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POLAND – ONE OF THE WORLD LEADERS IN THE MOUNTAINEERING AND HIMALAYAN CLIMBING

Summary

In the following article, the author will firstly present the definition of himalaism and the area at which it takes place. The second part of the article will take on the subject of the latest achievements of the Polish climbing groups and the individual climbers on the demanding areas of climbing, especially in the Himalayas and the adjacent territories, with the special recognition of winter himalaism. The third part, will focus on the discussion about the ways, in which our achievements can be used in the highest mountains of the world. The special focus will be put on the achievements in winter himalaism and their promotion in our country and abroad. The aim of all types of research is to know a real reality. The three most common and most useful targets are exploration, explanation of the explanation. This test is a thorough analysis of the phenomenon of so-called winter alpinism. The descriptive method was used in the paper in elementary analysis. As a research tool which can generally be any object to explain a given problem to take a specific set of thematic literature from which specific information and research data has been obtained.

Key words: Himalayas, winter mountaineering, expeditions, human genome, outstanding Polish climber.

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Introduction

Humans are unique human beings inhabiting Earth, which is an exceptional and one of a kind planet, what can be derived from the latest scientific research. The following facts can also testify the statement about the complexity of human beings.

Human genome consists of around three billion pairs of rules. If we were to write it down in a book, it would take 856 volumes, 1000 pages each. Genomes of 7 billion people from all over the world would create only a very thin layer on a tea spoon. One gram of DNA has only approximately 1 cm³ but it can

store the amount of information that would take up the space of trillion CD-ROMS. Human body is consisted of 100 trillion of such cells. How the DNA is packed in a cell is the subject to the ever-during amazement. It puts 40 km of the strand in one tennis ball (www1).

Another surprising human quality is the fact that the whole surface of our erythrocytes equals 3000 m². It is so called, the general breathing surface of blood (Kowalewski, Kurczab 1983). The third outstanding human characteristic is the brain, which is able to analyse billions of information during a single second (www1). I think there is nothing to add.

The author hopes to present the essence and the character of humans in his book of poetry entitled “Space-time”, where in the poem “Terrestrial Civilization-Human” he wrote: “A very strange being, inharmonic to its nature, imbued with the greediness of thinking, every day” (Legienis 2007).

Illustration 1. Autor on the glacier in Monte Rosa massif in the Italian Alps – August 2012



Source: own preparation.

Also, Morgan Freeman, an American director, gives an interesting characterization of humans: “Humans are very specific beings, who cannot say: enough! They always look for more” (Freeman 2014).

It is this constant thinking and looking for more that prompts us to invent newer and newer challenges of different natures, philosophical, scientific,

artistic or even sport stunts. One of these sport stunts is the exploration of the highest mountains in the world, namely the Himalayas Karakoram. Regardless of the numerous dangers on the way like: avalanches, crevasses, seracs, hurricane winds, low temperatures, low oxygen content and unimaginable obstacle on the way, people still want to reach the highest mountains in the world. The more difficult the way, the bigger the satisfaction! Poland is one of the leaders in climbing the Himalayas, especially in a discipline named winter himalaism.

Geographic division of the Himalayas and the definition of himalaism

Himalaism – alpinism practiced in the Himalayas, Karakoram and other mountains of the “Roof of the world” or “High Asia”. Its aim is to reach the mountain peaks of the highest mountains in the world, which is connected with serious acclimatisation problems and climbing in the areas distant from the inhabited territories. It requires the application of special techniques and the alpinist style (Kielkowsky 2003).

The Himalayas are the biggest mountains in the world and similarly to the Alpes in Europe, which occupy the “exclusivity” for the four-thousand summits, they have the “exclusivity” for eight-thousand peaks, which are nowhere else to be found. 14 eight-thousands are localized in the Himalayas and nearby Karakoram, also another 300 peaks exceed equally magical height of 7000 meters. Karakoram, the mountain range raising on the north-west from the Himalayas, is the only mountain range that can be compared to the them. There are 4 eight-thousands there but the average rise of the crests is much higher than in the Himalayas. Moreover, there are huge glaciers in this range, which exceed in their sizes the glaciers in the Himalayas. The whole Himalayan system consists of four main ranges:

The Sivalik Hills is the mountain range of the Outer Himalayas stretching along the whole system, enclosing an area that starts from the Brahmaputra and ends close to the Indus. It is 10 to 50 km wide and the average elevation is 2000 m.

