

The “Korona” Sports Club – Football and Gymnastic Beginnings of the Podgórze Sports Club

Małgorzata Orlewicz-Musiał

AWF University of Physical Education Kraków

Summary

The centenary of the “Korona” Sports Club in Kraków is a great excuse to verify knowledge about the genesis of this organisation, to clarify who its creator was and how he contributed to the club's further development. The article introduces the topic of creating the Podgórze Gymnastics Society “Sokół” and the children's football team, which, establishing cooperation in 1923, formed an organisational unit under the name the “Korona” Sokół Sports Club. At first, the history of T.G. (Gymnastics Society) “Sokół” in Podgórze, the beginnings of creating the infrastructure by sports facility creators and the way the society operates, is shown. It continued to show how the young footballers brought the team to life, under what conditions they trained, how they changed the club's name and eventually got the opportunity to use the sports facilities they connected with the Podgórze “Sokół”. Two-track activity in the field of gymnastics and sport culminated in the merger of these organisational units. The work was based created on materials available in the Kraków and K.S. (Sports Club) “Korona” archives.

The year of 2019 is the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the “Korona” Sports Club located in the Podgórze district of Kraków. The celebrated century refers to the idea of creating a sports club in Podgórze - also called Old Podgórze - once a separate town near Kraków, which on July 4, 1915, was annexed to royal Krakow. However, the origins of K.S. “Korona” go back to years earlier than those indicated by the anniversary celebrations - 1919, and the path of the club creation was very complex, thus, it is difficult to clearly indicate when the idea of creating the organisation actually appeared. In connection with this and the anniversary, it is worth presenting its genesis in light of preserved archival documents. The discussion on the creation of the club draws attention to several problems related to the birth of the association.

In the initial period, the fate of the “Korona” Sports Club was extremely complicated, and among the existing studies that appeared periodically on the occasion of following anniversaries, one can see numerous distortions of facts related to the beginnings of this association¹. Anniversary books were published on the occasion of celebrating subsequent anniversaries, but their credibility may be questioned, as each time, they were dedicated to the state authorities of the People's Republic of Poland (e.g. Józef Cyrankiewicz), and their merits in the field of sport and organisational activities of the club were glorified. These books also contain numerous

memories of former players and activists that shed light on club activities. Unfortunately, the memories do not have exact dates related to the described events. Moreover, they lack agreement as to the presentation of many facts. Articles on websites of the football clubs related to the “Football Clubs in Kraków”² category contribute to the deepening and consolidation of errors, while on the website titled “The Małopolska Voivodeship. The oldest football clubs”, K.S. “Korona” has been omitted³. Due to frequent references to these pages in popular articles, the problem is duplicated. Why all these misconceptions? It is worth reaching into the archives here to clarify and correct some facts.

The objective of this study is to verify the facts and show the complicated path of creating this merited Kraków sports club. The query that was carried out at the National Archives in Kraków did not bring the expected results. The collection shows numerous deficiencies among the oldest club registration documents and “*Księga protokołów KS “Korona”*” [Eng. The Book of KS “Korona” Protocols] preserved in the club archive was created as a manuscript, which was supplemented in later years⁴, therefore, numerous inconsistencies in

¹ 40 lat Terenowego Klubu Sportowego Korona 1919-1959 [Eng. 40 Years of the Korona Outdoor Sports Club], Kraków 1959; *Pół wieku Klubu Sportowego “Korona”* [Eng. Half a Century of the “Korona” Sports Club], Kraków 1970; 70 lat KS “Korona” Kraków 1919 – 1989 [Eng. 70 Years of the Kraków “Korona” Sports Club] (P. Plątek, Z. Ringer), Kraków 1989.

² “Korona” Kraków – the multisectional sports club initiated in 1919 in Kraków. In the years 1951–1971, connected with another Kraków club – Garbarnia, at the time, bearing the name – Włóknarz. https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korona_Krak.

³ S. Partyka, *Małopolska Najstarsze kluby piłkarskie* [Eng. Małopolska – The Oldest Football Clubs], <http://slawomirpartyka.com.pl/malopolska/#.XeVVxuhKjb1>.

