

»THE DUTY OF A SOKOL IS TO YET AGAIN STEP INTO THE NATIONAL FRONT LINE«

(SOKOL MOVEMENT IN SLOVENIA - 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF JUŽNI SOKOL)

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Research article

Abstract

In Middle Europe, gymnastics have roots in the 19th century and since are witnessing the social innovation and institutionalisation of physical activity and exercises to modern exercising systems named by antique original gymnastics. Gymnastics (various exercising systems such as Ling's, Jahn's, Nachtegal's and Tyrš's or sokolism) as physical education soon became a significant political, health-eugenic and military instrument in the shaping of national identities and characters in 19th century. Among middleeuropean Slavs the gymnastic pioneer was Sokol (Falcon) in Prague in 1862 but at the very same year there was also intention to organise gymnastic society in Ljubljana, Slovenia, independently of Prague's events. Because of the contradictions of authorities first Sokol society on the territory of present-day Slovenia was organised in 1863 and became the central Sokol society among Slovenes. In the years before the WW I. Sokol societies spread around Slovenia and united in Union. With the establishing of Yugoslav state after WW I. Slovene Sokols joined with Serbians and Croatians into Yugoslav Sokol. In the paper we describe Sokols story by focusing on some crucial moments in Sokols history.

Keywords: *Sokol movement, gymnastics, history.*

INTRODUCTION

In Middle Europe, gymnastics have roots in the 19th century and since are witnessing the social innovation and institutionalisation of physical activity and exercises to modern exercising systems named by antique original gymnastics. Among Middle European Slavs the gymnastic pioneer was Sokol (Falcon). Sokol movement based on the principles of the French bourgeois revolution and democracy was open to every member of a

nation, man and woman, peasant and citizen, capitalist and worker, free and equal in fraternity to whom freedom and national interest were first. It was important to exercise, as by exercise one strengthens, is healthy and makes progress. Thus, the ideal is virtue, individual, ethical and national, and progress, that magic word of modernism, as to progress was in the circumstances of the middle of the 19th century a must because, as Czech founder

of the Sokol Miroslav Tyrš¹ stressed, in the light of the universal natural survival law, a perpetual struggle for existence and survival exists among nations and societies that have in their life and in culture neglected physical and moral values and thus became effeminate, they succumbed. (Pavlin, 2009d; Kaimakamis &, 2011)

Sokol movement among Slovenes

The organizing or establishing of first Slovene gymnastic society is closely related to the political conditions in the Habsburg Empire. At the end of the 1850s of the 19th century, after dispersals in the foreign affairs and military spheres, poor economy state and after a longer period of the hateful Bach absolutism, the emperor Franz Joseph was forced to promise the time-appropriate changes in the legislation and the constitution. Soon followed the fall of the Minister of the Interior Alexander Bach and the adoption of the October Diploma in 1860 and the February Patent in 1861, both bringing back the constitutional life. The establishing of societies in all areas of national activities – from politics, culture and physical culture, to economy, adequately followed in the Slovene region. The societies also represented the practical side of the then Slovene as well as German nationalism. On the territory of present-day Slovenia, two gym societies, the German Turnverein and the Slovene one were established after constitutional changes in Ljubljana, then the capital of inneraustrian land Carniola and a town where the municipal authority in 1860s was taken over by the Slovenes. Ljubljana took over the position of the leading national, politically-cultural centre among Slovenes. The first Slovene gymnastic society Južni Sokol was organised in 1863 but we have to pointed out that the intention for gymnastic society was brought out already in the summer 1862 to organise utraquistic society. Soon contradictions between Slovenes and

Germans spread out and Germans decided to organise Turnverein, while Slovenes because of complications of authorities organise gymnastic society as much as one year later on 1. October 1863 and named it Južni Sokol (South Falcon). About gymnastics in Južni Sokol already at the end of 1863 referred E.H. Costa (*starosta* / president). He pointed the gymnastics, translated in slovene language as *telovadba* / body-exercise (telo/body – vadba/exercise). Gymnastics is “the art” and that the actual education is concerning only about “mind and soul” and it neglect “body” so therefore they were witnessing illness, which could be dispatched by going back to the nature and by exercising, as we are dualistic, from body and soul, and if one part got ill both would be ill. He also pointed education of youngs and educational effects of gymnastics and national education through sokol's manifestations. He also advocated gymnastics for peasants because it cultivated the peasant's natural or “raw” strength which could increase the peasant's agility, liveness, improve their walk and posture. Likewise he stressed the importance of the development of women's gymnastics which contributed to the feminisation of physical activities (Costa, 1864; Pavlin, 2009a).