The Lesser or Lower Himalayas is the middle section of the vast Himalayan system. This section is around 80 km wide with irregular course in their Western part. The range has an average elevation of 2400 m, only in the Western part they do approach 5000 m.

The Great Himalaya Range is the northernmost section of the Himalayas. It is confined by the Brahmaputra Valley from the East and the Indus Valley from the West. The main range within the Great Himalayas is the Zaskar Range furcating around the Nampa peak (6754 m). Further North we can find the

Ladakh Range, the Transhimalaya Range, the Tibetan Plateau and the Kunlun Mountains. This is also another, orographic division of the Great Himalayas. It distinguishes 6 basic sections of the Himalayas (from the East):

- The Eastern Himalayas
- The Bhutan Himalayas
- The Sikkim Himalayas
- The Central Nepal Himalayas
- The Garhwal Himalayas
- Western Himalayas

The Central Nepal Himalayas are 800 km long, they start at the Chabuk La mountain pass and the valley of Kangbachen-Tamur on the East and the river Kali on the West. The biggest massifs in Nepal are localised between the river Arun on the East and the river Rongshar Chu on the West. There are 4 eight-thousands there: Mount Everest (8848 m), Lhotse (8511 m), Makalu (8481 m), Cho Oyu (8153 m). It is also worth mentioning basic parameters connected with the mountain climbing like air pressure and the acclimatization. At sea level atmospheric pressure equals 760 mmHg, two thousand meters higher it is only 596, 2 mmHg. At four thousand meters over the sea level it equals 462 mmHg, while at five thousands it is only the half of the air pressure from the sea level- 378, 6 mmHg. At the extreme mountain heights of eight thousand meters, the air pressure equals 248 mmHg, which is 1/3 of the initial value. When it comes to acclimatization, the medical research shows that 5300 meters constitutes the highest elevation, on which the complete acclimatisation is possible. Complete acclimatization means that humans can stay and work in this area for the considerable amount months. Although, after too much time spent on this height the deterioration is possible. Above this height, the risk of deterioration grows with every meter. Between 5300 and 7000 meters only relative acclimatisation is possible. The higher is gets, the shorter the human stay is possible there (Ward 2008). The belt between 7000 and 7800 meters is called the sphere of temporal adaptation, while above this height is the sphere of altitudinal death. Being in this sphere causes very fast deterioration. Physical activity on this height results in enervation and sleepiness, while longer stay without using the additional oxygen leads to total exhaustion and death. Even the best acclimatized climbers have visual and auditory hallucinations and may fall into the state of limited consciousness. The climbers may be in euphoric state and underestimate the danger, which is especially dangerous. Defensive and control abilities dwindle, the resistance of the whole bodily system undergoes complete exhaustion. The haematocrit of the blood moves to morphotic elements with the advancing height. The tenacity and coagulation of blood raises, which can cause blood clots in veins, which can directly threaten human life.

Recent achievements of the Polish climbing groups and individuals at very difficult climbing walls, especially at the Himalayas and the adjacent areas, with the special recognition of winter himalaism