⁴ *Księga protokołów KS “Korona”* [Eng. The K.S. “Korona” Book of Protocols] – was probably not written systematically – the signatures on the back of the title page indicate the years 1931–32.

the name of the club can be noticed, and this text refers to documents that do not exist in Polish archives. The lack of the first statute accepted by the authorities or documents from the founding meeting is a clear obstacle, while no documents confirming the official name of the organisation can be found. The name of the club changed several times: 1920 - K.S. "Polonia", the proposed K.S. "Krakus" and K.S. "Korona", 1922 - K.S. "Podgórze", 1923 - "Korona Sokół Sports Club". It was particularly important to mention the name "Sokół" [Eng. Falcon], which would indicate another clue in the club's activity, thus it is necessary to analyse the connections between K.S. "Korona" and the "Sokół" Gymnastics Society.

The beginnings of the club are the intertwining fate of two organisations. The first of them, gymnastics, chronologically older, was created in the 19th century, while the sports part was established on the basis of the Podgórze football team, created after Poland regained independence. Accurate reports on the activities of the "Sokół" Gymnastics Society were included in "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide] from 1892, hence, the path of club creation can be precisely recreated through gymnastic roots. To understand the history of K.S. "Korona", it is necessary to trace both paths and consequences resulting from joint actions.

The "Sokół" Gymnastics Society in Podgórze

Activities within the framework of physical culture in Podgórze were initiated by the broadly operating "Sokół" Gymnastics Society in Poland⁵.

The "Sokół" Gymnastics Society in Kraków-Podgórze was established in 1891⁶. As was written in the leading organisational journal "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny Sokół" [Eng. The Sokół Gymnastics Guide]:

... In October 1891, upon the initiative of the current president Wacław Adamski, a committee was formed which, on the one hand, dealt with the drafting of statutes for the newly formed society, at the first meeting of the general assembly, our society was established as a branch of the Sokół society in Lviv⁷.

Among the people involved in creating the shape of the new organisation and later, the future management,

were the following leaders: Dr. Wacław Adamski was appointed the president of T.G. "Sokół", together with vice president Franciszek Maryjewski, while the faculty included: Dr. Samuel Aronson, Dr. Tadeusz Bednarski, Józef Emilewicz, Dr. Izidor Feuereiser, Kazimierz Janusz, Roman Klein Ignacy Kranz, Józef Kryłowski, Władysław Liban, Franciszek Rehman, Teodor Rybak and Józef Stępień. Dr. Karol Górski, Władysław Markwiczynski and Emil Serkowski comprised the court of honour. The Audit Committee was represented by Gustaw Baruch and Gustaw Rosenzweig. *The faculty was constituted on January 7, 1892 and chose Roman Klein Director, Tadeusz Bednarski as secretary, Franciszek Rehman as treasurer, Józef Kryłowski as host and Ignacy Kranz as librarian. The faculty held 10 meetings discussing administrative and gymnastics matters, creating composition and construction committees⁸.*



Edifice of the Podgórze "Sokół", Kraków, ul. Sokolska
(view from 2017)

Photo by author

⁵ K. Toporowicz, *Zarys dziejów "Sokoła" na ziemiach polskich w latach 1867-1947* [Eng. An Outline of the History of "Sokół" on the Polish Lands in the Years 1867-1947] [in:] Z. Pawluczuk (ed.) *Z dziejów Towarzystw Gimnastycznych "Sokół"* [Eng. From the History of the "Sokół" Gymnastics Societies], Gdańsk 1996; A. Pawłowski, *"Sokół" krakowski w latach 1891-1992* [Eng. The Kraków Sokół in the Years 1891-1992], [in:] A. Łopata (ed.) *Z kart historii polskiego "Sokoła"* [Eng. From the Pages of the History of the Polish "Sokół"], Kraków 1995, p. 38.

⁶ "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide], November 1892, issue 13, p. 85.

⁷ "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide], August 1893, issue 8, p. 108.

⁸ *Ibid.*

The Podgórze "Sokół", according to the reports of "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide], first focused on the implementation of gymnastics classes, both for adults and children (emphasizing exercises conducted especially for girls)⁹. They practiced eight times a week and the first class leaders were dh Kazimierz Homiński and dh Roman Sworzeniowski. The average number of exercisers – according to the estimates at the time – was 16 people per hour, with 81 declared members belonging to the association. The following year, Roman Sworzeniowski continued gymnastics classes at the Podgórze association, and in 1892, "Sokół" consisted of 1 honorary member, 6 founders and 121 ordinary members¹⁰.

