

Czech and Polish Table Tennis Players of Jewish Origin in International Competition (1926-1957)

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ABSTRACT

The beginnings of the 18th century marked the birth of Jewish sport. The most famous athletes of those days were boxers, such as I. Bitton, S. Eklias, B. Aaron, D. Mendoga. Popular sports of this minority group included athletics, fencing and swimming. One of the first sport organizations was the gymnastic society Judische Turnverein Bar Kocha (Berlin – 1896).

Ping-pong as a new game in Europe developed at the turn of the 20th century. Sport and organizational activities in England were covered by two associations: the Ping Pong Association and the Table Tennis Association; they differed, for example, in the regulations used for the game. In 1902, *Czeski Sport* (a Czech Sport magazine) and *Kurier Warszawski* (Warsaw's Courier magazine) published first information about this game. In Czech Republic, Ping-pong became popular as early as the first stage of development of this sport worldwide, in 1900-1907. This was confirmed by the Ping-pong clubs and sport competitions. In Poland, the first Ping-pong sections were established in the period 1925-1930. Czechs made their debut in the world championships in London (1926). Poles played for the first time as late as in the 8th world championships in Paris (1933). Competition for individual titles of Czech champions was started in 1927 (Prague) and in 1933 in Poland (Lviv).

In the 1930s, Czechs employed an instructor of Jewish descent from Hungary, Istvan Kelen (world champion in the 1929 mixed games, studied in Prague). He contributed to the medal-winning success of Stanislaw Kolar at the world championships. Jewish players who made history in world table tennis included Trute Kleinowa (Makkabi Brno) – world champion in 1935-1937, who survived imprisonment in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration camp, Alojzy Ehrlich (Hasmonea Lwów), the three-time world vice-champion (1936, 1937, 1939), also survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Ivan Andreadis (Sparta Praga), nine-time world champion, who was interned during World War II (camp in Kleinstein near Krapkowice).

Table tennis was a sport discipline that was successfully played by female and male players of Jewish origins. They made powerful representations of Austria, Hungary, Romania and Czech Republic and provided the foundation of organizationally strong national federations.

KEYWORDS

Jews, history of physical culture, table tennis

Introduction

The first half of the 20th century brought entirely different political and social conditions to Jews in Czechoslovakia and in Poland. The growth of Jewish society was connected with the establishment of a number of organizations, institutions, parties, and associations with a view to serve the needs of the whole society. Importance was also gained by organizations that dealt with, for example, problems in the area of sports (Tomaszewski, Żbikowski 2001, p. 159). Social status typical of the interwar period led the Jewish minority to considerable successes in world sport rivalries.

The goal of the present paper is to present the world sport and organizational output of Czech and Polish Jews in table tennis. As a result of analyzing the literature and archives, medals awarded in international competition during those years were predominantly won by inhabitants of countries in Central Europe, including Hungarians, Austrians, Czechs, and Poles. They were mainly athletes of Jewish origin. The chronological range of the paper encompasses the years 1926-1957. The year 1926 marked the first organized single world championships in London, whereas the year 1957 was the last in which Ivan Andreadis won a medal in the world championships.

1. Jewish sport at the turn of the 20th century

Jewish sport dates back to the 18th century. Pioneers in this area include boxers such as Barney Aaron, Samuel Eklias, Issac Bitton, and the Belasco brothers (Siegman 2005, p. xxvii, *Encyklopedia Judaica* 1972, pp. 291-318, Pięta 2009, p.23). An outstanding sportsman was Daniel Mendoga, the boxing champion (1792-1795) from England.

The second half of the 19th century saw Jewish world sport elite such as Liman Pike (baseball), Lon Myers (track and field), and Louis Rubinstein (figure skating). In the 20th century, the most successful Jews included boxers, who won nearly 20 medals in the Olympic Games during the interwar period. A very popular sport of those days was fencing (with 18 Olympic medal winners), track and field (Irena Kirszenstein-Szewińska, the 7-time medal-winner in the Olympic Games in Tokyo, Mexico, and Munich) (Tuszyński, Kurzyński 2007, pp. 513-515). The most prominent sportsman of Jewish origin, and winner of 7 gold medals in the Olympics Games, was Mark Spitz (Michalik 1993, p. 658). Olympic medals were also won by gymnasts, wrestlers, weightlifters, judokas, sailors, rowers, canoeists, and representatives of winter sports. From 1896 to 2000 (Siegman 2005, p. 29, Pięta 2009, pp. 23-24), Jewish competitors won over 300 medals in total, including 135 gold medals in the Olympic Games and world championships.