Before the second world war, after some significant successes on the territory of the Alps and the African mountains, the explorers organized the first independent expedition to the Cordilleras de la Ramada. The highest peak of the range, Mercedario (6800 m), was first ascended by Polish expedition in 1934. It is the third highest summit of the North and South America. The next Polish expedition headed out on February 1937 to the Atacama region in Chile. The expeditors reached previously unclimbed summit- The Nevado Ojos del Salado (6885 m)- the second highest mountain of North and South America. In the same decade, the explorers conquered few four- and five-thousand peaks in the Atlas Mountains and in the Rwenzori Mountains. This period was close with the success of four-people reconnaissance expedition to the Nanda Devi East (7434 m), one of the most demanding Himalayan peaks reached at that time. Poles got to the top on 2 July 1939, right before the outburst of the second world war. Also before World War II, Adam Karpiński proposed and strenuously encouraged actions to direct Polish alpinism towards the highest mountains of the world- the Himalayas and Karakoram. The conquest of the Nanda Devi East was overtaken after 11 years by French expedition that reached the first eight- thousand-meter summit- the Annapurna (8091 m). However, a famous expeditor and the Everest climber Tenzi Norkey, ranked Nanda Devi East as one of the most dangerous and the most difficult seven-thousands in the Himalayas (Sayse-Tobiczek 1985). But we should detach ourselves from these exemplification, which will be continued in this article, and let ourselves a while of reflection. In the author's opinion, the activity of the alpinists on the most difficult climbing roads of the world and the most inaccessible mountains practically contradicts the laws of nature. The alpinists often accomplish what seems impossible and it is only surprising how do they find this strength in themselves. In the highest parts of the mountains there are very demanding conditions for humans. The expeditors lack almost everything, food, sleep or rest, moreover the height destroys their bodies for example, there is not enough oxygen to breath properly. Despite these facts, the alpinists are invariably strong and determined. Even the author himself, who participated in the expeditions to easier four-thousand-meter summits in the Alps, cannot imagine the struggle and the sacrifice of the alpinists who try to conquer the Himalayas and other demanding climbing walls, not to mention the people who have not been to high glacial mountains before. That is why, before enumerating next Polish achievements, the author would like to quote few statements and descriptions of the alpinists to make the reader realise how

stressful the experience is. Author cannot comprehend how is this possible that these people, or maybe supermen, find determination and the will to fight the obstacles on their way to the top. Wanda Błaszkiwicz-Rutkiewicz's account of the expedition to Trollryggen (Troll Wall), the highest vertical cliff in Europe located in Norway. This expedition is ranked as one of the biggest successes in the history of female alpinism. "After the last overhang, were the hooks were old, we were supposed to get to the lift IV that lead to the upper ice field. Only once did I feel extremely lonely on that wall. You were somewhere lower; I couldn't see nor hear you. I was treading forward stubbornly, it wasn't very challenging, only IV, but it was a bit lousy. The hook was somewhere far away, only this wall in front of me. I could continue in my stubbornness if I was in a good position but I was tired of being constantly concentrated. The crags were wet, nowhere to drive my hook into the rock. No saint could have helped me, I had to go forward- so I did. The last 3-meter, wet wall was in from of me. I licked a bit of damp and bit my hooks next to each other, gratuitously, one would have been enough but the line wedged and I knew that I couldn't let anything happened on these last meters. I went on the wall, seemed easy-routes under the upper ice field- and the line obviously wedged. I was barely standing on the edge of the wall trying to keep my balance. You shouted from somewhere underneath and I snapped at you holding the line in my mouth. In the four-meter distance I saw an old piton, obviously, the line was too short, I walked up two meters, everything was shaking. You eliminated the auto-safeguard and I finally reached the piton. It was good, I stuck the loop, the line became touted. You were probably standing with your nose in front of the wall swearing, but I wasn't lonely anymore. Good piton, you would soon be next to me. One more lift behind us (Ibidem).

