

Abstract

Rabka-Zdrój is a resort-town dating back to the 19th century. Many factors contributed to its creation, such as the microclimate, the abundance of mineral waters and the health condition of Poles, as well as the growing fashion for trips to the waters for therapeutic and relaxation purposes. The discovery of the healing waters in Rabka created the town into an important resort, treating adults, which was the standard, and children, which was a significant novelty on Polish soil during the partition era.

Rabka, as a spa destination, developed in three different time periods: until the First World War, the inter-war period and the post-war period. They represent distinct periods that are discussed according to their specific periodisation, which is marked by caesuras that differ markedly in terms of the development of medicine and rehabilitation.

The goal of the study was to present the course of the development of sanatorium treatment and the physiotherapeutic methods used in Rabka from pioneering times to the present day. The description includes the therapeutic spa infrastructure, conceived not only as a sanatorium and treatment base, but also as a sports and recreational facility. The comprehensive coverage of the issues allowed us to trace the changes taking place in the spa, which generated contemporary physiotherapeutic methods, developed in Rabka, to later find wide application in other spas or rehabilitation facilities.

The dissertation is a historical work. It is written based on source material and studies on Rabka. The method of document and publication analysis was used, as well as the ordinal descriptive method to characterise the development of physiotherapy in the spa.

Key conclusions:

- The exceptional and unique climate together with the therapeutic raw materials, mainly in the form of iodine-bromine brines, determined the direction of the spa's development,
- Although the development of Rabka progressed slowly but harmoniously, this was mainly due to the investments made, which were followed by an increasing influx of visitors and bathers with the highest attendance in the interwar period,
- Thanks to its efficient and sensible administration, Rabka achieved the level of a European, modern spa in the interwar period,
- The social and economic changes that followed the Second World War had both positive and negative effects on the development of the spa. They have contributed to the development of infrastructure while over-exploiting the base developed by previous owners by destroying historic buildings that should be preserved as cultural heritage,

- The result of activities that have not always been properly thought through is the current state of the resort, which, if it is to continue to deserve to be called the "City of the Children of the World" or even to maintain its spa status, must adapt its offer to modern requirements, which would seem to include investing in multifunctionality.