

Tomáš TLUSTÝ*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6571-9161>

Orel – the Catholic physical education association: foreign relations up to 1929

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Orel – katolické stowarzyszenie wychowania fizycznego: stosunki międzynarodowe do 1929 r.

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia historię katolickiego stowarzyszenia wychowania fizycznego Orel (pol. Orzeł) i jego stosunki międzynarodowe do 1929 r. Początki ruchu Orel w czeskim regionie Austro-Węgier sięgają przełomu XIX i XX wieku, kiedy to powstały pierwsze oddziały stowarzyszenia. Poszczególne oddziały ruchu były mocno związane z czeskim katolicyzmem politycznym. Wkrótce po ich powstaniu działacze zaczęli nawiązywać pierwsze kontakty z istniejącymi organizacjami zagranicznymi, których większość pochodziła z terytorium dzisiejszej Słowenii. Liczba zagranicznych organizacji znacznie wzrosła po I wojnie światowej, kiedy to niezależny już czeskosłowacki Orel został członkiem Katolickiego Związku Gimnastycznego – UIOCEP. Członkowie tej organizacji pochodzili z wielu krajów świata, dlatego też rosła liczba nawiązanych przez nią kontaktów zagranicznych. Wzrosły również wpływy i znaczenie czeskosłowackiego ruchu Orel, co wiązało się m.in. z faktem, że czeskosłowacka organizacja zaczęła budować własne place zabaw i sale gimnastyczne. W 1922 r. czeskosłowacki Orel zorganizował swój pierwszy międzynarodowy festiwal w Brnie, co znacząco przyczyniło się do rozwoju całej organizacji. W 1929 r. czeskosłowacki Orel zorganizował drugi wielki festiwal wychowania fizycznego, licząc na dalsze poszerzenie grona zagranicznych przyjaciół. Drugi festiwal odniósł jeszcze większy sukces i pomógł czeskosłowac-

* PhDr., Ph.D., The University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Education, Department of Sports Studies, Czech Republic; e-mail: tomtlusty@pf.jcu.cz

kiemu ruchowi Orel zwiększyć wpływy w UIOCEP, w którym stopniowo stał się drugą co do wielkości organizacją.

Słowa kluczowe: Orel; katolickie wychowanie fizyczne i sport; UIOCEP; konkurencje sportowe; stosunki międzynarodowe.

Abstract

This paper looks at the history of Orel, the Catholic physical education association, and its foreign relations up to 1929. The origins of the Orel movement in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary go back to the turn of the 20th century when the first local Orel associations were established. These associations were strongly connected with Czech political Catholicism. Shortly after being formed, their functionaries began to establish their first contacts with existing foreign organizations. Most of these organizations were from the area of contemporary Slovenia. Their number rose significantly after the First World War when the newly independent Czechoslovakian Orel became a member of the Catholic physical education union – UIOCEP. The members of this organization were all around the world. The number of foreign contacts it had established was also on the increase. The first international physical educational festival, which helped Czechoslovak Orel with its development, was organized in Brno in 1922. But the Czechoslovakian Orel had planned a second big festival of physical education for 1929, hoping to further extend its number of foreign friends. The second physical educational festival was also successful. It helped Czechoslovak Orel to increase its influence in UIOCEP where it became the second-largest organization.

Keywords: Orel; Catholic physical education and sport; UIOCEP; events; foreign relations.

Introduction

The origins of Orel, which is primarily an association uniting people of the Catholic faith, can be found at the turn of the 20th century when the first physical education divisions were formed within existing Catholic associations. Their formation was provoked by a considerable disregard of religion in the Sokol organization and SDTJ (Union of Workingmen's Physical Education Associations).¹ Literature often refers to the decision to establish and name the organization in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary being inspired by Slovenian lands, where the Orel organization had been formed by Janez Evangelist Krek.