Tadeusz Piotrowski's account of crossing the Rimmon Route in the Trollveggen in Norway

"There was a block of compressed snow over my head, which cut off the way. I had to get rid of it. I was attentively hacking the snow away, waiting for the mass to fall down. I was afraid. I was hanging on the weak piton without any possibility of manoeuvre. Suddenly, the whole mass wobbled and collapsed. In an instant, I turned my torso and hid my head into the chimney. A hit in the shoulder. Painful blow in the hip. The weight of falling snow pressed me into the chimney. I was wondering whether the piton would take it. The white tempest was gone, I heard the dull sound came from the bottom. The chimney was filled with snowy dust. Trying to protect my face from icy needles I was brushing off the exhaustion and emotions of the last minutes. I did it. It was even harder higher in the chimney. Two subsequent bivouacs without any chance for a rest or the perspective on getting out of the chimney. Night climbing, accumulating weariness, the lack of food. And then it was, the last

day! At the eye level, I had a smooth rock. I looked up. Five meters higher there was just azure sky. Backlighting edge of the rock, underlined by the white snow, was promising the close end of our expedition. And there was a firm rock without any scratches. Dead end? Maybe turn right to the chimney? No, same. I felt arousing helpless anger. I had the peak at my fingertips and I got stuck. Time was running. But our predecessors didn't have wings, they had to get out of this place somehow. I rechecked the rock, smooth, without any changes. I looked down, there it was! Two metres below was an old piton. I was behind the slab, that was why I overlooked it and went too high. I made the turn and found myself next to the piton. The rock was covered with hard rime. Such a small distance and so much time it required to pass it. Frustrating scuffle. There were moments when I thought that I wouldn't make it. The sun disappeared from the crest, an evening shadow felt on the Valley of Trolls bringing hassling cold. I was still dealing with the icy rock, soaked to the skin, wanting so badly to warm myself in the sun, of which we were deprived for so many days staying in the shade of the rock. On the 19th of March at 7 p. m. we reached the longed-for peak. Hollowed cheeks were covered with thick growth, masking deep creases, made by the struggles of the last days. Hollowed eyes were marked with dark circles. Only the pupils were laughing, shining with joy: they were truly happy" (Saysse-Tobiczek 1985).

Janusz Klarner's account of the climbing the Nanda Devi East (the first ascent of the seventh highest mountain conquered at that time – 1939)

"The leg put with disorderedness slumped. Light bump. I am falling. Short, hopeless flash of consciousness. Widely set arms. The handrail falls under my armpits. A tug. I am hanging. Deep breath. Immediately, I feel the certainty of the situation. It is silly since I am hanging over the five-hundred, upright precipice with the perspective of the landing on the glacier in the sanctuary Nanda Devi. With the help of the handrail I am putting myself up back to the crest.

Without the bearers, we were carrying significant for this height (6700 m) sacks, which weighted up to 15km. The last night the first snow felt and now we're trudging through it, collapsing to our knees from time to time. The pace of our march is even slower than our colleagues' two days ago. It required three or four deep breath with every step. And again, a step and three breaths. And slowly, hopelessly slowly we're crawling upwards. After an hour of marching I'm looking back- the camp that we left seems so ridiculously close that I could have reached it in few minutes and crossing this short route cost us so much struggle. So many hundreds of meters we still ahead of us. I think that it was the day of the biggest struggle for me during the whole expedition. The fight against the lack of oxygen with the crushing weight on my shoulders and deep,

slimy snow. In addition, the struggle with the weather at the end of the day. In the afternoon, the west wind started blowing, at first, it was mild but it was growing in strength as the time was passing until it reached the tension of the hurricane”.

As I was walking first, suddenly, I dived out -completely unexpectedly- from the steepness of the fault into the wide, snowy flatland. Trudging through the deep, rugged snow, stumbling and faltering, fighting against the incessantly blowing wind, heading towards the climax of this route, which it uplifted over the surrounding. It is 5 p. m. My heart was pounding, I was moved. Tiredness? Yes, tiredness, exhaustion but also agitation and the feeling of happiness that it was the day and us who were honoured to reach this peak. After all the plans and struggling, after months of preparation weeks on the mountain, after hopes and break downs, we succeeded and ascended the top” (Saysse-Tobiczek 1985).

Marcin Tomaszewski’s account, entitled “Yeti”, from climbing the biggest, almost vertical “wall” – the Great Trango Tower. Trango Towers is the group of peaks in Karakoram in Pakistan. Their vertical walls are the biggest in the world.

