

WARTIME ADVENTURES OF STANISLAW MARUSARZ & HIS AWARDS

by Wojciech Zablocki

The gold medal won by Jozef KLUKOWSKI for the sculpture "Crowning of a Winner" at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 1932 counted among successes of Polish artists participating in the Olympic Contests of Art. The sculpture in question, just like other works of the artist, had been deemed to be destroyed or lost during World War II. Such information appeared in the book by D. KACZMARZYK in 1958 *The War Losses of Poland in the Field of Sculpture* and it was repeated by H. KUBISZEWSKA in the *Who Is Who of Polish artists*, vol. IV

Jozef KLUKOWSKI was born in 1894 in Repelka, Grodno district (nowadays a part of Belarus) He graduated from *Michajlow's School of Artillery* and at the age of nineteen he began to serve as a second lieutenant of the mounted artillery in the Russian army. After retrieval of independence, since 1918 he was serving in the army as a horse riding coach at the mounted artillery school in Toruń. In 1919 he was admitted to the Warsaw School of Fine Arts. In 1922 he studied at *Cracow Academy of Fine Arts*, and since 1928 – in André LOTH'S school in Paris. In 1931 he returned to Warsaw, paying visits to Paris almost every year.

The works by KLUKOWSKI comprise mainly sculpture and reliefs, often associated with architecture. He expressed himself also in minor sculptural forms such as masks, medals, accessories and even everyday objects. There were animal representations in his works, as well as realistic compositions illustrating sports events, portrait studies and acts.

His works are characterized by thoroughly contemplated composition, accenting the movement of synthetically seized, hieratic figure and a spatial arrangement of background of a differentiated convexity.

The artist was enthusiastic over combining sculpture and architecture. In 1939

he created numerous sculptures for the Polish pavilion at the World Fair in New York and nine reliefs for a new main railway station in Warsaw. The war made execution of those works unfeasible.

KLUKOWSKI made the sculptures straight in stone – granite, marble, malachite, but also in ivory, copper, silver or bronze. Rare castings in bronze had been made usually by specialized workshops. He took advantage of texture – either smoothly polished, shiny and glossy or coarse, taking into consideration the factor of light.

As a painter he expressed himself in realistic compositions, still life, portrait and landscape, using both oil and water-colour techniques. He was also a gifted drawer, his numerous cartoons of animals count among the best ones.

During the war KLUKOWSKI stayed in Sudol by Jędrzejów and in Nagłowice, carrying out interior designs for manor houses of Ludwik KIELBASS and Michał RADZIWIŁŁ.

Having been imprisoned, on the Warsaw uprising, in the concentration camp of Oranienburg, he was killed during evacuation to Bergen-Belsen.

The sculpture "Crowning a Winner" was displayed during the individual exhibition in Warsaw in 1931 as "Sport II" and it was sculptured in granite.

For the Olympic contest in Los Angeles, the most likely a bronze casting of the said sculpture was forwarded, made by a recognized foundry workshop of the Lopienski brothers. The fine arts contest gathered 520 artists from 24 countries. On July 30th the exhibition was opened at the Museum of History, Science and Fine Arts in Los Angeles and had as many as 384,000 visitors.

In the field of sculpture and in the discipline "reliefs and medals" the gold medal was awarded to Jozef KLUKOWSKI from Poland



Stanislaw
MARUSARZ
corner of fame
in his family
house
(photo by: W.
ZABLOCKI)



for his work "Sports Sculpture II", the silver medal went to Frederik Mac MONNIE from USA for "Lindbergh Medal" and the bronze one - to Richard TAIT Mc KENZIE from Canada for "Shield of Athletes".

Existing photos of the awarded sculpture by KLUKOWSKI, thereafter referred to as "Crowning a Winner" came from catalogues. Like other works by the artist, it was supposed to have been lost.

Its occurrence at the exhibition named "Stanislaw Maruszak - A King of Skis", organized by the *Warsaw Museum of Sports and Tourism* at the turn of 2000/2001, caused a sensation.

It appeared that the sculpture had been retained among numerous sports trophies of Stanislaw Maruszak and exhibited at his home in Zakopane, 18, A. Strug Street. Nobody knows when the sculpture by KLUKOWSKI became a property of Stanislaw. In 1993 MARUSARZ died and no one of his family knows who and on what occasion gave the sculpture to their father.

As in the fifties it was already deemed for being lost, it seems that Stanislaw could have received it as a sports trophy prior to the World War II.

In February 1939 the plebiscite among readers of the newspaper named *Przeglad Sportowy* was finalised to choose the best Polish sportsman of 1938. Stanislaw MARUSARZ won, getting as many as 28,230 votes. The decisive fact was that he got the silver medal during the World Championship in ski jumping in Lahti that year. It is the most probable that the best Polish sportsman had been honoured with a sculpture, which itself gained the highest prize in 1932.