An important functionary within the Slovenian Orel, Krek was politically active, having been a member of the Imperial Council (Reichsrat) at the turn of the 20th century. It was probably the Imperial Council where he met the man who was to become Orel Mayor for the Czech region of Austria-Hungary, Jan Šrámek, with whom he became friends. Janez Evangelist Krek visited Moravia several times. He also arranged meetings to share experiences on the running of political parties and associated (satellite) organizations – particularly unions. After the

¹ M. Strachová, *Sport a Český svaz tělesné výchovy po roce 1989*, Masaryk University, Brno 2013, p. 17.

Orel movement was established in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary, its functionaries gradually began to establish contacts with Catholic physical education organizations abroad.

The Orel and foreign relations before the First World War

Besides the previously mentioned friendship between Jan Šrámek and Janez Evangelist Krek, it was probably Štěpán Klapil who made one of the first foreign contacts for the Orel movement. He had already established written contacts with the Slovenian Orel, Catholic Sokol in the USA and Polish Sokol in 1908, which was actually before the official formation of Orel in Moravia in 1909.² Soon after the Moravian Orel was established, its members began to travel to foreign events.

Foreign colleagues repaid these visits, attending events such as the third provincial Orel festival held on 11th August 1912 in Kroměříž,³ where, for the first time, the town procession was host to delegations from the American Catholic Sokol, the Slovenian Orel and the Croatian Catholics.⁴

Orel delegates attended the Eucharist Congress in Vienna from 12th to 14th September 1912. Besides Orel members publicly declaring their faith and around 200 of them parading in folk costumes in the city procession, they also deepened their relations with their South Slavic colleagues.⁵ Large numbers of members of the Slovenian Orel had attended the event, inviting their colleagues from the Czech region of Austria-Hungary to join them at their festival to be held in Ljubljana.

The Slovenian Orel was preparing its first festival, which was also supposed to have been the first Slavic Orel Festival.⁶ Apart from meeting Slovenians, Orel members from the Czech region of Austria-Hungary had also arranged to meet Croatians in Ljubljana.⁷ Moreover, the Ljubljana festival was an important event for all participants due to it being a kind of manifestation of Slavic Catholic physical education associations in Cisleithania. The festival was hosted to participants from Dalmatia, Carniola, the Slovene Littoral, Gorizia, Carinthia, Styria, Vienna,

² *Pětadvacet let jednoty Orla českosl. ve Vyškově 1905–1930*, Vyškov 1930, p. 12.

³ *Orelský katechismus*, Třebíč 1938, p. 9.

⁴ Archives of Orel, Unclassified, *Stručné dějiny Orla; Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 16.

⁵ *Příručka osvětové práce orelské*, Brno 1921, p. 28.

⁶ “Orel: Věstník křesť.-sociálního Orla československého” 1913, no. 1, pp. 2–7. However, the Ljubljana Festival was not marked as the first Slavic Orel Festival in the end. This status was given to the festival in Maribor, which took place in 1920. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1929, no. 20, pp. 192–193.

⁷ PHS (Pravi Hrvatski Sokol – Genuine Croatian Sokol) had previously invited Orel delegates from the Czech region to its conference “Hrvatske Zajednice”, which took place on 24 March 1913 in Split. However, they did not attend, sending just a telegram to Dalmatia.

Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.⁸ The Orel travelled to Ljubljana as a fully independent organization with a delegation of 356 members. A total of 94 gymnasts performed floor exercises. Eighteen Orel gymnasts did ball exercises to music. Thirteen women Orel gymnasts also performed exercises with Indian clubs. This was the first large-scale trip abroad made by the Orel organization from the Czech region of Austria-Hungary.⁹

In 1913 the Orel was honoured by a visit from Gustav Košík, president of the Catholic Sokol in the United States. Proposals to bring the two organizations closer were the main issue on the agenda. The Orel was invited to the Catholic Sokol Festival to be held in 1915 in the city of Passaic, not far from New York. Just before the First World War broke out, the Orel made efforts to establish its first contacts with members of UIOCEP¹⁰ (Union internationale des œuvres catholiques d'éducation physique – International Union for Catholic physical education activities), which united the French, Italians, Luxembourgers, Dutch and Belgians. On 6th June 1914, its chairman Henri Delaunay held talks with Orel delegates in Brno on the possibilities of cooperation. Negotiations, which the Orel had hoped would lead to its affiliation to this Union, subsequently continued at a distance – in writing. The French delegate also invited the Orel to the UIOCEP congress in Nancy.¹¹