– You marked out the new way to the Great Trango Tower. Why did you pick this particular wall?

– Because it’s the biggest wall of the world, and it’s almost vertical. Its charm lies in the fact that it is set really high, it starts at 5000 m and ends up 1300 meters higher. It is enormous. Our route had 1997 meters. We spent 20 days hanging. Big walls have some secret inside. It was a type of the journey into unknown. You’re discovering yourself because you don’t know in what situations you will find yourself up there and how will they influence you.

– What did you take with you?

– Alpinist equipment weighted 150kg, 350 meters of lines. Apart from it around 100 carabiners, 40 hooks, 40 bolts, which you can grind into the firm rock, different implements, which you can wedge into the wall, ice axes, crampons, supplies, cookers. And portal edge, which is a tent, in which you spend the nights. -How did your day look like?-After few days of climbing and living on the wall, grinding the bolts and wedging the hooks we were waking up with stiff arms. Muscles, which are working the whole day, swell. They press on the veins, which are ischemic. We’re waking up without sensing. Everything hurts. We need to warm up. The morning starts with moans and complaints of two elder men. Tough time. It lasts few minutes. The first relief is coffee. We’re slaves of coffee. If it felt, we would go to the base.

– How does it feel to sleep in the portal edge? There were no shelves in the wall so you had few thousand meters below you.

– Portal edge is constructed like a camp bed. On meta there is some material. Inside, there is a wall mad of the material, which separates the

climbers. It's very comfortable but the tent works like a swing, one move and the whole system is ruined, so you need to synchronize your moves with the partner. It requires a lot of attention because maintain the balance within the portal edge is often the key to survive.

– How is it to fight with the frozen line?

– You break it on your knee. You can catch it like a cable and it stands 3 meters upright. A line like this disables security measures, and other manoeuvres. Ours was so frozen that even the climbing equipment was wedging on it. There were no chances for any climbing.

– How did your hands look like after 20 days on the wall?

– As if they were through the meat grinder. We are hurting them severely on the wall. We have a lot of small scratches on each hand. Some scratches heal in one day; others need more time. There are also ones that leave scars for the rest of your life” (Tomaszewski 2014).

Fragment 1 – of Jack Hugo-Bander's account of the expedition for the bodies of the Himalayan climbers who dies on the Broad Peak.

“One German climber was boasting that he reached the peak, so I asked him, if he saw the bodies of two men. Yes, but just one, over the mountain pass, on the route. He was a trouble. He described his clothing, equipment, but he didn't know if he was young or old because he had his head in his arms. He was hanging from the small, rock chimney, strangely clasped to some old line between two stony walls. You usually use it the ascend the peak and they were descending it. The German climber didn't want to touch the body but he thinks that he was a young man because his clothing was colourful. He made a photo of him, took a big step, changed his carabiner to pass the young man and his line by, and he went down.

Fragment 2

The whole philosophy of walking or moving on this height is very simple. You need to do this slower than you think you can. If you moved accordingly to your kinaesthetic memory and habits, after few steps you will feel as if your lungs and heart wanted to get out of your body through your throat. You will lean against trekking stocks. If you're going upwards with the ice axe, you're hanging on the three fulcrums. Your right leg is far behind, while the other one is up on the rock. Your left elbow leans against your knee and your hand keeps the haft of the axe. You put your head on the hand. Your head is extremely heavy. You're panting. You're panting as a dog, staring at the curls of breath from your mouth, at the thick splash dangling from your nose like a lucent, sticky spider that doesn't care about gravity. And you don't have the motivation or strength to reach it. You can get rid of with your tongue, unless it reached

your moustache and beard and perfidiously frozen. Then it'll stay with you for a longer time.