In 1896 a gymnast association in Berlin, Bar Kocha, was established and the first Jewish Gymnastics Day was instituted in Basle (1903) (Pięta 2008, p. 18). During the interwar period in Europe, Jewish Sports Clubs such as Hakoah Vienna, Bar Kochba in Berlin, Vivo es Athletikai Budapest, "Hagibor" Prague, and Makkabi Warsaw were among the best.

Makkabi World Union was also established in 1921. They organized the first Maccabiah Games (1932). Three hundred sportsmen from 18 countries participated in that event (Gan 2005)¹. Other Maccabiah Games took place in 1935, 1950, 1953, and 1957. The Winter Maccabiah Games were started in Zakopane (1933). In the 1930s, manifestations of anti-Semitism escalated throughout Europe. The period of World War II was characterized by numerous executions of sportsmen in ghettos and extermination camps (Bogusz 2007, p. 434). Jewish sportsmen took part in the resistance movements in Europe and North Africa. After the war, only few returned to sports life and organization.

¹ The second Maccabiah Games had 1,350 players from 28 countries.

2. Genesis of table tennis

Table tennis was known as early as in the 18th century (Uzorinac 2001, p. vi). It became popular at the turn of the 20th century. In 1890, traditional tennis was adapted to be played on a table using simulated equipment. This game was first patented by an Englishman named David Foster. Rackets with an elliptical shape and long wooden handles appeared; over the course of time, the wooden surface was replaced with greaseproof paper. Commercially made table sets emerged, including Gossima (England), Whiff-Whaff (USA), Pom-Pom, Pim-Pam (France), Indoor Tennis, Ping-Pong (England), Powiew Waff, Tennis Parlour, Królewska gra, Salon de tenis. The first regulations for the game were published in 1884 (Gurney 1990). The first games were played until 10, 20, 50, and 100 points were scored. The service was totally arbitrary. In 1900, the celluloid ball was first presented (replacing old rubber and cork balls), and was brought to the United States to Europe by an English engineer, James Gibb². Ping-pong salons emerged in Europe. In Poland, table tennis was first mentioned in 1902 in the *Kurier Warszawski*, a Polish daily newspaper. It said, in the world news: "Ping-pong, a new indoor game has emerged, of course in England, the homeland of any sport, and has become extremely popular in Paris. As five-o'clock tea, ping-pong is being now the order of the day for those who have time and money..." The same year, the Czech 'Sport a hry' said that table tennis was noticed by tennis players (Slobodzian 2005, p. 6). A breakthrough date in evolution of table tennis was marked by the application of a rubber surface (1902) by E.C. Good³.

In England (1900), two unions were established: the Ping-Pong Association (PPA) and the Table Tennis Association (TTA). The associations differed in the method of interpretation of service. TTA proposed direct service to the opponent's half (similar to tennis), whereas PPA opted for a service that began with serving from a player's half (Montagu 1924, pp. 5-6).

In 1898, the first show matches were played in England, while other tournaments took place in Vienna (1901), Budapest (1902), Prague (1903), Sweden (1906), and Japan (1905-1910). In 1902, first national federation was established in England (England Table Tennis Association) (Pięta 2008, p. 20), and England championships were played in London's aquarium. A number of handbooks with the principles and rules of the game were published in England and the US: A. Parker: *Ping-Pong*; W. Colley: *A Little Book Ping Pong Verse*; C.G. Eames: *A.B.C. of Table Tennis*, or the *Official Handbook of the Table Tennis Association*.

The period of fascination with the game ended in the first decade of the 1900s. Former founders of the Ping-Pong Association, J. Payne, P. Bromfield, F. Carris, P. Warden, and I. Montagu (of Jewish origin), reactivated this association in 1922 (Montagu 1924, pp. 8-9). The second stage in the development of world table tennis began when England and Wales championships, as well as friendly matches between Cambridge and Oxford Universities, were played.

During the second International championships (16 January 1926) in Berlin, Germany, initiated by a group comprised of Georg Lehmann (the president of the German Table Tennis Association), Ivor Montagu (the president of the English Table Tennis Federation), Georg Ross, G.J. Pope, and Hungarians Ronald Jakobi and Zoltan Mechlovits (both of Jewish origin), the president of Czech Republic's association, Zdenek Heyduszek and Austrians Paul Flussman (of Jewish origin) and the aforementioned G. Lehmann decided to convene the first Table Tennis Congress (12 December 1926). The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) organized the first world championships (Schafer et al. 2000, p. 15).