The Society's priority was to own its own location. This was immediately implemented. The plan of the building, which was to later be the seat of the Society in Podgórze, was made by Eng. Józef Kryłowski, who also supervised the finishing of the facility together with Stanisław Serkowski:

The current year (1892) can be confidently called a happy one for our aspirations, for the matter of physical education, because in no year did Societies come into existence as much as this year, and especially in recent days. We have already reported the creation of a new gymnastics Society in Podgórze, which will rapidly come into force with the cordial support of the noble mayor of this city, who promised to make the gymnasium of the people's school available for training free of cost¹¹. In the spring of 1893, after only a year of activity, the society started building its own edifice.

The actions of Wacław Adamski, who was also the president and mayor of Podgórze, led to the fact that the Municipal Council gave, as described: ... *the most beautiful square next to the green belt with an area of 644 (?) as well as sand, stone and lime needed to build the building. This being*

a truly royal gift, which we could not even dream of, and for which there are no words of thanks¹². The fact that the construction of the gym facility was completed quickly was considered a great success.

... To build an edifice in the first year of existence and an impressive building, is probably something unusual in the history of our 'Sokółness'. The best proof is that our ideas are being more and more applauded in all layers of society and that now, everyone wants something that Sokół can do¹³.

The selfless involvement of the Podgórze residents in creating the building was admirable: ... *free architectural and construction plans, free masonry and carpentry work, access to building materials from brickyard owners. Donations for construction also came in a rush, the author of "Szkice wybieżki w Pieniny" [Eng. Sketch of Trips in the Pieniny] donated the income from sales of their entire effort, the advance payment company granted a low interest loan. Poetry evenings, prizes. The donation commission watched over this¹⁴.*

On January 19, 1894, "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide] reported that: ... *for almost a month, we have been in our own building, and the facility was lent gymnastics equipment by Dr. Henryk Jordan¹⁵.*

The following years of activity were not as accurately depicted in magazines as the successful years of building the facility and the preparation for gymnastics training.

Here, the relationship of both Podgórze organisations should be indicated.

After World War 1, two Kraków clubs were merged: K.S. "Korona" and T.G. "Sokół", and thus, a club was created, which, according to the entry in *Księga protokołów K.S. "Korona"* [Eng. K.S. "Korona" Book of Protocols] was called the "Korona Sokół Sports Club"¹⁶.

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Gymnasium of the Podgórze "Sokół", Kraków ul. Sokolska (view from 2019).

Photo by author

⁹ *Ibid.*, issue 8, p. 108.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹¹ "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide], November 1892, issue 13, p. 85.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide], August 1893, issue 8, p. 108.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide], August 1893, issue 8, p. 109.

¹⁶ *Pół wieku Klubu Sportowego "Korona"* [Eng. Half a Century of the "Korona" Sports Club], Kraków 1970.

¹⁷ *Księga protokołów KS "Korona"* [Eng. KS "Korona" Book of Protocols] – probably not written systematically – signatures on the back indicate the years 1931-32.

archy of importance in youth groups depended on who owned the ball at the time, which would explain why the lucky leader at the head of the group was Rudolf Lowas.

The chaos of World War 1 did not destroy the plans to create the Podgórze club. It should also be mentioned that in 1915, Podgórze was joined to Kraków. An informal group of young people played matches with friendly teams from neighbouring streets. However, it took several years before the idea of creating a club became a reality. The idea of establishing a sports organisation was born in 1919, gaining the universal approval of supporters of Podgórze football and as early as January 1, 1920 (recorded in the first protocol¹⁸ – a group of founders: Rudolf Lowas, Roman Lowas, Tadeusz Komorek, Tadeusz Miciński, Jan Nowak, and Stanisław Wojdyła) – and an association was established bearing the name: the “Polonia” Sports Club¹⁹. The name “Krakus” was also taken into account. The beginnings of the football team were recalled by one of its co-founders – Tadeusz Wroński: ... *We gathered a team consisting of students from the Podgórze gymnasium and we played a match with the students of the 1st Gymnasium named after St. Anna (today's Nowodworek {one of Kraków's most highly ranked, ivy league high-schools}). We played on Błonia {a large green plot of land open to the public in Kraków} and we won 8: 1. It gave us impetus to found a club. A sport lover from Podgórze Rudolf Kropacz helped set up the club. We wanted the club to be called “Polonia” or “Krakus”, but such clubs had already once existed. It was agreed that the club would be called the Korona Sports Club and was registered under that name²⁰.*

However, this name could not be registered, as it was reserved for the “Polonia Kraków” club existing since 1912.