Figure 1. Dr. Henrik Etbin Costa – the first president of Južni Sokol

Sokol gymnastics as a specific system of exercise for all-round personal exercising was primarily an activity of urban areas but

¹ Czech Miroslav Tyrš (1832-1884) was one of the founders of Sokol movement and creator of sokol's ideology.

slowly it did start to make its way into the countryside. With organisational and professional consolidation came gym professional manuals and works. The first gym professional publishing in Slovene *Nauk o telovadbi* (Science of gym) was published as early as 1867 (part I.) and 1869 (part II.) and it was inspired by German professional works. While Czech societies were professionally uniting around Tyrš's system and it did further developing (Gajdoš, 2012a), the professional bases inspired by Tyrš's system in Slovene Sokol societies introduced Viktor Murnik in the last decade of 19th century. V. Murnik was good gymnast and soon became conductor. He was inspired by Czech's Sokols profession and studied Tyrš's gymnastics bases. For the Sokol professional development, courses for instructors organized by V. Murnik after 1896 were of big importance. Murnik's work for professional renovation of sokolism in Ljubljana coincided with organisation of several new societies within the Slovene lands – starting in the 1880s - and in historiography is that period marked as era of Sokol renaissance and Murnik as Slovene Tyrš. Major characteristics were organisation of courses for instructors, systematically regular exercising and competitions and adequately uniting around profession, that was gym, introducing woman gymnastics and woman sections. With Sokol renaissance and Murnik's theoretical work Sokol movement brought about a new profession and social activity, which was spreading and developing. Growth of Sokol societies in Slovenia and unique professional bases led to the organisation of national association called Slovene Sokol Union in 1905, which in 1907 joined International gymnastic association (FIG). With this act Slovene Sokols joined the FIG's competitions. Murnik's systematical works finally reflected at all sokol festival (*zlet*²) in

Prague 1912 where at the game for Slavic champion surprisingly won the first place Slovene Stane Vidmar and on third place was Karel Fux - the pupil finally attained the teacher. Finally we can not neglect the fact, that Tyrš's system was also adopted by Croats (first society 1874) and Serbs, so Tyrš's Sokolism became the basis of gymnastic work among Slavs. (Zaletel, 1933; Pavlin, 2009a; Stepišnik, 1974) Sokol movement spread also in USA as many of Slovenes in the second half and at the end of 19th century migrated there to find better existence. In free time they established Sokol Societies and contributed to progress of USA gymnastics. (Grossfeld, 2010; Kaimakanis, Dallas, Stefanidis, Panagiotis and Papadopoulos, 2011)

Up to 1914 gymnastics gained importance among the Slovene people and it was on the other hand charged with national emotions since it coincided with tendencies of Slovenes towards national emancipation and political demands for the unification of Slovene lands into a politically autonomous unit of Slovenia within the Austro-Hungarian framework. But we must though stress that various societies or associations, whose purposes were either educational or cultural, social or merely sociable or nationally-defensive and not political (but yet mostly bound to various political conceptions), included gymnastics into their activity. Physical activity served the societies as an "instrument" for "achieving the society's purpose". Similarly in line with the catholic politics of "re-catholisation" at the end of the 19th century, the catholic camp decided to introduce a gymnastics at the beginning of September 1905. Anton Korošec, later a recognized cleric and Slovene and Yugoslav politician but then still an arbitrator for society's entertainment events, advised to organize gymnastic sections within the catholic civil organization, which few years later resulted in an independent catholic gymnastics

² Zlet/festival; these were massive manifestations, reunions and promotion of Sokol gymnastics or work – mostly group free exercises, they included also gymnastic match. With festivals started Czech

Sokols (Gajdoš, 2012b) in Slovenia was first in 1888, second in 1904 and third would have to be in 1913, but it was abandoned by authorities.

organization Orel (Eagle). (Pavlin, 2006; Pernišek, 1989)

End of WW I.: new state, new Sokol

The end of World War I signified an ultimate national emancipation and independent political organization of the Austro-Hungarian Slavs. 29th October 1918, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was announced on the ruins of Austria-Hungary and that was a state of Austro-Hungarian South Slavs. Slovene gymnastic organizations – national-liberal Sokol as well as the catholic Orel – and gymnasts enthusiastically welcomed the new state. Sokol immediately asked “Sokol brothers and sisters” and “all the Sokol units and societies” to instantly start the Sokol activities since “the duty of a Sokol is to yet again step into the national front line” (Pavlin, 2005, p. 100). The most significant duty in first month of peace was to secure the political overthrow by membering the National Guard³; they appealed to the members that there should be no Sokol who would not join the guard and help maintain law and order. (Pavlin, 2005; Perovšek, 1996)