Fragment 3

You need to have ice axe with you. A wonderful tool. A lot of climbers thinks about it with special tenderness as if it was their loved one. Many create this attachment, never borrow it, never buy new one, and holding it as if it was a knee, not a piece of metal. A lot them call it "my lucky ice axe" and won't go without it into the mountains. It never lies with the rest of the tools in the closet, it is put in a visible place, so the climber can look at it with love. Like a lucky charm. Because it's not just a tool, but "dziaba", identification mark, like a sabre for Uhlan. Ice axe can save your life, when you're falling in a couloir or at the snow field. You go down, stumble, slip or teeter you have 3-4 seconds to turn to your stomach, catch the ice axe, bite it into the ice or snow and slow down. If you fail to do this, you're start falling too fast to be able to stop. You'll die. But at least with the loved ice axe in your hand, because it should be belted to your hand. Sometimes they will put it in your grave. But having a handrail, may climbers pin the ice axe up to their sacks. An impediment. It shouldn't be necessary; two free hands will be useful with pitons and lines" (Hugo-Bader 2014).

The author hopes that these quoted fragments from various interviews and memories of the Polish climbers from the most difficult routes and climbing walls of the world will give an insight into their struggle. To continue, the author wants to back to the description of the Polish achievements on this field. It was after the Second World War, in 1960, when the first expedition of the Alpine Club organized an expedition to the Noshaq (7492 m) in the Hindu Kush Range. This expedition restored the possibility to compete for the highest peaks in the world for Poles. After the reconnaissance in 1969, the alpine club's expedition lead by Andrzej Zawada headed to the Karakoram two years later. The climbers ascended difficult Kunyang Chhish (7852 m) - the second-highest peak in the Hispar Muztagh and twenty second massif in the world. Four Polish climbers stand on the summit: Andrzej Zawada, Andrzej Zygmunt Heinrich, Jan Stryczyński and Ryszard Szafranski. Polish himalaism debuted in 1973. The expedition of the Warsaw Club KW for the first time in the history, ascended seven-thousand Noshaq during winter. On 13th of February Andrzej Zawada and Tadeusz Piotrowski stand on the peak of the mountain. During the late autumn of 1974 Andrzej Zawada took Polish Alpinism Association to the Himalayas in Nepal. They wanted to ascend the fourth-highest peak in the world- Lhotse (8511 m) Due to the delay and hurricane winds the expedition stretched in time to the winter. Poles did not reach the peak, but they achieved record-breaking height for winter of 8250 meters (Kowalewski, Kurczab 1983). Other outstanding achievements of the Polish climbers will be recalled in the

following part. In 1976 the expedition lead by Adam Bilczewskid marked out the new way to the Kohe Tez (7015 m) in the Hindu Kush. There was a big slumping during the expedition but nobody died. The Hindu Kush, 1978- the first crossing of the East crest Tirich Mir East (7692 m) What Is more, Kukuczka and Piotrowski or the first time ascended the Binda Ghul Zom peak (6340 m). Poles reappeared in the Himalayas for the second time when the golden time of conquering the mountains has already passes. All the 14 eight-thousands were ascended by that time. The second period of sport himalaism was starting- ascending lower but more difficult peaks, crossing demanding walls and crests, looking for the new ways to get to the top. Polish expeditions were “attacking” yet unclimbed seven-thousands. They were also looking for the new ways to reach the eight-thousands and, what is the most important, they started winter excursions to the highest peaks.

In 1980 Leszek Cichy and Krzysztof Wielicki for the first time during winter, ascended Mount Everest. Since that time, Polish expeditions are heading to the Himalayas every year, even during winter, to ascend the peaks that used to intimidate other climbers (Kukuczka 1999).

It is worth mentioning that Andrzej Zawada was the creator of the Polish himalaism, his successor was Artur Hajzer. Nowadays, Janusz Majer is the leader of the discipline.

In Spring 1978, Polish Mountaineering Club, led by Piotr Młotecki, organised a very successful expedition to the Khangchendzonga. Eugeniusz Chrobak and Wojciech Wróż ascended difficult the South Khangchendzonga (around 8500) and Wojciech Brański, Andrzej Zygmunt Heinrich and Kazimierz Olech – the Middle Khangchendzonga (around 8490 m). In Autumn 1978 the first Pole reached Mount Everest (8848 m). It was Wanda Rutkiewicz, who conquered the mountain with French-German expedition. She was the third woman, and the first European woman on the top of the world (Kowalewski, Kurczab 1983).