The First World War considerably strangled the efforts and further enthusiasm of the organization as a whole. It prevented the planned trip to Nancy as well as the prepared first Imperial Festival of the Orel from the Czech region of Austria-Hungary, which was supposed to have taken place alongside celebrations on Saints Cyril and Methodius Day in 1915. This was supposed to have been a festival for all Orel associations throughout Austria-Hungary. The organizers counted on the participation of Orel associations from Moravia, Silesia, Bohemia, Austria and Slovenian lands as well as PHS, the Polish Sokol and Czech and Slovakian Catholic Sokol from the USA. They also assumed that UIOCEP offi-

⁸ “Orel: Věstník křesť.-socialního Orla československého” 1913, no. 5, pp. 1–2.

⁹ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 18; *Orelský katechismus*, Třebíč 1938, p. 10; “Orel: Věstník křesť.-socialního Orla československého” 1913, no. 6–7, p. 5.

¹⁰ This organization was formed in 1908 after the first international congress and Catholic gymnastics tournament in the Vatican. With his passion for physical education, Pope Pius X is also credited with its establishment. He was renowned for his proclamation: “*Pray and exercise.*” The Union was initially located in Rome but relocated to Paris in 1920. However, Rome still remained its formal headquarters until 1933, when the Union left Rome for good after changing its statutes. Its largest member being the French FGSPF (Fédération gymnastique et sportive des patronages de France – the Gymnastics and Sports Federation of the auspices of France) was instrumental in that. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1928, no. 5, pp. 65–68; “Nová tělesná výchova: list pro tělesnou výchovu, tělocvik, sport, hry, skauting a pro vědecké studium těchto oborů” 1927–1928, p. 44.

¹¹ “Orel: Věstník křesť.-socialního Orla československého” 1914, no. 7, p. 55; *Příručka osvětové práce orelské*, Brno 1921, p. 30.

cials would attend.¹² The Union provisionally confirmed that its top executive organization – the FGSPF would participate.¹³ However, Orel activity was not suspended. It was only very significantly restricted.

The Czechoslovak Orel and foreign relations immediately after the First World War

After the First World War came to an end and an independent Czechoslovakia was established, the independent Orel associations in Bohemia and Moravia were united, creating a single Czechoslovak Orel organization – the Czechoslovak Orel. Half a year on from the end of the First World War, the united Czechoslovak Orel began to make efforts to reestablish contacts with Belgian and, in particular, French Catholic gymnasts. This task was taken up by the Mayor of the Czechoslovak Orel, Jan Šrámek, who spent several weeks in France and Belgium accompanying the Czechoslovak parliamentary delegation.

Contact with the American Catholic Sokol was soon re-established too. They had sent a letter to the Brno office in the first half of 1919 with greetings and news of its activities during the First World War. The letter also contained a request for the Czechoslovak Orel to return their news and the Czechoslovak Orel quickly sent a reply.¹⁴

The Czechoslovak Orel was later to organize a manifestation to be held in Brno on 25th January 1920, calling on every single division to invite as many members as possible. The Catholic Sokol from the United States of America was one of the foreign guests to have provisionally agreed to take part. This would be the second delegation from the American Catholic Sokol in history to attend an Orel event in Moravia. Hynek Dostál, their mayor from St. Louis, even prepared a speech for the occasion. He was joined in Moravia by the Secretary of the Velehrad group from Ohama – Václav E. Jelínek.¹⁵ Delegates representing Catholic associations from Yugoslavia and Vienna also travelled to Brno. This was also

¹² “Orel: Věstník křesť.-socialního Orla československého” 1914, no. 5–6, pp. 33–34.