There was another suggestion: ... “Korona” [Eng. Crown]. *Because the name “Podgórze” was taken by others, those from Zabłocie, so for us, from ul. Kottłataj, there was nothing else but to take the name of the dropped “crown” (our Korona [Eng. Crown] had nothing to do with the imperial one)²¹.*

On April 18, 1920, footballers still performed under the name the “Polonia” Sports Club”, playing a match with the Railway Sports Club “Olsza” Kraków, which dates back to 1920. The first “spring season of the club” began with training on April 4, 1920, and two weeks later, playing a match with K.K.S. “Olsza”. The match ended with a score of 0:4, which was rather predictable after such a short time of team training. No rematch was held.

On April 22, 1920, for the emerging new football formation, the name “Korona” Sports Club was proposed. Creating the unit, a draft of the new Statute was written. Its writing was modelled on the statute of K.S.

“Podgórze”, existing since 1913. The immaturity associated with organisational activities should be blamed on the young age of the organisation's founders. Rudolf Lowas was only 17 years old at the time. As it appears in the record of the Protocol Book: *During non-seasonal moments, i.e. up to April 4, 1920, the statute was developed, which did not come into force in the first version. With the consent of the board, the spring season was opened on April 4 (1920).*

The necessity of registering and belonging to the POZPN club forced a change of the name proposed by the founders. As recorded during the meeting on April 26, 1920, reconstructed after 11 years and signed in pencil by Rudolf Lowas:

... *On April 22 (1920), six members of the club were at the meeting with Włocławek, secretary of the “Podgórze” Sports Club. “Podgórze”. The result of the meeting was that our club changed its name to K.S. “Korona” and signed up for POZPN²².*

Lowas, being a co-founder of the organisation, accepted these events and signed the report document years later. However, it is difficult to determine from the available documents whether this record was not a certain simplification of the more complex process of creating a club on the basis of an existing football team.

The birth of the club colours was a coincidence *The first president Karol Jachimczak donated 12 old military shirts altered by my sister. The club did not have shirts, so my mother, from military shirts (12 military shirts donated by Karol Jachimczak – author's comment²³), made shirts, decorating them with red collars. Such shirts were also worn by those who put up posters, which is why the first players of K.S. Korona were called ‘posterers’. So we changed the shirts to green, which were used by our Club for many years²⁴.*

Tadeusz Mitusiński described the rules of the amateur team at the time: *It was our referee who used 1 penalty for 3 corners, which gave great opportunities ... And at the same time, the wingers were unchanging and it was not allowed to play in bordses. Today it's allowed – and that's why it's bad!²⁵.*

The fate of the young team was again carried away by the vortex of history and its activity was suspended during the Polish-Bolshevik war. The decision regarding temporary cessation of sports activities is mentioned by the lapidary report of the meeting from July 11, 1920 ... *go help endangered homeland - the whole K.S. Korona joins the army – the season was cancelled until further notice²⁶.*

The initiated legislative steps were returned to after the end of war actions. Again, young people tried to

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p.b.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p.b.

²⁰ Statement by Tadeusz Wroński, interview for Jerzy Berezowski on 15 October 1994 in Kraków.

²¹ Statement by Kazimierz Rusinek - one of the founding fathers of “Korona” and its long-time patron.

²² Meeting on 26 April, *Księga protokołów KS “Korona”* [Eng. KS “Korona” Book of Protocols], p. 3 (protocols signed by Lowas in pencil).

²³ Tadeusz Mitusiński, *Pół wieku ...* [Eng. Half a Century ...], *op. cit.*

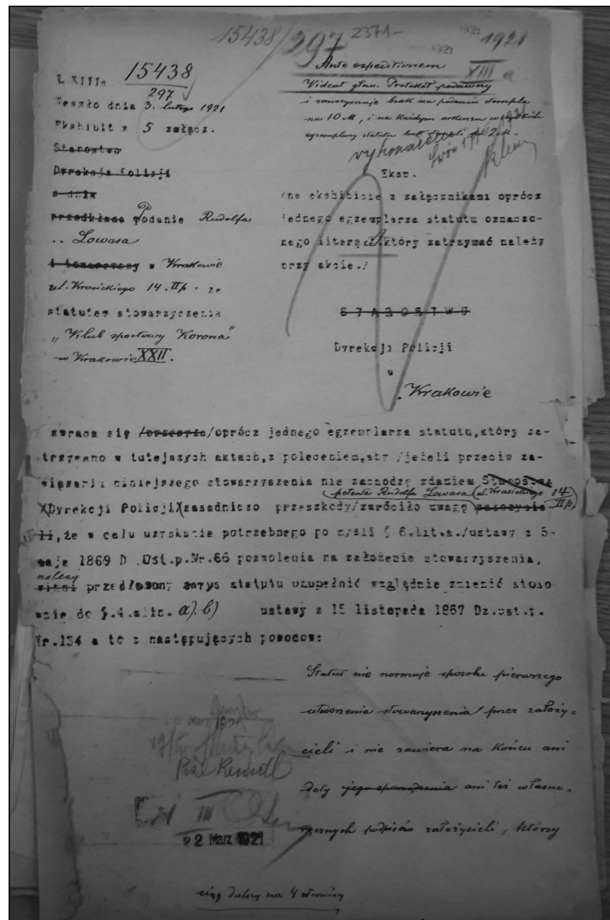
²⁴ Statement by Tadeusz Wroński, interview for Jerzy Berezowski, 15 October, 1994 in Kraków.