The next political step was the union of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs and the Kingdom of Serbia into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 1st December 1918, which was in 1929 renamed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In the first decade, the kingdom went through stirring times. The uniting process namely did not suit all the parties as it was regulated by then effective political rule of conduct “one nation – one state”, based on the unitary or centralistic Yugoslav national ideology of an unitarian Yugoslav nation and its three tribes – Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In the western, catholic part of the state (Croatia and Slovenia), political opposition (in Slovenia especially catholic political camp) advocated that the state had

to be reorganized on the national autonomy and were therefore in contradiction with the “Unitarians”, the advocates of the integral Yugoslav politics and a unified Yugoslav nation. In Slovenia and Croatia, this meant that the leading national parties either identified with the Catholicism and advocated the national autonomy and rights of the Church in secular, cultural and political life, or with the national liberalism supporting the Yugoslav unitarism. The conflict, which was twofold – on one hand on a state level, on the other hand within the nation – transferred to the cultural domain and therefore to the physical culture domain, since gymnastic societies and their logical development in the 19th century and integration in the national revival of the Slavs in the Habsburg empire, were an important bearer of the national emancipation and neoslavic as well southslavic idea. The cultural conflict between unitarians and autonomists was characteristic for the catholic part of the Yugoslav state and more or less the entire public life was tied into it. (Dolenc, 1996; Pavlin, 2009a; Perovšek, 2005a)

With forming the new state essentially influenced the ideological orientation of the civil society. National and liberal Sokols and on the other hand Catholic Orel faced the question of Yugoslav organization. Sokols were the principal advocates of Yugoslav unitarism and centralistic union. Ideas and plans on south Slavic Sokol union date before World War I. Already in 1913 during the planned all sokol festival of the Slovene Sokol in Ljubljana, south Slavic national sokol associations intended to link up on a democratic basis into a union. With end of WW I., sokols enrapturedly supported the foundation of the Yugoslav state. In the January 1919 issue of Sokol (official gazette of Slovenian Sokol), Slovene Engelbert Gangl, the later Sokol president, otherwise a teacher, poet and writer, stressed in an article titled “*Victory-freedom*” that the formation of the new state also signified the formation of the new, Yugoslav lifestyle, political as well as cultural, which meant a deviation from the

³ The National Guard had to secure specially the retreatment of soldiers of Austro-Ungarian army from northeast Italy through Ljubljana and Slovenian countries.

traditional austro-german frame. This represented a new challenge for the Sokol movement and at the same time it was the realization of the south Slavic Sokol ideal. The new state brought the end to the struggle for national emancipation, which was replaced by the “enthusiasm” to the new state and to the new Yugoslav Sokol movement. The path to reach the new Slavic national consciousness led through the Yugoslav state – Gangl stressed and equated the state with the birth child of the Sokol movement. So they have to clench a fist and make every effort to defend since “the Sokols are a fighting organization, revolutionaries who want to build new worlds in the living souls. Foundation – brotherhood, links – unity, aim – freedom!” (Gangl, 1919, p. 4) The euphoria upon the birth of a new country was according to Gangl unfortunately accompanied by grief as well since some of the national territories remained in foreign hands (in Italy, Austria and Hungary – note author). But the grief has to be overcome though, for he stressed at the end, we have a state and victims were not in vain.

At the end of January 1919, the Slovene, Croatian and Serbian Sokols met in Zagreb and decided to join together. In the Declaration it was emphasized that the nation of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes represents one nation and that Sokol societies were, are and have to be national societies. It was also stressed that there is only one Slavism and it is a part of Mankind. The ideals of Mankind are uniform. Slavic Sokol movement and Sokol movement of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes tended, tend and will tend to fulfill those ideal conceptions. And they had in mind the ideals of democracy originating in enlightened humanism and French revolution. So the national Slovene, Croat and Serb Sokol societies, following the political union, joined together into Yugoslav Sokol Union or shorter Yugoslav Sokol on 29th June 1919 in Novi Sad. The principle of conduct was “one nation, one state, one Sokol”, which corresponded with the state centralistic order and the state’s

idea of the unified Yugoslav nation and three tribes – Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. That meant that former national Slovene, Croatian and Serbian union would dismissed themselves, while societies had to transform or joined into new Yugoslav one. The later was delicate especially in the regions of Croatia as, for example, former Croatian and Serbian societies in Croatia had to unite into new Yugoslav one. (Pavlin, 2009b) At the founding assembly they also emphasized that Yugoslav state “is the result of their pre-war efforts and activities”. In the view of international gymnastic membership the YS continued the Slovenian and Croatian membership in FIG and replaced former Slovene and Croatian Sokol and in 1924 also started to compete at Olympic Games. (Pavlin, 2009b)