¹³ This organization was established in Paris in 1898 by Paul Michaux. It was originally known as the Union des sociétés de gymnastique et d’instruction militaire des patronages et œuvres de jeunesse de France. It was not until 1903 that the Union was renamed FGSPF. This was an organization devoted mainly to gymnastics, although it was also possible to go in for sports like light athletics, football or later basketball on a recreational basis. A.R H. Barker, *Amateur Musical Societies and Sports Clubs in Provincial France, 1848–1914: Harmony and Hostility*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2017, p. 223; “Orel: Věstník křesť.-socialního Orla československého” 1914, no. 7, p. 55.

¹⁴ “Orel: Věstník Orla Československého” 1919, no. 5–6, pp. 40–45.

¹⁵ The Americans followed up on their visit to the Czechoslovak Orel manifestation in Brno with a delegation of six members of the American Catholic Sokol being welcomed in Moravia by the Czechoslovak Orel in June 1920. *Příručka osvětové práce orelské*, Brno 1921, p. 39.

the very first time an event had been attended by Catholic youth members from Racibórz.¹⁶ The main topic of discussion at the meeting was the mission of the Orel movement, its expansion and new challenges.¹⁷

Relations with Southern Slavs were further deepened by the First Slavic Orel Festival, held from 29th July to 3rd August 1920 by the Southern Slavic Orel. This magnificent event, held in Maribor, was host to several foreign associations, including the Czechoslovak Orel,¹⁸ which was the largest foreign delegation, despite members having had to pay all expenses themselves. 378 of its members travelled to Maribor and took part in all of the major celebrations. The Czechoslovaks were scheduled to have their performance of floor exercises on Sunday 1st August but it was cancelled due to bad weather. Members of the Czechoslovak Orel had to make do with a joint mass performance of floor exercises with all the other Orel participants (Czechoslovak and Slovenian).¹⁹

However, the festival did provide members of the Czechoslovak Orel the opportunity to meet a delegation of eighteen French Catholic gymnasts, led by Armand Thibaudeau. The French went on to invite the Czechoslovak Orel to its festival in Strasbourg in 1921. In return, they were later invited to the Second Slavic Orel Festival, to be held in Brno in 1922.²⁰ František Metoděj Žampach, vice-mayor of the Czechoslovak Orel, also invited the Slovenians and Croatians to join them in Brno.²¹

During the Maribor Festival, delegates representing the Czechoslovak and Slovenian Orel also met to discuss whether or not a Union of Slavic Orel Associations should be formed. Despite both parties unanimously accepting the idea of such an organization, the issue of Union statutes got no further than an exchange of opinions. The two parties subsequently agreed to work on proposals for the statutes to be negotiated at a future meeting.²²

In early February 1921, the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel received a letter from the manager of the Strasbourg festival containing the following text:

We were honoured to receive your letter of 28th January and we are extremely pleased that you intend to take part in the Strasbourg meeting. We are also in very close contact with the Yugoslavian Orel in Ljubljana. We hereby enclose a program to enable you to get

¹⁶ “Orel: Věstník Orla Československého” 1920, no. 2–3, pp. 32–33.

¹⁷ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 32; “Orel: Věstník Orla Československého” 1919, no. 12, p. 148.

¹⁸ *20 let trvání jednoty Orla československého v Plzni 1913–1933*, Pilsen 1933, p. 18.

¹⁹ “Orel: Věstník Orla Československého” 1920, no. 4–5, pp. 70–71; “Nová tělesná výchova: list pro tělesnou výchovu, tělocvik, sport, hry, skauting a pro vědecké studium těchto oborů” 1927–1928, p. 44; *Zpráva předsednictva: valný sjezd Orla československého v Brně 1. května 1923*, Brno 1923, p. 5.

²⁰ This festival also became the first national festival of the Czechoslovak Orel associations.

²¹ *Příručka osvětové práce orelské*, Brno 1921, pp. 38–39.

²² “Orel: Věstník Orla Československého” 1920, no. 8–10, pp. 106–119.

acquainted with the technical side of the festival. Be so kind as to inform us of your receipt of the enclosed program. With kindest regards. Yours Faithfully, A. Biecheler [all transl. – author]²³.