²⁵ Tadeusz Mitusiński, *Pół wieku ...* [Eng. Half a Century ...], *op. cit.*

²⁶ Meeting on 11 July, 1920. *Księga protokołów K.S. “Korona”* [Eng. K.S. “Korona” Book of Protocols], p. 8.

create a new, correct document, but the lack of experience meant that they encountered a legislative problem on part of the authorities and the police. Rudolf Lowas submitted the following document: Letter L XIII 15438 February 2, 1921 – Statute with 5 annexes – among them: Application by Rudolf Lowas in Krakow ul. Krakowskiego 14. II floor, In the ideals of the heads. Register protocol.

K.S. "Korona" Statute from 1921:



K.S. "Korona" Statute from 1921.

Source: National Archives in Kraków. Korona Sports Club 1921. Record Unit 29/204/0/11/162

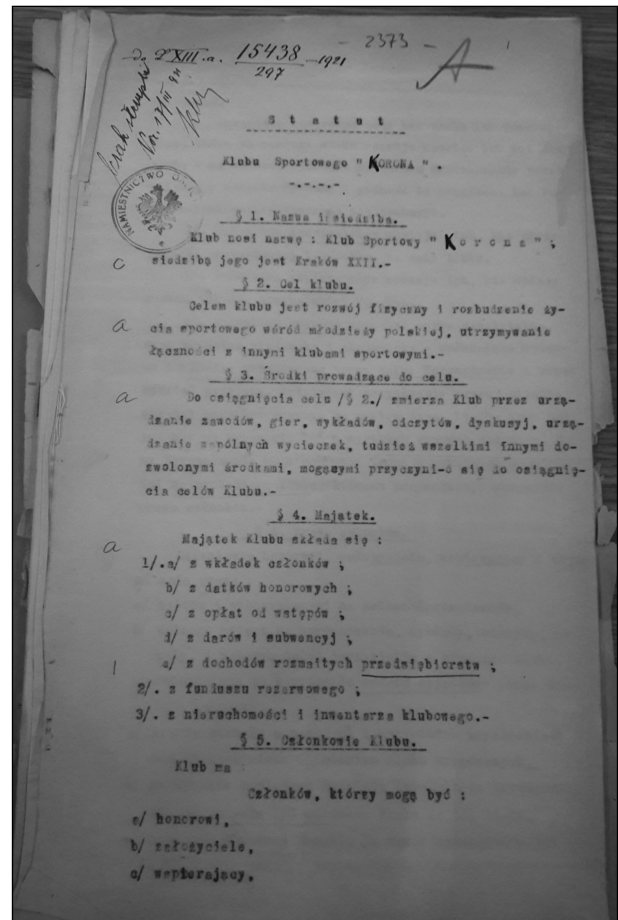
The office's comments on the document highlighted a number of shortcomings: *The statute does not regulate how the founders first formed the association and does not include at the end neither the date nor signatures of the founders who ...* [continued on page 4 – no page], reply date March 22, 1921. And here is a gap in the club's documentation. There is no document in the archives showing the further legislative process. Ultimately, the name of the club included in the application on the statute: Statute of the "Korona" association sports club in Kraków XXII. On a copy of the statute – as the most important shortcoming – the lack of a stamp is indicated and not substantive errors related to the declared activity of the organisation. The documents in the archives do

not allow to determine whether and to what extent the indicated remarks were followed.

In the memoirs of T. Mitusiński, the issue of the club IDs appears:

... And when Rudek Lowas put together the first (shoddy) IDs – the club became an organisation that was 'not too shabby' – as assessed by athletic Kasprzyk Teofil²⁷.

