

# The architecture of the sports tribunes of the Second Polish Republic in the interwar period, 1919–1939

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**Summary:** The tribunes are a group of sports facilities accompanying many sports facilities of various disciplines. These objects had many types of architectural forms, from small-scale wooden structures, through medium-sized steel structures, to large brick and reinforced concrete structures. The tribunes, depending on the rank of the sports facility, were designed as open or roofed. In some buildings, the function of the audience was combined with the back of sanitary rooms, cloakrooms, cash registers, entrances, restaurants, etc. Many of these buildings played a representative role. The stands built in the interwar period were one of the first facilities of this type. The later projects of the tribunes referred in their function and form to the examples from the Second Polish Republic.

**Keywords:** tribune, architecture, interwar period, the Second Polish Republic, modernism, sports facilities

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## Introduction

During the interwar period of the Second Polish Republic, many various sports facilities were built. These facilities differed in form and function in relation to the sports discipline for which they were dedicated. These were, among others stadiums, sports fields, halls, field facilities and cubature buildings. Among the various types of facilities, tribunes were found in almost every facility, regardless of the sports discipline. This was due to the need to provide adequate space for viewers watching sports and cultural events organized in sports facilities<sup>1</sup>. The tribunes were designed in many forms depending on the rank of the sports facility and the number of spectators attending the shows. The architecture of the stands was varied and related to the function of these objects. Some of them, apart from the main function of the audience, also served as a back room with rooms for sportsmen, spectators, ticket offices, restaurants, and were also part of facilities with a different function.

## Aim and Scope

The aim of the research is an attempt to systematize and classify the tribunes built in the interwar period, with particular emphasis on their form and function. Specification of characteristic features and architectural analysis. The aim of the research is also an attempt to describe the architecture of these objects and the question of whether and in what form these objects depended on the sports function of the object in which they were located. The scope of the research concerns the interwar period and the territorial area covers the borders of

1 A. Pawlikowska-Piechotka, M. Piechotka, *Dzieje obiektów sportowych w Europie*, AWF, Warszawa 2017.

the Second Polish Republic. Selected objects of the stands were accepted for research, taking into account the greatest possible variety in terms of form, architecture and additional functions performed by these objects.



**Fig. 1.** Localization of tribunes included in research.

## Method and materials

The methods used in the research were based on an archival query. The objects were divided according to their type, form, function and accompanying functions. The structure of the objects and their rank were also compared. Synthetic diagrams were made on the basis of archival photos in order to show the characteristic features of the examined objects.

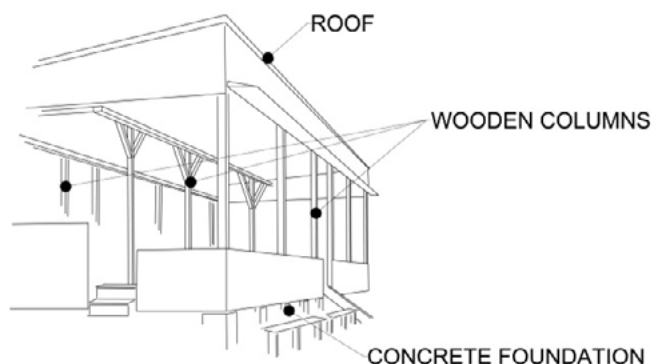
## Selected examples of sports tribunes

Selected stands from the smallest to the largest buildings are described below. The stands were located in almost every sports facility. Regardless of the sports discipline, the spectacular function of the stands made it possible for the audience to watch the show. Thanks to the use of a terrace arrangement of benches for viewers and the analysis of visibility, the comfort of admiring sports events has been significantly improved. The type of construction and the material used was related to the scale and form of the objects. In smaller projects, mainly wood was used as a construction material. Steel was used in larger buildings and a reinforced concrete structure was used in the largest, most representative buildings. The architecture of the buildings was similar in form<sup>2</sup>. In the largest projects, a monumental, horizontal line of arcades was obtained through the use of single-pitched or gable roofs.