² James Gibb (1853-1930) established a factory that manufactured ping-pong balls in England. Most of the balls were manufactured from 1899 through 1904 (Uzorinac 2001).

³ Using these guidelines, E. Good defeated England's master, Parker, 50:3. J. Jagues and Son: *Ping-pong*, England 1900, A. Golsworthy: *Ping-pong People*, England 1901, *Handbook of the Ping-Pong Association*, England 1902.

3. Organizational activity of Jews for development of world table tennis (1926-1957)

National federations emerged in England and Wales (reactivated in 1922) (Montagu 1924), Austria, Ireland (1923) (Uzorinac 2001, p. 385), Hungary (1924)⁴, Czechoslovakia (*40 let...* 1965), Germany (1925) (Schafer et al. 2000, p. 15), Sweden (1926) (Uzorinac 2001, p. 385), France, Denmark, and Romania (1927). Next, associations were established in Yugoslavia and Latvia (1928). In the Netherlands and Norway, national federations were founded in 1930 as well as in Poland (Pięta 2008), Switzerland, Belgium, and Scotland. Ping-pong on the Asian continent appeared in Japan (1902), China (1901), and India (1907) (Uzorinac 2001). In 1930, the American Ping-Pong Association was established (Boggan 1999).

The originator of the Congress was the president of English Table Tennis Association (ETTA), Ivor Montagu (Uzorinac 2001, 22-25, Siegman 2005, p. 170, *Handbook ITTF 1997/1998*, p. 117)⁵, and the signatories of the establishment (1926) included England, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, India (outside Europe), Germany, Sweden, Wales, and Hungary (Gross 2009, p. 7, Kulczycki 1998, p. 14, Slobodzian 2005, p. 9). During the founding congress, two commissions were called into existence: the equipment commission (C.H. Hallett – Wales, W.J. Pope – England, J. Gerke – Czechoslovakia) and the commission for the principles and rules of the game (J. Pick – Austria and activists of Jewish origin, Z. Mechlovits – Hungary, and I. Montagu - England) (The London Table Tennis Congress 1926). The official journals were also approved: *Table Tennis* (Penarth), *Tennis and Golf* (Berlin), *Idotz Blada* (Stockholm), and *Stahn* (Prague). The first executive committee was then appointed for the ITTK. The responsibilities of the first president of the ITTF were entrusted to I. Montagu of England (Uzorinac 2001, p. xii). In the period from 1920 to 1950, world table tennis was dominated by Europe, especially Hungary. When moment spongy rackets were developed (1950), the period of supremacy of Asian table tennis players began. The first world championships played outside of Europe were in Bombay (India, 1952). The Chinese made their world championship debut in 1953, and their competitor, Rong Guotuan, was the first world champion (Dortmund – 1959) among all sports disciplines. In 1954, the general meeting of ITTK renewed their effort to include table tennis in the Olympic Games. Two years later (Tokyo, 1956), an Asian female player, T. Okawa (Japan), became the first world Olympic champion. In 1950-1955, six gold medals in singles play were won by a Romanian competitor, Angelica Adelstein-Rozeanu (of Jewish origin). Sports competitions were also joined by the Soviet Union (1958). During the 29th ITTF Congress (Stockholm, 1967), Ivor Montagu resigned from his chair of the president (Eckert 1954, p. 15).

The Jewish sport community had a substantial impact on the evolution of table tennis in the 1920s. In Central Europe (Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland) ping-pong was one of the most popular games. Initially, there was lack of balls and rackets. Rackets were made of plywood and the wood was glued to sandpaper or rubber padding. In 1928 in Poland, a racket cost 1 zloty and a ball cost 30 groszy (*Cennik Centralnej Kooperacji Dostaw Związku Harcerstwa Polskiego* 1935), whereas table tennis was 35 zlotys. In Czechoslovakia, 'Madziarka' or 'Slezingerówka' were 20 Czechoslovak

⁴ The association was established by 12 clubs.