The sit of Yugoslav Sokol (YS) was till 1930 in Ljubljana and during the first decade the Slovenes took over the running of organisation and gymnastics since the former Slovene Sokol organisation was the oldest in the Slavic south and professionally well developed. Because of that, the Slovene gymnasts played an important role in consolidation of the YS organisation and in professional identification on the basis of the Tyrš’s sokol gymnastics. As a part of Sokol activities, we must also mention the combining of gymnastics with cultural activities. “*Sokolnica*” or Sokol gymnastic hall was also a national and cultural hall (especially in smaller towns) and it had a broad social meaning. Music, drama and puppeteers’ groups all functioned within the Sokol society and Sokol events included gymnastics as well as cultural activities. In central and south Yugoslavia “sokolnica” also functioned as an educational centre, especially if the town or country did not have a school. It helped reduce illiteracy (in 1931, 60% of the Yugoslav population were illiterate, mainly the people in south Yugoslavia) and organised practical lectures on modern farming. (Pavlin, 2009a; Stepišnik, 1974)

As we see, YS related activities with the young state and country. On the other hand, as the advocates and bearers of

Yugoslavism, patriotic nationalism and democracy, they have been politically tied in the liberal unitary camp. However, the national YS unity rather quickly weakened, first in Croatia, where a larger group of members gathered around the umbrella society in Zagreb withdrew from the YS association and re-organized Croatian national Sokol societies within the Croatian Sokol Union. They withdrew at the assembly of YS held in Osijek in 1921 after only two years of unity and southslavic “enthusiasm” (Gangl). After their retreatment YS in the 1921 assembly resolution emphasized the unity of YS association and that the unity represents also the evolution into Yugoslovanism, which requires time. They even more explicitly declared as the bearers of Yugoslovanism and their defenders. Their vision, or we could say their utopia, expected – in the spirit of progress, democracy and social equity regardless of one's race, religion or class –the formation of a specific Yugoslav type of culture “as the means for developing a Slavic culture on the pathway to mankind”. They recognized the difficult conditions of living in the country after the war so in this hard time they appointed themselves the role of a guide taking the slogan “Who Sokol, that Yugoslav”. (Brozovič, 1930, p. 65-66)

The unity and activity YS presented in 1922 on its first all Sokol festival in Ljubljana. The festival was well participated, also numerously by “brothers and sisters Czechoslovaks”. Within the festival it was included International match or (today) World Championship of FIG. Festival was well organised and it was presentation and promotion of YS and new young state as it was written about it also in foreign newspapers. (Spomenica, 1923)

Yugoslav Sokol and school

YS's important concentration in new state was work on education and within it intention to renew and sokolise the physical education on the level of the state. In the question of school physical education YS already at the assembly meeting 1919 laid

down a principle called *Sokol and school* emphasizing the fact that the Sokol and school should be connected reciprocally. They stressed the Sokol movement had had a nation-forming task for over 50 years and in the new state, it should therefore penetrate all national schools, secondary moderns, secondary schools and other schools with its spirit and take over physical education in schools. Sokol teachers should also be physical education teachers and vice versa. The Sokol movement should play a leading professional role in resolving issues concerning physical education as well as within the framework of the authority structures from the lowest to the highest ones at ministry or government level. The YS declaration was taken into account since in January 1920, the Yugoslav government ordered that school gym should be carried out in accordance with the Sokol system. YS also took care of the professional basis and their 1921 assembly made an appeal to the Ministry of Education for organizing courses for gym teachers and for employing gym teachers trained according to Sokol principles in all teacher secondary training schools in the country. They also made an appeal to the authorities for special supervisors for physical education. They also proposed that a department of physical education should be established in at least one faculty of arts – in cooperation with the faculty of medicine; lecturers should be established Sokol experts. The Ministry of Health should award grants to young doctors skilled at physical exercises who could specialize as physiologists and develop the physiology of physical education. However, the demands were too radical (also expensive) for new authorities and in practice, the education of staff was based on YS professional courses (in Ljubljana, a one-month training course for Sokol instructors was organized as early as autumn 1919, similarly in Zagreb; it consisted of 10 lessons every day covering theoretical and practical aspects) which were also recognized in schools as appropriate for teaching physical education. At the end of November 1920, YS met with