2 A. Pawlikowska-Piechotka, *Przestrzeń sportu, rekreacji i turystyki bez barier*, Warszawa 2016.

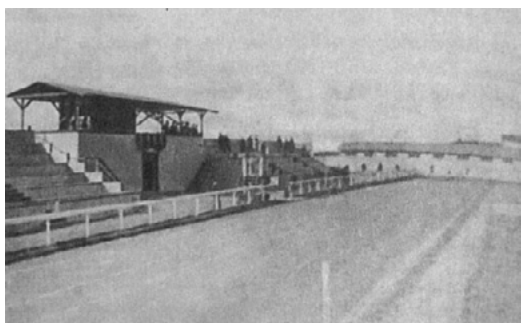


**Fig. 1A.** Lublin, Stadion Unia, source: <https://www.nowydzien.pl>, 15.04.2019.

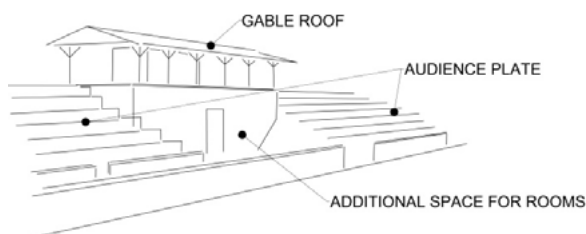


**Fig. 1B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

An example of a small stand for several dozen people was the stand in Lublin at the Unia stadium. The facility has a single-pitched roof with the ridge level equal to the level of the street adjacent to the sports area. The form of the object was simple, inscribed in a cuboid. Horizontal parting stripes of the eaves formwork and balustrades protected against rain and sun, creating comfortable places in the shade. Construction columns are located in three rows with an equal, modular spacing. The level of the stand floor was raised above the level of the pitch to improve the visibility conditions for spectators. A row of benches is located in front of the stand. An example of this type of facility concerns local sports fields and sports grounds that were implemented in small towns.



**Fig. 2A.** Warsaw, stadion of Klub Sportowy Orzeł, view of tribunes before 1939, source: [www.warszawa1939.pl](http://www.warszawa1939.pl), 07.03.2021.



**Fig. 2B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

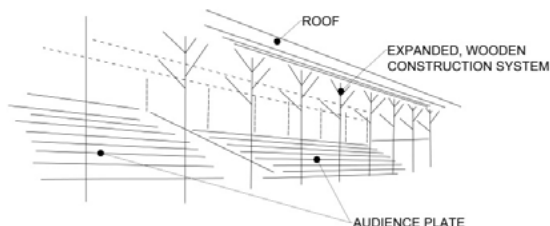
Around 1928, the city stadium of the Orzeł Sports Club was established, managed by the Society of Friends of Grochów of the Orzeł Sports Club. The facility survived until 1945. In the central part of the long side of the pitch, stands of reinforced concrete structure with six levels were designed<sup>3</sup>. The main part of the stand was a cubature, brick structure housing the entrance to the stadium and additional rooms. This part was covered with a wooden gable roof. The architectural form of the facility has been adapted to the scale of the sports facility. This type of stands was located in small towns, but in more advanced sports facilities.

<sup>3</sup> *Budowa Terenów i Urządzeń Sportowych*, Praca Zbiorowa pod redakcją Pptk. Dr Władysława Osmolskiego i Henryka Jeziorowskiego, Główna Księgarnia Wojskowa, Warszawa 1928.



**Fig. 3A.** Cracow, stadion of „Cracovia”, source: NAC, 16.04.2019.

The wooden structure was the grandstand of the Cracovia stadium in Krakow. The facility is medium-sized, intended for several hundred people and covered with a mono-pitched roof. Structural columns located at the outer edge of the roof were a characteristic element. The pillars had support elements for the struts. The side elevations of the stand were built in part with a partition made of wooden boards. The tribune provided comfortable admiring of sports competitions, protecting viewers from rain and sun.