In 1981, Polish climber Kukuczka ascended the West wall of the Makalu alone. In 1986, Maciej Barbeka and Maciek Pawlikowski marked out the new way to Cho Oyu during winter. Few days later Kukuczka and Heinrich ascended the same mountain. In the same year, Kukuczka and Czok ascended Kengchenjunga during winter, unfortunately, A. Czok died durig the expedition (Kukuczka 1999).

Polish climbers are so incredible that the experts started talking about the Polish school of himalaism. For example, Krzysztof Wielicki impressed the climbers with his speed of conquering the mountains. As the first man in the history, he ascended the eight-thousand mountain, Broad Peak, in less than 24 hours. It took him 21 and a half hours to get to the top. Moreover, he ascended Dhaulagiri in 17 hours, marking the new way to the to, it was even more impressive. The latest renowned expeditions were: Polish Winter

Expedition “Netia” K2 2002-2003 TO K2 and the Winter Expedition to the Broad Peak in 2013 realised as the part of “Polish winter himalaism 2010-2015” programme (Sidor, Zarzycki 2013).

While discussing polish achievements in climbing and himalaism, some more male and female successes must be mentioned. The list of the conquerors of all Himalayan and Karakoram peaks consists of 31 people from all over the world. There are 3 Poles among them- Jerzy Kukuczka, Krzysztof Wielicki and Piotr Pustelnik. They represent 10% of all the conquerors (Sidor, Zarzycki 2013).

What is more, there are 16 Poles who conquered the Seven Summits: Leszek Cichy, Anna Czerwińska, Urszula Tokarska, Tomasz Kobielski, Janusz Adamski, Bogusław Ogrodnik, Robert Rozmus, Jarosław Hawrylewicz, Martyn Wojciechowska, Anna Lichota, Marian Hudek, Roman Dzida, Ireneusz Szpot, Małgorzata Pierz-Pękała, Aniel Mizera, Agnieszka Kiela-Pałys (Sidor, Zarzycki 2013).

In 1986 Wanda Rutkiewicz ascended K2, she was the first woman who did it (www2).

Marcin Miotk ascended Mount Everest without oxygen in 2005. Anna Czerwińska and Kinga Baranowska belong to the circle of the most recognized female climbers in the world. They are also the candidates to gain all the Himalayan peaks (Sidor, Zarzycki 2013). The author is incapable of enumerating all Polish achievements in crossing the most difficult climbing ways, ascending the highest peaks on the Earth and marking out the new ways to the tops. It is also impossible to mention the names of all Polish climbers. However, the author made an attempt to present Polish outstanding performances on the most important mountain ranges. It is hard to resist mentioning the tragic side of this sport. Unfortunately, the highest and the most difficult routes are very “ravenous” and constantly “eat” their conquerors, who add up to umpteen victims throughout the years. Nevertheless, even the biggest risk cannot stop the climbers who are “incurable collectors”. For these people, ascending the highest mountains in the world is the highest value. This “collecting” is often their main goal in their lifetime.

Conclusions

People who practice alpinism are undoubtedly exceptional. Their achievements are widely recognized because they strive to do impossible things. Therefore, it would be advisable to make use of these achievements to promote Poland on the international arena. The following steps should be taken:

- Public facilities, schools, parks, squares, streets and sport places could be named after renowned Polish climbers. This practice is already implied but it could be used more often. Jerzy Kukuczka’s school in Bielsko Biala, Poznań,

Jastrzębie Zdrój, Grodzisk, Łódź and Katowice may serve as examples. Moreover, the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice is also named after Jerzy Kukuczka. He also has his Hall of Memory, which is localised in Istebna Wilcze 340. Numerous photographs from his expeditions, his equipment, medals and books are there on display. The tour guides of the Beskids mountains organise annual rally to commemorate Jerzy Kukuczka. All the schools named after him take part in this rally, which constitutes around 600 participants. The Foundation of Supporting Polish Alpinism is also named after this incredible explorer. One of the streets in Wrocław's district Krzyki also has his name, as well as the district in Katowice.