the Czechoslovak Sokol in Ljubljana to establish the Union of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Sokol (later Slavic Sokol Union). In a solemn declaration, they stressed the tendency towards the creation of a new and complete type of a Slav who would strive to achieve human completeness and the tendency towards closer contacts among Slavs. Both the Yugoslav and the Czechoslovak Sokols aimed to serve the nations on the basis of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. One of the central points of Sokol work was a physical rebirth of a nation and education of young generations, that is why both Sokol organizations demanded that the states should pay attention to these issues and they would help them. They also stressed the fact that among the goals of this Association are the commitment to reforming schools and army according to Sokol principles, an obligatory law on physical education of all citizens and the establishment of a college of physical education either in Czechoslovakia or in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Actually, a six-month Sokol school was organized in Prague in the late 1920s where also Yugoslav Sokols were trained. This training, however, was carried out primarily in a civil society manner. On the basis of Sokols' initiatives, the Yugoslav state got involved in solving the problems regarding professionalism in physical education in the late 1920s. In June 1927, it introduced a one-year course in physical education for physical education teachers in secondary schools. At the same time, YS emphasized that physical education teachers and professionals in the field of civil physical education should study for two years either at university or teacher training short-cycle college until a suitable short-cycle college of physical education was established (Pavlin, 2009b; Pavlin, 2010).

By coming into schools and by introducing Sokol gym and national education, Sokols were – in the catholic part of the country⁴ – confronted with the

traditional educator, i.e., the Catholic Church, and its intention to use the principles of the catholic Orel in this part of education. This led to an eruption of the cultural fight between the Sokol and Orel movements which had a political liberal and catholic background. At the end of January 1921, after the government order that school gym should be carried out in accordance with the Sokol gym, representatives of the catholic Slovene People's Party and priests from the Ljubljana diocese met to discuss resistance to Sokol education. They made a written protest and required that the order to introduce the Sokol movement into schools should be cancelled. Different catholic societies made written protests addressed to the government in Belgrade, Slovene bishop Jeglič initiated action at bishops' conference level and in February 1922, Slovene and Croatian bishops made a personal protest in Belgrade and demanded that controversial decrees should be revoked. They referred to the Austrian school act which was still valid in Slovenia and which determined religious and moral education while the Sokol education was denied this mission. Catholic gatherings were organized by both the catholic party and the Ljubljana diocese to emphasize political action. In the middle of March 1922, sixty-six gatherings took place to protest against educating the youth in the Sokol spirit.⁵ (Dolenc, 1996)

The Sokol status and work in the first decade of Yugoslav state was discussed from January 20th to 27th at special conference organised in Ljubljana, the seat of the YS organisation, with an intention to critically assess the Sokol activity in the first decade in organisational, technical, ideological and educational aspects, review causes that have positively or negatively influenced the development of the Sokol work, and to form on its results guidelines for future work. With the "questionnaire" they very selfcritically established that the Sokol movement only partially managed to

⁴ Slovenia, Croatia and part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁵ Ljubljana Bishop Jeglič thought at that time that the government would give in and would require only gym in accordance with the Sokol system but would refuse Sokol education.

become the central point of national and cultural movement in the country. The idea of Yugoslavinism, i.e. national and state unity, was more or less bound to the Sokol movement only, while beyond it, it developed in the opposite direction. They also established that the politics often impeded the Sokol development. Sokol members who were active in the politics could generally not perform the Sokol activities since their political job was not in accordance with the Sokol principles, specially national. In regard of profession, they ascertained that the knowledge of the trainers was in general insufficient, that they should be central personalities of the Sokol organisations, and that educational work was unsuccessful due to inadequate inner cooperation of the trainers and educational workers and structures. Consequently, a large part of youth was included in other sports and physical-educational organisations as for example in scouts. They also noticed a decrease of female members and deficiency of female skilled cadres. In regard of inclusion of the Sokol movement in state structures, it was stressed that the relation between the army and the Sokol organisations was otherwise friendly and in spirit of support but cooperation depended on individuals, while military education did not or insufficiently include the Sokol system of education. Also unsatisfactory was cooperation between the Sokol organisations and schools, despite the decrees of the ministry of education and inspite the fact that in the process of giving physical education in schools a Slovene as well as a Yugoslav character, the Sokol movement played the most important professional role. On the contrary, in schools they many times met with a negative attitude not only towards the Sokol movement but also to physical education in general. Somewhat better was the situation in the country where the Sokol movement developed but conditioned by specific circumstances in the state. (Pavlin, 2002)

The 6th January Dictatorship and the Foundation of the Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (SKY)

