec in class A as PKS Sosnowiec (Goksiński, 2013: 54-57). Borderland clubs played an important role in integrating Polish communities and popularizing sport in places where it was not as popular as in other parts

of Poland. It should be remembered that the sport was amateur then. Trained after hours of service. So practicing sport was both a form of active leisure and building physical fitness, useful in the daily police service. Apart from team sports, especially football, martial arts and defensive sports were also promoted within PKS: boxing, shooting, and skiing. The most famous athlete in the navy blue uniform was Stanisław Piłat. He was born on June 13, 1909 in Nowy Targ. He boxed for Warta Poznań and PKS Katowice. In the years 1934-39 he won the title of the individual Polish heavyweight champion six times. Five times, in 1932-36, he won the national team championship with Warta's team. Participant of the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 and the European Championships in Budapest, Milan and Dublin. In the white and red colors he fought 20 duels, of which he won 9 in his favor and tied three. In his career, he fought 170 fights, of which 143 won, 24 lost and 3 tied. After the war, a physical education teacher in schools in Nowy Targ. He died on May 10, 1993 in Nowy Targ [Piłat]. Another police Olympian was Wacław Okulicz-Kozaryn. He was born on February 8, 1884 in the Vitebsk region. He practiced skating, horse riding, gymnastics, swimming and rowing, and wrestling. He started regular and intensive training in this discipline after he came to Warsaw (1918), first at Klub Piaskowski at Twarda Street, and later in the 4th Falcon's nest in Dynasy under the supervision of Władysław Pytłasiński. Together with his master, he moved to the Polish Athletic Society (1922), where he began his competitive career (1922-1927), which he continued at the YMCA and the Capital Legia. He achieved his first successes in 1923, winning the titles of the champion of Warsaw and the cham-

panion of Poland in middleweight wrestling. After winning the championship also a year later, he was admitted to the qualifying fights for the right to represent Poland at the Olympic Games in Paris. He won this opportunity and, together with Leon Rękawek, became the first Polish Olympian in this sport discipline. One of the first promoters of wrestling in Poland withdrew from active sports life in 1927, but difficult material conditions and problems with finding a job – he was a caretaker – forced him to take up professional wrestling fights in the circus. In September 1939, he stayed in Romania, where he was delegated by the Bank of Poland. He returned to Warsaw and then moved to Michałowice. After the war, he moved to Warsaw again, where he died on April 14, 1974 [www.olimpijski.pl]. Another Olympic performance by a Polish policeman made the outbreak of World War II impossible. The Sparta Białystok athlete, Bernard Zasufa, was appointed to the team for these Games. In the years 1936-1938 he was a multiple champion and record holder of the country in the 100 and 200 m race. He fought in the September campaign, and a few years later, as a soldier of the Polish II Corps, he took part in the Battle of Monte Cassino. After the end of the war, he stayed in the West and settled in Manchester (plus.poranny.pl).

In addition to appearances in national competitions, sports competitions of police clubs were also organized. They took place in such disciplines as: football, athletics, boxing, wrestling, swimming, as well as professional disciplines: weighted walking, grenade throwing, ski patrol run (Litwiński, 2010: 440-441). Equestrian competitions were also organized, during which you could watch such a spectacular discipline as polo, during which play-

ers used a ball with a diameter similar to the height of the horse at the withers.

Therefore, the State Police played an important formative role not only for the officers themselves, but also for their families and local elites, especially at the county level. So where other Polish state institutions, especially in the Eastern Borderlands, were not sufficiently present. Police was a pioneer in the use of new media for those times, such as books and newspapers. It popularized not only security issues, but also Polish culture, including physical culture. Some of these solutions can be and are implemented also today, for example on the Internet or during local festivals and meetings in communes or counties. It helps local elites and the police to get to know each other, and the cooperation between them creates not only the rebuilding of the service's image, but also the strengthening of cooperation at every level, which is to raise the level of safety and public order. It also serves to popularize the service, which is an important element for acquiring new candidates for it.

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