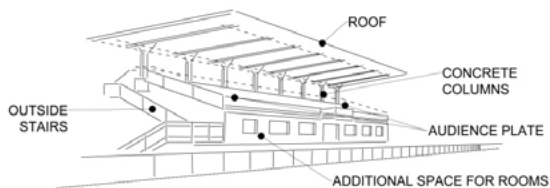


**Fig. 3B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

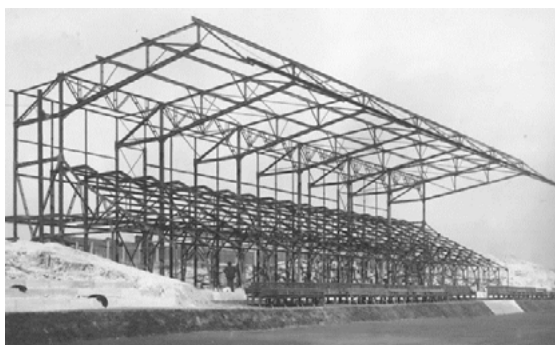


**Fig. 4A.** Trzyniec, Zaolzia, source: NAC, 14.04.2019.

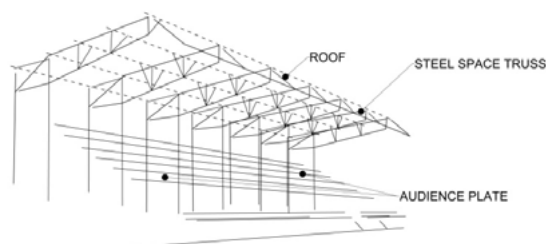
The tribune in the city of Trzyniec was built next to the sports field. The stand ensured very good visibility due to the location of the audience at a height of several meters. There was a cubature part of the building with rooms under the auditorium. A monumental roof was a characteristic element of the building's architecture. The mono-slope was designed with a slope towards the outside of the building. The roof rests on eight reinforced concrete columns. The roof structure is made of reinforced concrete beams and a complementary steel structure. Thanks to the knowledge of the design possibilities for reinforced concrete, a levitating element of the form of the roof was obtained, despite its size, visually light in reception.



**Fig. 4B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.



**Fig. 5A.** Hajduki Wielkie, source: NAC, 14.04.2019.



**Fig. 5B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

A steel structure facility was designed in Hajduki Wielkie. Both the auditorium, the rear wall, brackets and the roof were made of a steel spatial truss structure. The main elements of the structure were seven support frames anchored in the audience slab and transformed into the roof. Thanks to the elevation of the audience plate a few meters, all viewers had a full view of the sports facility.



**Fig. 6.** Warsaw, hippodrome in Łazienki Królewskie, source: NAC, 01-03-2021.

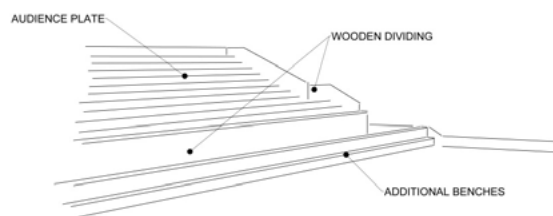


**Fig. 7.** Warsaw, hippodrome in Łazienki Królewskie, source: www.warszawa1939.pl, 01-03-2021.

An unusual example of the facility was the tribune of the hippodrome in Warsaw. A characteristic element of the building was the main façade, designed in the form of a two-story arcade with lots of ornaments, cornices, avant-corps and bay windows. The front end of the storey is made in the form of a partition, which also has a protective function against sunlight. The tribune's audience was not elevated above the ground. The first row is located at the level of the playing field. Such a procedure gave the impression of being in close contact with horse racing competitors.



**Fig. 8A.** Warsaw, tennis courts Legia Warszawa, source: NAC, 17.04.2019.



**Fig. 8B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

The architectural form of the tribune in the Legia Warszawa courts in Warsaw was unique compared to other facilities of this type. A unique procedure used in this building was a compact form obtained by building a wooden partition made of boards on the side walls and the front part. Raising the audience about two meters above the pitch provided safety for the spectators while playing tennis. An additional design procedure was the construction of a built-up part of the stand at the line of the pitch. It was here that journalists and photo-journalists could safely document the event.



**Fig. 9A.** Katowice, skating track and tribune, source: A. Syska, *Siła Narodu – wojsko polskie i budownictwo sportowe* [w:] A. Szczerski, *Modernizmy, Architektura nowoczesności w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Tom 2, Katowice i województwo śląskiej, 2014.

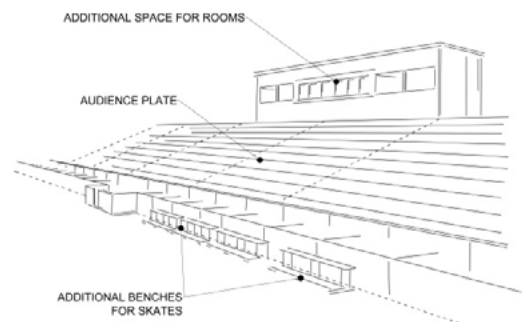


**Fig. 9B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

The tribune in Katowice were a representative and functionally developed facility. The building had three storeys and the front elevation from the side of the ice rink, extended in form and ornament. The windows have been divided into smaller quarters, creating a representative appearance on the facade. The audience was divided into fifteen rows. The central element of the stand was a cubature structure whose façade was moved back in relation to the line of the stands, creating space for users, judges, spectators, reporters and photographers. The architect of the building was Lucjan Sikorski<sup>4</sup>.