Political chaos ruled in the young Yugoslav state in its first decade as for example in less than ten years ten governments followed, and various political coalitions were from the aspect of principles and polarisation incomprehensible. King Alexander tried to annul traumatic circumstances, which paralysed public life, with the so-called 6th January Dictatorship at the beginning of 1929. He abolished parliamentary political regulation and introduced absolutism to, as he among other explained the citizens in his 6th January “manifest”, preserve “national and state unity”. With the Law on protection of the state, political parties were prohibited and dissolved, while the existence of political or related societies was linked to special administrative permits. (Perovšek, 2005b) The 6th January decree echoed in the Sokol official gazette Sokolski glasnik. In its approval of the King’s action they stressed that the King’s act itself was not a solution and that the Sokol members were convinced that “only morality and education can save the nation”. Political autonomy was as well just a means to actual national life but could easily be lost “if we as a nation cease to live morally”. The latter was the task of the Sokol movement, which in such a manner took part in “building up” the Yugoslav state. (Pavlin, 2002, p. 59)

Because of the traditional links between the political and cultural groups and gymnastic organisations, the dictatorship also influenced the field of gymnastics; sport suffered no consequences. Soon after the King’s dictatorship destiny of gym organisations appeared on the agenda of the government sessions. King Alexander accepted in March 1929 YS delegation. He was interested in the activity of the YS and in obstacles that were disturbing their work “for the King, nation and homeland”. (Žutić, 1991, p. 43) The YS prepared for the occasion a “memorandum” on physical education with schemes of laws on physical

education of youth and on a gymnastic military school (the basis was the January 1929 conference in Ljubljana). In the Memorandum, they suggested a model of sharing competences in physical education between the state and the Sokol organisation. It was pointed out that the state should take care of “physical education of its citizens” as it took care for spiritual education, for “as the human soul and body are inseparably bonded, so natural is the demand for performing physical education in parallel with spiritual education, thus physical education belongs in every school” [...] “Because physical education is not concluded with the school period” and is because of that most necessary from 15 years of age on, “the state should leave it for that period to the Sokol organisations”. (Spomenica, 1929)

As Slovene newspaper *Jutro* reported at the end of November 1929, “a plan was being prepared in Belgrade by which physical education in schools and among the nation was to be organized uniformly, in the spirit and by the principles of the Sokol gymnastics, and to bring the Sokol movement in close connection with the action of the state”. (Pavlin, 2002, p. 61) The new Sokol movement, spread among all strata of the Yugoslav society, would have a significant role of the educator of the Yugoslav national and state idea. The planners of the scheme intended to “merge it with the state educational policy”, for “only that way it will be possible to convey the Sokol and Yugoslavism to the widest national strata and educate the entire nation in the spirit of national and state unity”. (Pavlin, 2002, p. 61) At the beginning of December 1929, the law on the foundation of SKY was adopted. At verification, *Jutro* pointed out that the foundation for the new organisation was the Sokol idea “on development and strengthening physical culture and a uniform Yugoslav spirit”. Such Sokol movement would “become under state control a united national first class militia, a strong factor of national future ..., the most significant element of national felicity and progress”, and it would

be spread among lower classes, workers and peasants, who were “the most efficient national elements”. Also stressed was the pre-military significance of “physical culture” for the “Sokol members have always been the healthiest material for the army”, therefore massive Sokol membership “will facilitate military education with purpose of state defence”. The Sokol recruits would be already trained, only military improvements would be needed, the duration of their service could be shortened. *Jutro* concluded that statutory founding of a state Sokol organisation was an honouring to the actual Sokol movement, and recognition of past work. (Pavlin, 2002, p. 63) President of the YS E. Gangl immediately greeted the law, reminded of the Memorandum on regulating physical education in the state, and said YS movement was “ready to contribute to their abilities in achieving entirely the great and generous goal of physical and moral education of the whole nation”. (Pavlin, 2002, p. 64) By the Law the government and the king wanted to protect the Sokol movement but at the same time wanted to have influence and control over the organization. Essential for further activity of the then gymnastic organisations was article 12, which determined that previous “societies for physical and moral education: YS, Croatian Sokol, Orel and the Serb Sokol, if in three days after the beginning of validity of the law, they would not unite or join the SKY...would be abolished”. (Zbornik SSKJ, 1939, pp. 9-12)⁶

While the catholic gymnasts refused to join, the YS joined and transformed into the new Sokol given that the new law was drafted according to its interests. The etatisation of Sokolship and Sokolism reflected in the government’s control over the new organisation, the principle of the democratic choice of leadership only applied for the base, while the leaders of the Federation were appointed or later (based on the base’s proposal) confirmed by the

⁶ The Codex (Zbornik) contained laws, decrees, regulations, and instructions on the organisation and activity of the SKJ.