⁵ Ivor Goldsmid Samuel Montagu, third child of Ludwig Samuel, the 2nd baron Swaythiling and Gladys Goldsmid Lady Montagu. Born on 23 April 1904 in London, Montagu finished Westminster School, studied botany and zoology Kings College, Cambridge (Masters degree). At the age of 18 (1922) he established ETTA (English Table Tennis Association) and was its first president (1922-1929). The next honor of the presidency he received in 1932/1933, 1936-1958 and then until 1966. He contributed to the establishment of world table tennis federation (ITTF) in 1926. Ivor Montagu was president of the ITTF for 41 years (1926-1967). The number of ITTF members rose from 4 to 160 countries within this period. In 1925, he established the first film club (London Film Society). He was also a film producer, wrote screenplays, reviewed films about the civil war in Spain, nature films, as well as thrillers and films about table tennis. He was a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and then the Communist Party of Great Britain. In 1927, he secretly married Helsten Eileen, a cobbler's daughter. He wrote two books: *Table Tennis Today* (1926) and *Table Tennis* (1936) and *Film World, Eisentein in Hollywood*; died on 5th November 1984 in London. Ivor Montagu was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize (1959) for his social and professional accomplishments and was recorded in the International Table Tennis Hall of Fame (1995).

korunas; the balls were around 80 haliers. Brand balls, such as 'Tema', 'Malecek', 'Kolar', and 'Kettnerowa', were expensive, about 2 korunas (Slobodzian 2005, p. 20). The Jews in Poland manufactured ping-pong balls with a diameter of 3cm and weight of 3g (Częstochowa & Lwów) (Jodłowski 1936, pp. 8-9). The principles and rules of the game were described by I. Montagu in *Table Tennis To-day* (1924), *Table Tennis* (1937), *Table Tennis* (1947), I. Kelen *Success at Table Tennis* (1936), and V. Barna *Table Tennis* (1949).

During the Maccabiah Games in Prague in 1933 the gold medal was won by A. Ehrlich and the silver medal went to Albert Bergmann (Czech Republic). This success was repeated in doubles with H. Kuehl. The Maccabiah Games have been played since 1929. Table tennis was introduced to the agenda in 1950. The first (1950) and the second (1953) winner in London was Bolgar Anton from Sweden⁶. The winners also included Jaff Ingner (1957). It is also remarkable that table tennis players popularized this sport in Europe, South America, and Australia.

3.1. English Table Tennis Association

The rivalry for the influence on the development of the game was between the two associations: Ping-Pong Association and Table Tennis Association. In 1921, P. Bromfield and J.J. Payne modified the rules of the game and initiated the reactivation of the national federation and first England championships (*Raz, Dwa, Trzy* 1938). London was also a host city for the first world championships (1926). In 1929, Fred Perry (b. 1909) won gold medal in singles, bronze in the doubles and teams. In the press, this outstanding athlete protested decidedly against the exclusion of Daniel Prenn (German player of Jewish origin) from the German national team. After World War II the English national team was represented by, for example, R. Bergmann and V. Barna.

3.2. Hungarian Table Tennis Association

The first championships at the national level took place in 1905 (won by Bela Redlich). Before World War I, the champions were Jewish: Rolad Jacobi (1909, 1910) and Zoltan Mechlovits (1911) (Szabo 1993). From 1910 to 1911, R. Jacobi and Z. Mechlovits became Hungarian champions in doubles. At the moment of the establishment of the national association (1924), after the first year of the activity, singles were renewed and team events were initiated (the Matyasfoldi team won). By 1940, the Jews won 58 gold medals in Hungarian championships (Szentgyorgyi 2004). Elite Hungarian players represented Magyar Testgyakorlok Kore (Z. Meclovits – 1926, 1927), Nemzeti Sport Club (L. Bellak – 1928), Magyar Testgyakorlok Kore (V. Barna, Z. Mechlovits, M. Szabados - 1929, 1930, 1932), Budapest Sport Egyesulet (I. Kelen – 1931) and, in the following years (1934-1935), championships were won by the Duna Sport Club (V. Barna, M. Szabados). From 1926 to 1939, Hungarian Jews won 44 gold medals in world championships (singles, doubles, and mixed events) and 9 team gold medals⁷. These medals were won by R. Jacobi, a lawyer by profession, who worked in ITTF regulation committees and was the first champion in singles and doubles play, and Z. Mechlovits, a world champion many times over. The person of merit to the ITTF, he worked in ranking and judging committee (Pięta 2009, p. 28). L. Bellak, a left-handed ping-pong player, played for Hungary and the US. He was a seven-time world champion. M. Szabados was a 15-time world champion. V. Barna (1911-1972) was the most prominent worldwide table tennis player in the 20th century. He won 41 gold medals in world championships, including five in singles play. World class was also reached by (with 21 gold medals in world championships) a female player, Annus Sipos (1908-1988). Medals were also won by: Dora Beregi, Magda Gal, Istvan Boros, Lajos Dawid, Erno Foldi, Sandor Glancz, Tabor Hazi, and Daniel Peciś⁸.