**Fig. 10A.** Zakopane, ice rink and tribunes, source: NAC, 12.04.2019.



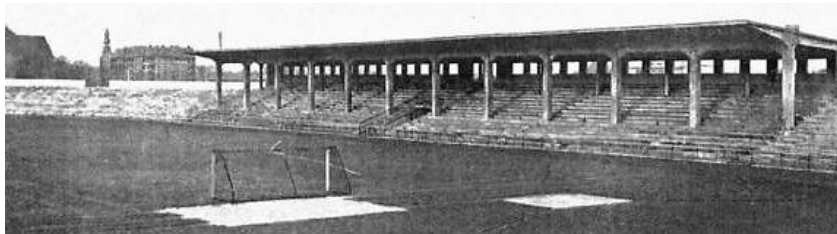
**Fig. 10B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

The tribune in Zakopane was also a representative object of the stands at the ice rink. The reinforced concrete structure of the building gave a monolithic and compact appearance to the architectural form. Above the auditorium there is a small, fully enclosed building, intended for judges, commentators, special guests, etc.



**Fig. 11.** Warsaw, Łazienkowska street, view of the swimming pool, source: [www.warszawa.fotopolska.eu](http://www.warszawa.fotopolska.eu), 26-09-2020.

An important and representative sports facility in which the stands were located was the open swimming pool at ul. Łazienkowska in Warsaw. The architect of the building was Aleksander Kodelski. The facility was built in the years 1928–1929<sup>5</sup>. The audience plate was made using the natural relief of the slope. The first row of stands was made at the level of the sidewalk around the swimming pool<sup>6</sup>. Due to the type of sport it was not necessary to raise the level of the audience plate much higher.



**Fig. 12.** Poznań, city sports stadium, arch. Sylwester Pajzderski, source: Architektura i Budownictwo, rok 1932.

In the city stadium in Poznań, the stands were built of reinforced concrete. The modular, monumental column spacing dominates the auditorium. The stands are designed for several thousand spectators.



**Fig. 13.** Cracow, al. 3-go maja, city sports stadium, source: [www.szlakmodernizmu.pl](http://www.szlakmodernizmu.pl), 23.05.2020.

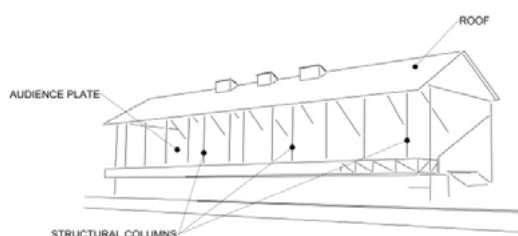


**Fig. 14.** Cracow, al. 3-go maja, city sports stadium, source: [www.szlakmodernizmu.pl](http://www.szlakmodernizmu.pl), 23.05.2020.

A large-scale object of the stands was the building in Krakow, in the city stadium at ul. May 3<sup>7</sup>. The stand was designed in a reinforced concrete and brick structure. The facility was cubature and had rooms for players, cash desks and technical rooms under the audience floor. The main entrance is located in the central part of the stands with a characteristic place of a mono-pitched roof based on four reinforced concrete pillars. The main façade obtained a representative appearance through the use of a modular, vertical division with pilasters and windows.



**Fig. 15A.** Lwów. stadion of Żydowski Klub Sportowy Hasmonaea, 1933, source: NAC, 16.04.2019.



**Fig. 15B.** Scheme of tribune form, prepared by author.

<sup>5</sup> Architektura i Budownictwo, rok 1929, Warszawa 1929, s. 4.

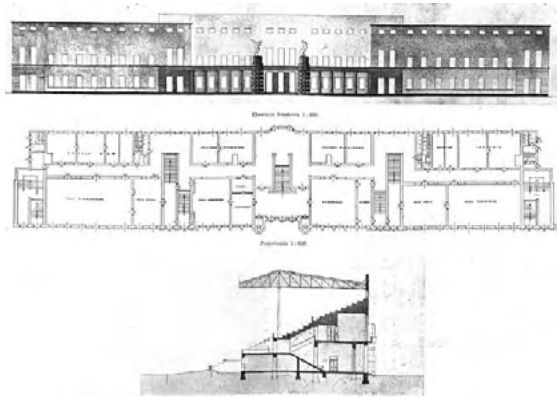
<sup>6</sup> Strug E., Semadeni T., *Budujemy pływalnię*, „Sport wodny”, nr 4, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> Pszczołkowski M., *Architektura Użyteczności Publicznej II Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939 Forma i Styl*, wyd. Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy, 2014.