government. In addition to that regular financing of physical education in direction state-Union, municipality-societies were introduced. In 1932 the Ministry for the Nation's Physical Education was set up and it took over the control and financing of physical education. A larger portion of the budget was given to SKY and the other portion was divided among sports, mountaineers, scouts, shooters and firemen. (Pavlin, 2002)

The seat of SKY was transferred to Belgrade, capital of Yugoslavian state, which in the 1929 renamed into Kingdom of Yugoslavia, similar as Sokol organisation. The first or constitutive session of SKY took place at the end of January 1930. The main point on the agenda was constitution of the SKY and adoption of the statute, which was proposed to the government for ratification. The agenda also contained the question of membership in international organisations, in the FIG and in the Slavic Sokol Union. The entente ally Czechoslovakia was attentively watching over the destiny of the YS. Immediately

after the adoption of the Law of SKY, the Czechoslovak Sokol union asked the Yugoslav ambassador in Prague for exhaustive information upon which they could be sure "that in the new Yugoslav Sokol organisation there is nothing fascist, or anything that the Sokol movement could not accept in regard of its democratic and liberal principles". (Pavlin, 2002, p. 66) The Yugoslav ambassador in Prague wrote on the new national organisation to the Czechoslovak Sokol as well as to the Slavic Sokol Union, and expressed a belief that "the Czechoslovakian and the Slavic Sokol Union will be able to evaluate the intentions of the new Sokol organisation in Yugoslavia". He stressed it was necessary "that particulars of gymnastic organisations adapt in every Slavic nation and in every Slavic state to local circumstances". (Pavlin, 2002, pp. 66-67) In Prague, after detailed acquaintance, greetings and approval replaced scepticism and strongly supported SKY in incorporating in FIG and Slavic Sokol Union.



Figure 2. Yugoslav team at OG 1928, on the left coach dr. Viktor Murnik

SKY got personal connections with the court because Alexander's heir to the throne Prince Peter was the official leader of Sokol. After King Alexander's assassination in 1934, SKY kept its leading role however, following the political twist in 1935, the

government once again gave permission to organise catholic gymnastic societies under new name Slovenski fantje in dekleta (Slovene boys and girls; boys and girls in the sense of young men and women – note author). Up to 1941, the state supported

gymnastics and physical education based on gymnastics and in 1934 a law was passed which introduced physical education as an obligatory activity for the young population that finished schooling. In the background, we must take into consideration the Central-European political situation and increasing militarization and totalitarianism, in this case physical education, especially sokolism, was supposed to perform pre-military and patriotic training. In different “decrees” on facilitations for SKY members regarding obligation of serving the military, the minister of army and navy prescribed benefits for members who would, when entering military service, attest five-years continual membership, and successfully conclude the programme of needed preparing. Years the recruit spent in lower age gymnastic categories were also included in the five-year term. (Pavlin, 2009c; Zbornik SSKJ, 1939)

“Golden age”

As pointed in his publication Sokol and Olympian Boris Gregorka, the decade between two world wars was in competitive sense “the golden age”. After succeeding the membership in FIG and joining to Olympic movement Yugoslav Sokols competed at all major gymnastic matches with exception of Olympic Games (OG) Los Angeles 1932 and World Championship (WC) Budapest 1934. The reasons for missing the OG 1932 was high expenses, but on the other side in that same Olympic year was also allsokol festival (zlet) in Prague and the head of SKY decided rather to take part with large delegation at Sokol festival. In 1934 they decided to boycott the WC in Budapest because of political reasons. The very first introduction of Yugoslav gymnasts was in 1922 when new YS had its first allsokol festival (zlet) and within it hosted FIG’s international match or WC. Among individuals Peter Šumi shared first place, while Stane Vidmar was third and Leon Štukelj eighth. Two years later Yugoslav Sokols appeared at Olympics. In Paris OG 1924 surprised the gymnastic

world Leon Štukelj winning two golden medals (allround and pole). In 1926 was on schedule WC in Lyon. Among six nations Yugoslavs were second after Czechoslovakia while Peter Šumi became for second time FIG’s world champion. At OG 1928 in Amsterdam in gymnastics competed eleven nations and Yugoslavia was third while Leon Štukelj was third in allround and first at rings, Josip Primožič second on parallel bars and Stane Derganc third in vault. The Amsterdam OG were success hard to overgo. Then followed the tragical WC in Luxembourg 1930 as during his appearance on rings tragically fall off young Tone Malej and later died in hospital. Despite of tragedy Yugoslav Sokols finished competition and Josip Primožič became allround world champion. He also won pommel horse, parallel bars and floor exercise. Leon Štukelj, who during the competition injured, was third at horizontal bars. In the thirties new generation was coming but unfortunately it was facing lack of major matches and lost the international contact. Finally they appeared on the scene at OG in Berlin 1936 but the golden age declined and only Leon Štukelj at his last Olympic performance got silver medal on rings.