When in 1940 Stanislaw was arrested by the Slovak border guard and handed over to the Nazis, his father packed all his son's sports

trophies and transported it by a cart to the Tatra Museum, where it was hidden in the cellar by a father's friend, at that time a director of the Tatra Museum. Perhaps that's why the sculpture by KLUKOWSKI has been rescued, because when Maruszak ran away from a prison in Cracow, the Gestapo was a frequent "visitor" to the MARUSARZ family house at Male Żywczańskie Street.

Towards the end of April this year (2003) the author went to Zakopane to paint late snow in the mountains, and on that occasion visited Stanislaw MARUSARZ'S house at 18 a, A. Strug Street, where his daughter Magda Gadek lives in the house of wooden logs, built in the typical style of Zakopane region, which has been designed by Stanislaw's wife, Irena, a talented architect. There is a memorial chamber to Stanislaw MARUSARZ there, with his portrait, numerous medals, prizes and tributes.

Among other exhibits there stands the sculpture by Klukowski, a bronze casting, 44 cm high, representing crowning of a winner or according to the official catalogue "Sport No II".

The sculpture represents the figure of a hero, standing against a rock, which symbolizes a three-level podium. A long haired, muscular man holds a discus in his hand. A figure in a long gown, her head inclined, emerges from behind the rock, placing a crown on his head. On two side planes of the rock and on the back ones there are reliefs representing sportsmen: a discus thrower, a shot putter and a football player.

The sculpture reveals strong artist's ties with the architectural composition and distinctive influence of Art Deco stylistics. Motionless, standing on attention, mighty figure of a hero contrasts with a theatrical gesture of wingless Nike, who rather holds a symbol of victory above his head than crowns him, as if she intended to show that the sports accomplishment is of ever-lasting quality.

Ever-lasting quality can be attributed to the fame of Stanislaw MARUSARZ, the Zakopane "king of skis", who in his life had performed about 10,000 ski jumps plus two the most important ones, the jumps of salvage during the World War II, namely the jump from border station in the Szczyrbskie Jezioro and the jump from the prison located at Montelupi Street in Cracow.

Stanislaw MARUSARZ was born on June 18, 1913, in Zakopane, into the highlander family and started to practice skis, when he was ten years old. His first set of skis he carved

Stanislaw
MARUSARZ four
times Olympian
(1932,1936,
1948, 1952) in
ski-jumping.
(photo by:
Roman
SERAFIN).

himself with assistance of his brother, from an ash wood and he attached them to shoes by means of wires. For the first time he took part in the competition on the Wielka Krokiew ski jump in 1927, at the age of only 14, although the judges objected his admission because of his young age.

The last jumps during a competition he performed opening of the Four Hills ski jumping in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and in Bergisel in Innsbruck 1966. At that time he was 54 and during preceding nine seasons he had not jumped at all. The result was 70 meters... .

However, he performed the very last jump in 1981, when he was 68. He jumped then in a movie about himself.

During his long career Stanislaw MARUSARZ 21 times stood at the highest podium during the Polish championship; he was a winner not only in jumping, but also in downhill, classical and Alpine combination, and in relay races: four times 10km and five times 10km Marusarz took part in four Winter Olympic Games: in Lake Placid, 1932 (ranked 17); Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 1936 (5); after World War II in Saint-Moritz, 1948 (27) and in Oslo 1952 (27).

He left for the fifth time for the Games in Cortina d' Ampezzo in 1956. However, he was not in the capacity of a jumping sportsman there, but of a celebrity who opened the Olympic competition. His sports career ended in 1957, when he came fourth in the Polish Championship.

The most prominent international accomplishment was his silver medal in the World FIS Championship in Lahti, 1938, where he yielded only to the famous Asbjorn Ruud from Norway. The verdict delivered by judges was questioned by the Finnish audience and Ruud intended to give to Stanislaw the cup for the World Championship, which of course was rejected by MARUSARZ.

World War II unexpectedly interrupted years of MARUSARZ'S greatest accomplishments. When the war began, he was at the Pyszna glade, where for some time he was running a chalet. After the defeat in September, a number of officers, soldiers and other people were making attempts to get out and to reach Hungary, Turkey and Yugoslavia and later France, where the Polish troops started to structure. The Tatra guides fulfilled the task of conducting people across the mountains. Soon MARUSARZ joined them.