⁶ Olympics Museum, Multi-events section: a book about Maccabiah games before World War II.

⁷ W. Pięta's own collection: Zestawienia statystyczne Mistrzostw Świata w latach 1926-2008.

⁸ Materials sent to the author by Robert Szentgyorgyi on 10 May 2010.

3.3. Austrian Table Tennis Association

The sport emerged in 1901. Those days, the first Vienna Cup tournament was played and won by E. Shires (England) and F. Pietrzikowsky (Austria). The game was promoted during breaks for tea. After the first decade of the 20th century, it was almost forgotten. Through the initiative of E.D. Stein, the game was reactivated in Vienna (1923). A network of the first ping-pong clubs developed dynamically. AC Baden was an organizer of the world championships in January 1933. A similar club was established in Vienna by Paul Fluszmann (a man of Jewish origin). He coached, among others, Richard Bergman (*Chwila* 1937), Karl Fischer, Jakob Tartakower, and Ferry Weiss. The existing association, which covered 11 clubs and nearly 100 players, was transformed into the Austrian Table Tennis Association (OTTV). The association participated during the initiation of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF)⁹. Within 12 years (until 1938), 5,000 players played in Austria. Most of them played in Jewish Hakoah sports clubs. The most prominent tennis players included Richard Bergmann and Alfred Liebster. In 1938, Austria was incorporated into the Third Reich. The activists (Henry Nitschmann) and the sportsmen of Jewish origin were entirely devoid of chances to take part in sport competitions and training. R. Bergmann, for example, left the country.

3.4. German Table Tennis Association

Traditions of the German game of ping-pong date back to the beginnings of the 20th century, when the first ping-pong café was opened. The association in 1925 was co-created by Georg Lehmann and Fritz Zinn. The activists of Jewish origins, who were forced to resign from being active in German Table Tennis Federation (DTTB) for political reasons (1933), were Herbert Caro and its bursar, Fritz Zinn (Schafer et al. 2000, p. 16). In 1933, a German representative of tennis and table tennis, Daniel Prenn (Davis Cup), fled to England because of being Jewish. He won the bronze in the German championships in 1926. On the German national team, he played in the 1926 world championships together with H.G. Lindenstaedt and C. Gerstman (Schafer et al. 2000, p. 37)¹⁰. Germans won seventh place. D. Prenn (singles) was classified as 32nd; in doubles, he advanced to the quarterfinals. Switzerland was represented in 1930-1933 by Heinz Nickelburg.

3.5. American Table Tennis Association

In the 1920s and 1930s, ping-pong developed dynamically in the United States. In 1929, the regulations imposed the 21-point game (previously counted similarly to tennis) (Boggan 1999). The American Ping-Pong Association (APA) was established in 1930, and, three years later, the American Amateur Table Tennis Federation and National Table Tennis Federation also came into being. Eventually, these organizations supported the establishment of the American Table Tennis Association (1935). During one of the first official tournaments in New York (the Metropolitan Ping-Pong Open Championship), the final was played by Marcus Schussheim¹¹, a player of Jewish origin, and Sam Lieblich, a former Lviv competitor. The first official US championships in singles play took place from 25-28 March 1931 in the Pennsylvania Hotel in New York (participants had to pay a one dollar entrance fee). Seven hundred competitors played on 16 tables, and were watched by 1000 spectators. These historical competitions were won by M. Schussheim (during a final with Ed Svigals with a 3:0 score). Large financial and organizational support for these champions came from Parker Brothers, an

⁹ W. Pieta's own collection. Notatki z historii powołania federacji tenisa stołowego w Europie.

¹⁰ D. Prenn was born on 7 September 1904 in Vilnius, graduated from the University of Technology, Ph.D. in technical sciences. Died in Berlin on the 3 September 1991.