A large-scale object of the tribune was the building of the stadium of the Jewish Hasmonea Club in Lviv. The object was mainly made of wooden construction. The audience plate was divided into two floors. The upper floor was entirely covered with a roof and was intended for several thousand spectators. The monumental, gable roof is based on a dozen or so meters columns forming a modular division of the facade of the stand from the side of the pitch.



**Fig. 16A.** Warsaw, stadion of Wojska Polskiego im. Józefa Piłsudskiego 1930, source: [www.legia.com](http://www.legia.com), 29-07-2019.

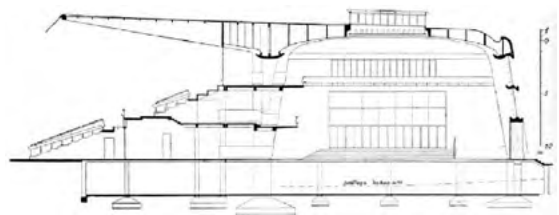


**Fig. 16B.** Warszawa, proj. inż. Maksymilian Dudryk, projekt trybun na stadionie Wojskowego Klubu Sportowego im. Marszałka Piłsudskiego, źródło: *Architektura i Budownictwo*, rok 1929.

Another large-scale and monumental facility was the stand of the stadium of the Polish Army. Józef Piłsudski in Warsaw. Many different sports, cultural and state events were organized at the stadium. The horizontal arc of the architectural form of the building was obtained through an asymmetrical gable roof. The audience plate was divided into floors. Almost all viewers were protected from the rain. The roof rests on five pillars. The roof span was optimized by using a steel structure<sup>8</sup>.



**Fig. 17A.** Warsaw, Służewiec, horse racing track 1938, source: NAC, *Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, sygn. 1-S-389-5.



**Fig. 17B.** Warsaw, Służewiec, main tribune 1938, source: NAC, *Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, sygn. 1-S-389-5.

One of the most significant and representative equestrian sports facilities was the hippodrome in Warsaw called Tor na Służewiec. The building's architect was Zygmunt Plater Zyberk<sup>9</sup>. The aesthetic and elegant form of the stand's roof corresponded to the reinforced concrete slab of the audience, creating an unusually expressive object<sup>10</sup>. A unique solution was also the combination of the auditorium with a multi-storey hall which housed

<sup>8</sup> We wczesnych latach po odzyskaniu niepodległości nawet w Warszawie nie wszystkie kluby posiadały własne boiska a w większości identyfikowano problem związany z dostępem do tego typu obiektów. Pawlikowska-Piechotka A., Piechotka M., *Dzieje obiektów sportowych w Europie, Historia architektury sportowej od czasów starożytnych do współczesności*, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie, Podręcznik akademicki, Warszawa 2017, s. 251.

<sup>9</sup> Zachwatowicz J., *Architektura Polska*, wyd. Arkady, Warszawa 1966.

<sup>10</sup> Wereszczyńska A., *Statki na trawie i kropla wody – styl Streamline w architekturze i wzornictwie przemysłowym w latach trzydziestych XX wieku w Stanach Zjednoczonych, Europie i Polsce*, *Architecturae et Artibus*, 2, 2015.



the ticket offices, the main entrance, boxes, restaurant and accompanying rooms. The facility currently functions almost unchanged. It is an example of timeless modernist architecture in streamline style.



**Fig. 18.** Królewska Huta, sports stadion Komitet Wychowania Fizycznego i Przystosobienia Wojskowego, view of tribunes from playing field and from main entrance 1931, source: NAC, 18.04.2019.

Another large-scale object of the stands is the example from Królewska Huta. As in several other structures, the construction of the stands was combined with other functions. Rooms, a restaurant, ticket offices, etc. are located under the audience's slab. The main supporting structure for the roof was made of steel elements of columns and beams. From the outside, the building had a modular facade division.

## Summary

The stands are one of the few types of facilities that were built next to sports facilities, regardless of the discipline for which they were erected. The construction of these facilities was necessary due to the necessary space for viewers to watch sports events.