- There is a significant list of facilities named after Wanda Rutkowska, among them: The primary school no 300 and the secondary school no 117 in Warszawa, the complex of schools in Janowice Wielkie, MOSiR in Opole, streets in Wrocław, Opole and Warszawa. Also, the annual Alpine Film Festival, organized in the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw has her name. There is also an annual rally named after Rutkowska in the dolnośląskie voivode. In the Slovakian Tatra Mountains and at the cemetery in Ostrewa you can find memorials commemorating her achievements. Other people who contributed to Polish alpinism are not so frequently memorialized. In Chorzów, the Big Human Foundation organizes annual "Run for the Elephant" commemorating Artur Hajzer. The latest event marking Polish achievements in winter himalaism was the presentation of a sculpture "The Crown of the Himalayas" in Władysławowo. Polish climbers were also commemorated with the named stars on the promenade.

Probably there are even more places and events named after Polish alpinists that the author didn't find. Nonetheless, it is highly regarded that such initiatives take place. What else can be done?

- Means of transport, like: buses, airplanes flying domestically and internationally, cargo ships and ferries, can also be named after famous Polish climbers. It would enable promoting our position in Himalaism not only in our country, but at the international as well. Due to the fact that outstanding achievements of Polish climbers are gaining publicity and making Poland recognized on the international arena, it would be worth considering to establish a special decoration for the alpinists and prize them somehow. Also, help for widows should be taken under consideration, if they are in difficult financial position. It should apply to all renowned Polish sportsmen and sportswomen.
- We should also expose our achievements during international conferences, trade fairs and congresses. Leaflets or pins would be distributed among the participants of such events to raise awareness of Polish successes in climbing.

- The Polish Post Office should release special stamps commemorating for example, first Polish ascend to the eight-thousand in winter.
- We should present our achievements during international touristic trade fairs like ITB in Berlin. It would be enough to show interesting shots from the expeditions and projecting movies about our achievements for instance, the expedition to conquer Great Trango Tower etc.
- Introducing mountain climbing as one of the profiles at sport schools to let it compete with other popular disciplines like basketball, volleyball or swimming.
- Funding Artur Hajzer's sport programme "Polish winter himalaism 2010-2015", now directed by Janusz Majer, by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. In 2017/2018, the Polish winter expedition to K 2 took place under the auspices of the Polish Mountaineering Association. The members of the expedition were: Krzysztof Wielicki, Janusz Gołęb, Piotr Snopczyński, Adam Bielecki, Rafał Fronia, Marek Chmielarski, Dariusz Załuski, Marian Kaczkan, Artur Małek, Piotr Tomala, Jarosław Bator, Maciej Bedrejczuk, Denis Urubko. The expedition lasted 80 days officially from 07. 01. 2018 to 19. 03. 2018. However, it did not end with entry to K2 (www3). The next planning expedition to K2 is winter 2019/2020 (www4).

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Polska – jeden ze światowych liderów alpinizmu i himalaizmu

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule przedstawiono po pierwsze definicję himalaizmu oraz obszar na którym ma on miejsce. Drugą część pracy poświęcono dotychczasowym osiągnięciom polskich grup wspinaczkowych i indywidualnych wspinaczy na trudnych obszarach wspinaczkowych, a w szczególności na terenie Himalajów i Karakorum. Ostatnia, trzecia część pracy poświęcona jest omówieniu sposobu wykorzystania naszych osiągnięć w najwyższych górach świata, a w szczególności osiągnięć w himalaizmie zimowym i ich promocji w kraju i na świecie.

Słowa kluczowe: Himalaje, wybitni polscy wspinacze, himalaizm zimowy, ludzki genom.

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