¹¹ Marcus Sussheim, born on 4 August 1912, competitor in Boys Club, New York; he changed his name to Mark Matthews in 1936. He started trainings at the age of 7 in the East Side Boys Club. Membership in this club was then 10 cents

equipment manufacturer¹². This game was advertised in newspapers printed in New York. In 1931, the general public saw a ranking of the best ping-pong players in America. The first 20 places were taken by sportsmen of Jewish origin: M. Schussheim (1), S.Lieblich (4) – Hakoah New York, Preminger (8) – Hakoah New York, Goldberg (13) – Boys Club New York, V. Schaffzin (14) Boys New York, A. Zeller (19) – Hakoah New York, H. Ribanowitz (20) – Hakoah New York (Boggan 1999). The top tennis female players of this period were sisters, Thelma Thall and Lech Thall-Neuberger (gold medalist in world championships in 1956). In her multi-year career (1947-1974), Lech Thall-Neuberger won 29 titles, including nine in singles play. In 1971, she participated in the historical ‘ping-pong diplomacy’ in China¹³. A triple US champion in singles play was Bernie Bukiet, a former player in Makkabi Sosnowiec and Polish vice-champion in singles play from 1938, who represented Poland (Pieta 2008, p. 44).

3.6 Romanian Table Tennis Association

The first matches were played in 1926 in Oradea, Cluj, and Arad. In 1934 Romania became a full-fledged member of the ITTF. Their debut in world championships was reported in 1936 (Prague), when Romanians made history in world table tennis. Farkas Paneth and A. Ehrlich fought for the first ball in a set lasting 132 minutes. Austrians with Romanians fought for the title of world champion with Romanians (Marin-Goldberger, Paneth, and Vladone) for 12 hours, whereas Marin-Goldberger with Michel Hagenauer played a match for 7.5 hours (from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm) (Eckert 1954, pp. 49-50). In this period, the international stage saw Angelika Adelstein, who at the age of 15 won the Romanian championships. In Cairo (1939), she won a team bronze medal. During the World War II (1940), international Romanian championships were organized and in the women’s match with world champions, Germans (the Germans won 3:2). In 1953, Romania organized the 20th world championships, when an English female player, Angelika Adelstein-Rozeanu, was a three-time world champion (Banus 1957).

3.7. Israeli Table Tennis Association

This association came into being in 1930 (Haifa). The first Israel championships (1937) were won by Shimcha Finkelstein, who fought in the final with Mordecai Finberg (Cwirza 1988). Palestine, as a region, made its debut in the world championships in Wembley, England, in 1938, represented only by S. Finkelstein¹⁴. A year later, in Cairo, the women won fifth place (I. Diennes, E. Segal), whereas the men (S. Finkelstein, M. Igle, S. Weissfesch) ended their competition with 10th place¹⁵. After World War II, the Israelis took part in the world championships as early as in 1947 (Prague). The representation was formed by table tennis players of Polish origin (S.Finkelstein, M.Goloub, I.Rojzen, and S.Schiff), who also played in 1948, 1950, 1951, 1954, 1963, 1965, and 1967. They were included in the European Federation during the 17th Congress of the European Table Tennis Union (ETTU) in Gothenburg (1990).

¹² Parkers Brothers, the owner of author’s rights, registered the name Ping-Pong in the US Patent Office on 7 August 1928.

¹³ L.H. Neuberger, born 17 December 1919 in Columbus, nicknamed Miss Ping. Selected in 1980 to the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

¹⁴ Shimcha Finkelstein, born in 1917 in Warsaw, started training in Makkabi Warsaw. Polish team champion (Hasmonaea Warsaw) and singles champion (1937). He fled in May 1937 via Romania to Palestine. He played seven times in world championships (1936, 1937 - for Poland; 1938, 1939, 1947, 1951, 1954 - for Israel). His greatest achievement was to take fifth place in doubles play (1939) in the world championships. Finkelstein represented Poland in 17 matches (winning 21 times); a champion for Israel many times over, won with E. Leipnik in III Maccabiah Games (1950). He finished his sports career at the age of 50. He had three children and died at the age of 70.

¹⁵ W. Pieta’s own collection: Zestawienia statystyczne mistrzostw świata (1926-2008).