However, it is difficult to find out when this event took place because the author of the memoirs, when



K.S. "Korona" Statute from 1921, title page

Source: as above

writing about the work done by the printer (i.e. the adult R. Lowas), does not cite any date.

A return to sports activities showed another phenomenon – contracts related to commitment to play on the team for several years: February 13, 1921 – players signed a declaration of loyalty to their own club: *I commit to playing in the "Korona" sports Club for ... years ...*

The next step towards continuing the club's activity was the proposal to merge (the existing unit) with K.S. "Podgórze". The pretext for that was the meeting of the Liquidation Committee on 24 June, 1922 during which

²⁷ Tadeusz Mitusiński, memoirs, *Pół wieku ...* [Eng. Half a Century...], *op. cit.*

However, the 'sokolian' magazines, unfavourable towards Jewish subjects, did not note this fact. The further development of the section was dynamic. Up until 1939, "Korona", apart from football (1919), created the following sport sections: track-and-field (1923), women's and men's gymnastics (1923), and shooting and bowling, which is mentioned by Kazimierz Rusinek³⁴.

This event may have drawn attention to the desire to be interested in other sports disciplines in Podgórze and not only in football. This may be an abuse, but it is difficult to exclude the relationship between the starts of track-and-field athletes and the creation of new sports sections of K.S. "Korona" in the future.

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The club's further fate was also turbulent. In the early years of existence, the name of the club was subject to modification, functioning as: 1919 – the "Polonia" Sports Club, 1920 – the "Korona" Sports Club, and in 1923 – the "Korona" Sokół Sports Club. The end of World War 2 also brought changes to the names, which were: in 1945 – the "Korona" Sports Club; 1948 – the "Włóknierz–Korona" Sports Club; 1957 – the "Korona" Outdoor Sports Club, and in 1962 – the "Korona" Sports Club.

In 1939, the Sokół building was destroyed. On July 31, 1947, officers of the Security Office withdrew the organisation's permission to operate. The "Sokół" Gymnastics Society ceased to exist³⁵.

A paradox may be the intertwining of the fate of K.S. "Korona" and T.G. "Sokół". These fates are not indifferent to the history of Polish 'sokoliry'. Wearing the name of the Sokół "Korona" Sports Club for many years, it became an involuntary continuator of its legacy in the field of gymnastics, in the broad sense.

Further history is the development of the sports infrastructure of the so-called "sports complex" initiated by a former footballer and later a politician - Kazimierz Rusinek. Tadeusz Wroński recalled the further fate of "Korona": *It was only after the war that thanks to Kazimierz Rusinek, later deputy minister, Aleksander Witkowski, Marian Plebańczyk and many other activists, the "Korona" sports centre was established. Although the famous Dr. Bolesław Drobner wanted to see a hospital in the place of "Korona" in Podgórze, Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz convinced MP Drobner that a sports facility is needed in the labour district of Podgórze ...*³⁶

³⁴ *Pół wieku Klubu Sportowego „Korona”* [Eng. Half a Century of the "Korona" Sports Club], Kraków 1970.

³⁵ *Order of the German authorities regarding eradication of sports organisations from 23 July, 1940 and its consequences for Polish sports organisations in Kraków* [in:] S. Chemicz, *Sport w Krakowie w latach 1939-1945* [Eng. Sport in Kraków in the Years 1939-1945], Kraków 2003, p. 32.

³⁶ *70 lat KS "Korona" Kraków 1919 – 1989* [Eng. 70 Years of KS "Korona" Kraków 1919-1989], (P. Płatek, Z. Ringer), Kraków 1989.

Finally, in 1960, a new facility of the Sports Complex "Korona" was commissioned and in 1966, a 25-m swimming pool was opened on W. Pstrowski Street (currently Kalwaryjska) in Kraków. Thanks to them, it was possible to further develop the section. Individual sport sections over the past 100 years have been presented in the anniversary album 100 Years of K.S. Korona Kraków 1919-2019³⁷.

A reminder of the distant fate of the "Korona" Sports Club on the 100th anniversary of its creation allows to understand its genesis. Unfortunately, the lack of original documents in the archives is an unsolved problem regarding the first registration of this meritorious club in Kraków. The preserved documents, with a few exceptions, are secondary sources, thus the beginnings of the formal activity of the "Korona" Sports Club in Kraków are still an open issue.

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³⁷ *100 lat KS "Korona" Kraków 1919-2019* [100 Years of KS "Korona" Kraków 1919-2019], Kraków 2019.