Among his courier missions one

homecoming from Budapest in March 1940 had the most dramatic course. The untamed snowstorm made him to change his route and to come down to a small town named Szczyrbskie Jezioro, on the Slovak side. He was detained by the Slovak patrol. Notwithstanding that the Slovak border guards had been turning a blind eye to the activity of Polish couriers, Stanislaw was brought to the border station. A sportsman well known to MARUSARZ was the commander in charge there, however he appeared to be an uncompromising Gestapo collaborator. On discovering in the Marusarz's backpack, a big amount of zlotys and dollars instead of declared food (the money was intended to cover expenses of illegal stars of fugitives), the commander notified his superiors of seizing a Polish spy and asked for a car and an escort. Then MARUSARZ took a daring decision to escape. Paying no attention to the fact that the warrant officer had a revolver within the reach of his hand, Marusarz pushed him against the table - using a mattress, and before anyone of the guard managed to reach for his gun- he sprung to the window and jumped out through it, with his head directed forward, breaking the window panel with his fists. Although hurt by the glass and stunned during the fall from the first floor, he run to the iron gate, however, it was locked. He climbed hastily and jumped on the other side. Then he ran across the railway tracks and rushed towards the wood. The high snow made his march difficult, but to his surprise the Slovaks did not pursue him. After a few hours he reached the known village, where friends bandaged his wounds and lent him a pair of skis. On the same day he managed to get back to Zakopane, where he informed the resistance cell about the incident in Slovakia. His stay in Zakopane, however, became rather unsafe and risky. Well-known sportsmen happened to become victims of the growing Gestapo terror. In these circumstances he decided to run away, together with his wife Irena, to Hungary. It was towards the end of March 1940.

During crossing the river Hemad, the very last obstacle before the Hungarian border, Irena and Stanislaw were arrested by the Slovak border guard. They were transferred to Muszyna prison. In the same prison Stanislaw MARUSARZ'S sister, Helena MARUSAROWNA, a recognized ski sportswoman, was imprisoned. She was executed by a firing squad in September 1941, at the age of 23.

The Gestapo interrogated Stanislaw

MARUSARZ many times, lavishing blows on him. When he fainted of pain, they poured water on him. He was transferred in turn to prison in Nowy Sacz, Zakopane and Cracow.

At the Gestapo seat in Cracow, MARUSARZ received a proposal of collaboration with the Nazis, the essence of which was the unmasking of the Polish Clandestine Transfer Network. The award was a ski training in the German army, and after the war - becoming a coach of the German national team of the ski jumpers. He rejected. He was beaten up to a blackout and sentenced to death as one among 134 other names.



Without revealing the alleged evidences, the judge indicated "activity against the Third Reich". 46 people arrived at the condemned cell together with Stanislaw Maruszka. The same night about two o'clock, the Gestapo took about forty people out of the adjacent cell, for the execution. Stanislaw Maruszka and a dozen or so of the bravest people decided to run away. Using broken table legs, for few hours they were stretching the window grate. The cell was located on the high ground floor, and the prison had a guard of twenty-six SS-men, armed with automatic guns. At first light, the sign to escape was given. The first one to jump was Bugajski (an officer in the underground activity), afterwards Maruszka. Not following the planned sequence, everyone moved towards the window. One of the prisoners stayed blocked in the too small hole, and then fell down breaking a window panel. Stanislaw reached the window, however due to his rather athletic constitution, got stuck. His companions managed to push him out of the window. Stanislaw quickly climbed the wall over the barbed wires, which were cutting his hands to the bones. At the same time the Germans started to shoot and the alarm buzzer hooted. But Stanislaw had already managed to jump onto the Montelupi street, and Bugajski was running in front of him. Terrified passers-by were dispersing as they saw the bloodstained fugitives and the latter could not count on hiding in the crowd. They were running across the streets of Cracow, but suddenly Bugajski fainted, as the long stay in prison had weakened his heart. Maruszka drew him into a

courtyard and ran to the Vistula River. In the river he washed his injuries, as it appeared that the German shot him into the left leg. For four days Maruszka roamed across the fields and woods towards Zakopane, mainly during night. He found a place of safety with his friends, but he did not venture to go home, neither did he decide to see his wife, who was released from prison. She was thoroughly watched by the Gestapo. After a certain period of time he recovered and decided to leave immediately for Hungary, that time alone and armed. The gun was helpful, because using it he

KLUKOWSKI:
'Crowning of the winner'

forced the Slovak patrol to retreat and without trouble he crossed the border. The Hungarians did not give up Poles to the Slovak border guard and mostly they behaved in friendly way. In Budapest he was directed to the refugees' camp and there - although Maruszka had changed both places of stay and names - Gyula Beloni, a former member of national ski jumpers team, found him. The offer of a work in capacity of a coach for ski jumpers and runners was submitted.

In November 1941 Stanislaw received an order to carry a secret parcel of matchbox size to Poland. If caught, he would crush it, so causing the chemical destruction. After encountering many difficulties and obstacles he arrived safely at Zakopane, turned over the secret parcel and got a new one, which he delivered to Budapest.

All of a sudden Germans came into Budapest, lacking confidence in their so rare ally. The arresting of Poles started, so Maruszka decided to hide himself near Balaton Lake. But the Soviet offensive was coming.

During the siege of Budapest Maruszka once again saved his live. On his way to the place of execution, an explosion of a Soviet missile caused a panic among the German soldiers escorting him, which allowed him to escape, thus saving his live.

On liberation of the city Maruszka came back to Zakopane, following the same route across the mountains, which so many times he passed as a courier.

He returned and he recommenced ski jumping.