The architecture of the stands can be divided into three types due to the scale. There were small wooden structures, medium-sized steel structures, and the largest objects in representative sports designs, reinforced concrete structures<sup>11</sup>.

In many examples of stands it can be noticed that their main function is related to secondary functions. These were, among others sanitary facilities, cloakrooms and rooms for employees, cash desks, entrance to the facility as well as restaurants in the largest facilities.

In many cases, the facilities of the stands provided favorable conditions for watching sports events. The seats located on the platform significantly improved the comfort of watching sports events due to the greater range of visibility. In many venues, seats in the stands were divided into more or less comfortable ones. The best conditions for viewers had roofed stands with an exposed place to watch a sports facility, e.g. a balcony or a bay window. Some of the most representative buildings had closed, glazed boxes where special guests were received.

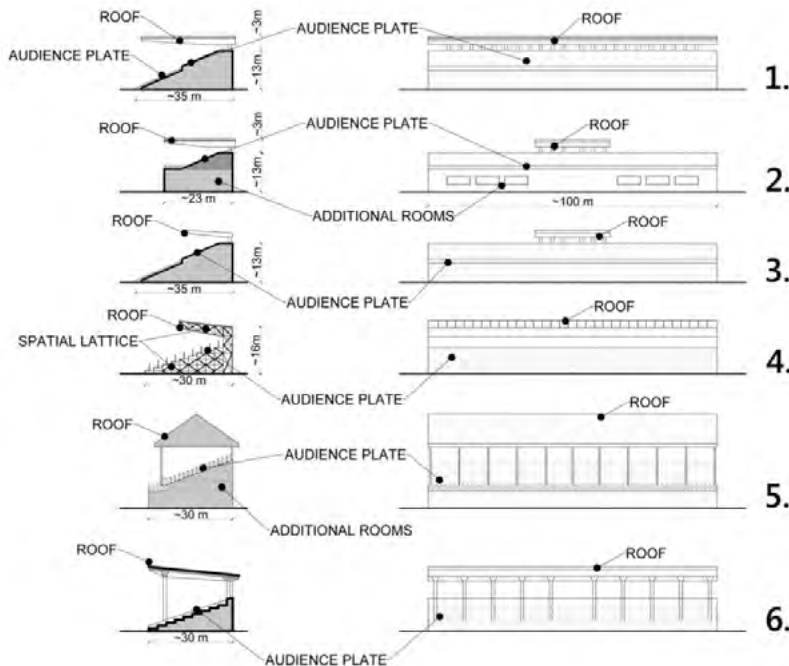
Examples of stands of the interwar period are an important element of sports architecture. There is a clear evolution in the way these objects were designed between the 1920s and 1930s. The manner of advancement of the facilities also depended on the available materials as well as the design knowledge which Polish architects often owed to examples of foreign facilities<sup>12</sup>. The stands built in the years 1919–1939 are the first such facilities built on a large scale in Poland, which in the following decades were systematically developed by subsequent architects.

A characteristic element of the form of the stands was the row of structural poles supporting the roof of the building. The columns were located mainly in a modular arrangement with an equal spacing. In the later

11 Wirszyłło R. (red.) *Urządzenia sportowe, Planowanie, Projektowanie, Budowa, Użytkowanie*, wydanie czwarte, Arkady, Warszawa 1982.

12 Śleboda T., *Edgar Norwerth 1884–1950 artysta i człowiek*, Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata & Wydawnictwo Tako, Warszawa – Toruń 2018.

facilities of the 1930s, thanks to the use of new technologies in construction, the poles were located closer to the central part of the auditorium.



**Fig. 19.** Types of selected tribunes, 1. Tribunes with full audience roofing, 2. Tribunes with raised audience platform, 3. Open tribunes with covered central part, 4. Tribune in steel space truss construction, 5. Tribunes with gable roof, 6. Tribunes in reinforced concrete construction, prepared by author.

Depending on the sport discipline, the facility for which the stands were located, the level of the first row was located at the appropriate height. For large-area facilities with a large pitch, the level of the first row of stands was raised a few meters. For sports such as swimming pools, the level of the first row foundation was located at the level of the footpath surrounding the pool basin.

The stands built in the interwar period in the Second Polish Republic are an example of the first large-scale structures of this type. Many of these buildings have not survived to the present day due to the wooden structure and the destruction caused by warfare. Objects that have survived to the present day are an example of a timeless design idea and an architectural idea that was then modern with the use of new construction and material technologies.

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