In Berlin also competed for their first time Yugoslav female Sokols. Last competition before WW II. was FIG’s WC in Prague 1938. As it was tense international political situation the participation was truncated. Yugoslav Sokols were in men competition third, among individuals Josip Primožič was third on horizontal bars. In female competition Yugoslav team was second among four national teams.

We have to pointed out that in Yugoslav (Sokol) men national gymnastic teams in “golden age” prevailed Slovenes or gymnasts from Slovene sokol societies. On the major competitions (3 OG and 4 WC) in the period between two world wars competed 26 gymnasts. Among them 4 came outside Slovenian societies, in 1928 Olympic team was one Croatian, in 1936 Olympic team was one Serbian and in WC 1938 team were one Croatian and one

Serbian. More than half of gymnasts competed at least at two tournaments.

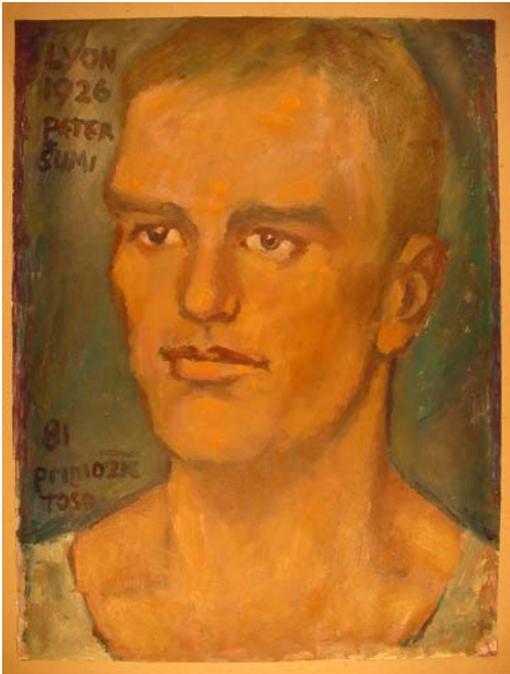


Figure 3. Peter Šumi (two times in row all around World Champion). Painted by Jože Primožič the first official apparatus World Champion on Floor, Pommel Horse and Parallel Bars

The leaders were Leon Štukelj and Josip Primožič at six tournaments, Stane Derganc and Boris Gregorka at four, Mihael Oswald, Janez Porenta, Peter Šumi at three, Slavko Hlastan, Stane Vidmar, Anton Malej, Edvard Antosiewicz, Miroslav Forte, Jože Vadnov and Janez Pristov at two, one appearance had Vlado Simončič, Stane Žilič, Rastko Poljšak, Srečko Sršen, Oton Zupan, Rafael Ban, Konrad Grilec, Miloš Skrbinšek, from Croatian societies Dragutin Ciotti and Stjepan Boltžar, from Serbian societies Josip Kujundžić and Dimitrije Merzlikin. (Gregorka, 1991; Štukelj, 1989)

Unfortunately “golden age” followed April sixth attack of Nazi-fascistic bloc on Yugoslavia in 1941, its capitulation, occupation and dismemberment of Slovenia. Sokol was liquidated and their halls took over by occupation authorities or forces. In this situation Sokols in Slovenia supported resistance and were cofounders of National liberal front and partisans while one part of

Sokols supported resistance within Yugoslav army led by emigrant government and King Peter, former heir and Sokol president, in London. With liberation in 1945 and communistic political takeover, former physical education was transformed into prosovietic “physical-culture”. In transformation there was no place for national and liberal Sokol. But its gymnastic heritage and work and methods went on. After the reorganization of physical culture after 1948 (Informbiro confrontation between Soviet Union and Yugoslavia) again was organized an independent gymnastic organization. On the meeting of its Executive board in 1951 it was suggested to name again Sokol, but it was politically refused because of Sokol’s division during WW II. It prevailed idea to name the organization Partizan (partisan - fighter for liberation in the WW II.). Another change came in 1963 when was organized Gymnastic Union of Slovenia (on the state level Gymnastic Union of Yugoslavia). In Union was united the competitive gymnastics (sports and rhythmic gymnastics, Gymnastic Union took over also the membership in FIG), while Partizan would have to takeover mass physical activity or recreation. And if we borrow verse of popular song of rock-group Doors, “This is/was Sokol’s/ the end, my only friend” (Jim Morrison).

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