4. Sports and Organizational Contribution of Czech and Polish Table Tennis from 1926 to 1957

In the history of world table tennis, Czechoslovakia and Poland have letters engraved in gold. In the area of the former Austria-Hungary, the game of ping-pong settled in the first period of the years 1900-1907, whereas in Poland this sport discipline was popular in the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, Czechoslovakia was a signatory to the establishment of the ITTF (1926), whereas Poland was included in this association as late as 1933. Czech players took part in the first world championships (1926), whereas Poles participated first in the eight world championships (1933). The first medal in team world championships was won by the Czechs in 1930, whereas players from Poland won their first medal in 1935. Czechoslovakia had its representative, Z. Heydusek, in the authorities of the ITTF from 1926. In the period analyzed in this study, they organized the world championships twice (1932, 1936). They were better in manufacturing sport equipment. Czech table tennis players participated in all 23 world championships (1926-1957) with the exception of 1952 (Bombay). Poles played in seven world championships (1933, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1950, 1957). The Jewish minority had a markedly higher impact on the development of table tennis in Poland. Many outstanding ping-pong players did not survive the occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany. During World War II, regular matches were played in the Upper Silesia region, the Protectorate of Bohemia, Moravia, and the Slovak Republic.

4.1. Czechoslovakian Table Tennis Association

The first ping-pong cafés in Prague began operating during the first years of the 20th century. In the 1920s, dynamic growth of table tennis was observed in Czechoslovakia. Players trained in LTC Praha, I.CLTK, German DEHG, A Sparta, SK Vitkovice, SK Viktorie Vinohrady, PPC Studentcky domom, Victoria Dejvice, SK Husovice, and SK Slapanice. On 20 March 1925 in Prague, the first meeting to establish the Czech Table Tennis Federation took place. In April 1925, a tournament in Prague was played: 106 players fought for the title of the champion of the capital. The title was won by Zdenek Heydusek, who beat Meissner during the final by a score of 6:2, 6:3, 6:1. A substantial interest in table tennis in the First Czechoslovak Republic caused the Ceskoslovenska Tabletennisova Asociace (CsTTA) to be established on 7 November 1926 in the presence of delegates from 14 clubs (Slobodzian 2005, p. 8). A very dynamic activist and competitor was Zdenek Heyduszek. He participated in the first ITTF Congress. The most prominent female player of Jewish origin was Traute Kleinowa (Makkabi Brno). She was the medal winner in world championships in 1935, 1936, and 1937 (gold team medals in 1935, 1936) and in mixed events (with Mirosław Hamer) (Siegmann 2005, pp. 169-170¹⁶). T. Kleinowa won in the first Moravia and Silesia Championships (1937). Because of her origins, she was imprisoned with her husband, Jacob Inger, in the Terezin Ghetto, from which they were transported to Auschwitz. T. Kleinowa managed to survive the ordeal of the concentration camp and immigrated to Israel via the US. Czechoslovakian representatives also included Miklosz Fried and Pawel Lowy from Hagibor Prague. M. Fried represented Prague during the match with Brno (1925), when 10-person teams played. He represented Czechoslovakia in world championships in Budapest (fifth place) and in 1930, he won a bronze in team tournament (Berlin). The Slovakian champion in 1935 and 1936 was Albert Bergmann from Kosice (Wehle 1973, pp. 213-214).

Good table tennis players in eastern Slovakia also included Imre Salzer, Jindrich Heitler, and Erwin Koln (Korda), who won two medals in world team championships silver (Baden -1933) and bronze (Paris – 1933) (Slobodzian 2005, p. 229). The Czechoslovakian champion (1939) in doubles was P. Lowy (with Smark) and, in mixed games, with Vera Votrubcova. Iwan Andreadis, a Greek Jew born on 3 April 1924 in Prague had his first contact with ping-pong at the age of eight. At the age of 15, he won the Junior Czech Championships. During official team competitions he represented Sparta Praga together with Vana and Tereba. During World War II, he fought for the freedom of Czech and

¹⁶ W. Pieta's own collection: Zestawienia mistrzów świata w latach 1926-2008.

Moravia. In 1944, he was interned in Klein Stein (Kamionka near Krapkowice in Opole Silesia) (Uzorinac 2001, pp. 110-112). He dominated in the 1940s and 1950s. He won 12 Czechoslovakian champion titles (1939-1963) and nine gold medals in the world championships (four in doubles play and in team; one in mixed events). I. Andreadis was also an outstanding coach. Other good table tennis players of Jewish origin included Fleischner, Weinbaum, Emil and Josef Lowe, H. Weiss, Fritsch, Altschul, Tuma, Hirszt, Rubin, Weinbaumowa, and Stei. The activists of merit to the game include Kraus, Schalkenstein, and Iritzer¹⁷. It is also remarkable that training was organized in Hagibor Praga, TTC Celtic Praga, Makkabi Žilina, Makkabea Malacky, and Makkabi Brno.

4.2. Polish Table Tennis Association

The late 1920s saw dynamic development in the game of ping-pong. Golberg, Warsaw's champion, was supposed to make his debut during the world championships in Stockholm (1928); however, due to financial reasons, he did not get there. In the meantime, attempts were made to establish the Polish Table Tennis Association by activists from Ascola, a Jewish sports club (1927). Maksymilian Hornung (1929) from Kraków, who had a Ph.D. in the field of legal sciences (Jagiellonian University), was the president of Kraków's ping-pong association beginning in 1929. Eventually, on 1 November 1931 in Lodz, during the General Assembly, the statutes were approved (as developed by Stanisław Jacobsen). The association's headquarters were established and authorities were elected (Bogusz 2007, p. 8). The activists from the Jewish community had established the regional ping-pong unions in Kraków (1928), Lodz (1928), Lviv (1930), Warsaw (1931), Upper Silesia (1932), and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie (1933) (Pięta 2008, p. 44). Regional associations were found in Vilnius, Częstochowa, Lublin, Białystok, and Wrocław (1946). Polish Jewish club championships were played in 1930. Among the 15 Jewish sports clubs, the strongest teams were Hasmonea Lviv, Schockówna Makkabi Kraków, and H. Kuehl (Metal Lwów). The first Polish team championships were played in Lodz (1932), and won by Makkabi Lodz. In singles play in Lviv (1933), the first gold medal was won by Alojzy Ehrlich from Hasmonea Lviv and by Stockfiszówna (Gwiazda Warszawa). From 1932-1939, Polish sportsmen of Jewish origin won all Polish championships (teams and singles) (Pięta 2008, pp. 40-45). The Jews (A. Ehrlich, W. Loewenhertz, S. and H. Pohoryles, E. Schiff, S. Finkelstein, I. Rojzen, and Weinsztok) were the core of the Polish representation who won bronze medal during world championships (1935). Three titles of vice-champion of the world went to A. Ehrlich (1935, 1937, 1939)¹⁸. H. and S. Phoryles, participants in the world championships in Paris (1933) and London (1935), did not survive the occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany. S. Jacobson, vice-president for the PTTA organization for many years, died in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp.

Conclusions

Table tennis developed around the world in two stages. The first stage of development began at the turn of the 20th century (the first clubs and national structures of table tennis management were established). This period affected the demand for production of equipment for the game. During the second stage, focused primarily in Europe (1920-1950), the organization of national and international federations (ITTF) were initiated. Uniform rules for the game were adopted. The first world championships were also organized (1926). A lack of coaching staff was typical of those days. The majority of competitors were self-taught. A lack of professionally guided training schemes was complemented by show tournaments. The importance of the singles play, which promoted the game, was added by outstanding world-class ping-pong players (V. Barna, L. Bellak, R. Bergmann,

¹⁷ Zbiory: Vladimira Slobodziana (Czechy).

¹⁸ W. Pięta's own collection : Zestawienie statystyczne medalistów mistrzów świata. Mondial Ping 2003. Au top du top, Paryż 2003.

M. Szabados, A. Ehrlich, I. Andreadis, and A. Rozeanu) and by specialist literature (written by, for example, activists and competitors of Jewish origin).

Jews organized the structure of the International Table Tennis Federation (I. Montagu). They co-created new ping-pong clubs and organized national championships. From 1926 to 1957 table tennis players from Jewish minorities, such as those from Hungary, Romania, England, Czechoslovakia and Poland, won 223 medals, including 170 individually and 53 as teams. The Jewish minorities were then a world power. The greatest centre of growth for table tennis was Hungary, with the most famous table tennis players being V. Barna and A. Rozeanu. World champions became then particular ambassadors for their countries and friendly people who were united through their passion for table tennis. It is remarkable that Ivor Montagu was president of the International Table Tennis Federation for 41 years. V. Barna won 41 world gold medals, whereas Ivan Andreadis, throughout his 11-year international career (1947-1957), won 26 world championship medals: 17 individual medals and nine with his team. He was a nine-time gold medal winner. However, despite being the most prominent ping-pong player, he never became individual world champion. Until 1939, Jews were the world's table tennis powerhouses. The most resilient centre of development of table tennis was Central Europe, having the most famous players such as Victor Barna, Ivan Andreadis, or Angelika Rozenau. Medal winners in the world championships were regarded as world elite. They were great ambassadors of their own countries, united through their passion for playing table tennis. The world federation of table tennis was managed by Igor Montagu for 41 years. Sadly, World War II interrupted the Jewish achievements in this field.

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