Originally the Czechoslovak Orel had planned to send a group of 24 members to Strasbourg, having prepared their physical education performance.²⁴

However, the French had estimated around 25 thousand visitors from all over France would attend. They were to be joined by associations from many other countries. For the Czechoslovak Orel, this was to be their first big performance abroad. Its previous participation in the Maribor festival had been a mere attempt to develop its activities abroad but still only among Slavs. The Czechoslovak Orel had wanted to show off the best it could offer, planning to deepen friendships between them and their French colleagues.²⁵ Its other aim was to acquire knowledge and experience to enrich its further work in Czechoslovakia.²⁶

The Czechoslovak Orel wanted to impress the French with its elements of women's physical education, which was not very widespread in France at the time. Consequently, a great deal of attention was devoted to preparing the women's performance.²⁷ However, Czechoslovak Orel leaders could not make up their minds for a long time as to whether to have their members attempt to measure their strength with the local talent. It was generally assumed that if the French physical education organization had existed for such many years, it would dispose of a high level of maturity and excellence. Moreover, this assumption was supported by the fact that the Czechoslovak Orel had witnessed the Paris Montmartre elite team performing its exercises in Ljubljana, Slovenian lands. For that reason, the Czechoslovak Orel decided not to take part in the competitions this time and rather to put their efforts into building solid foundations for friendship. It also wanted to thoroughly observe what the French tournaments involved and use the experience they gained to prepare for next time.

In the end, around 80 people represented the Czechoslovak Orel in Strasbourg. Their observations led them to state that they would definitely take part in the following tournaments and that they would try to be one of the best teams. On Sunday 7th August 1921 the Czechoslovak Orel performed its exercises, gaining a huge ovation from spectators and words of recognition from local physical education experts. However, their performance was much shorter due to delays in the whole event's schedule. The national anthems of all participating nations were played to close the festival. The Czechoslovak Orel was very happy with its per-

²³ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1921, no. 2, p. 24.

²⁴ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 32.

²⁵ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1921, no. 2, pp. 23–24.

²⁶ The Czechoslovak Orel was well aware that, unlike its French counterparts, it was a very small organization with very limited experience from the few years of its existence. "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1921, no. 3–4, pp. 41–42.

²⁷ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1921, no. 7, pp. 120–121.

formances. Moreover, having formed close friendships with the French, the Belgians and other nations, they managed to agree on having these Catholic gymnasts participate in the coming First Festival of Czechoslovak Orel Associations in Brno in 1922.²⁸

Moreover, the Czechoslovak Orel women's performance in Strasbourg greatly inspired the French to start thinking seriously about establishing a Catholic women's physical education federation. Consequently, a committee was set up to prepare the establishment of this federation. The first committee meeting was probably held in Paris on 16th January 1922 during the UIOCEP conference.²⁹ Leopold Saňka, a delegate invited to represent Czechoslovakia, informed of the Czechoslovak Orel women gymnasts' organization and shared his experience of women's association physical education. Negotiations resulted in the establishment of the FCEPF (Fédération catholique d'Éducation Physique Féminine – Catholic Federation of Women's Physical Education). On a visit to greet the new federation, Leopold Saňka invited their women gymnasts to take part in the coming Orel Festival in Brno and the French federation approved.³⁰

In the early 1920s, the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel agreed to begin to make efforts to get the Orel affiliated to the UIOCEP.³¹ At its annual meeting on 15th January 1922, this organization, claiming in early 1922 to unite Catholic physical education and sports unions from Italy, France, Belgium, Alsace, Holland, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia,³² Luxembourg and Yugoslavia, proposed to have its championships held in Brno to mark the First Festival of Czechoslovak Orel Associations. This proposal was of great importance for the Czechoslovak Orel. It was a great honour for the Czechoslovak Orel as it was aware that there were not all that many tournaments held by this organization.³³ Mem-

²⁸ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1921, no. 8, pp. 137–143; *Pětadvacet let jednoty Orla českosl. ve Vyškově 1905–1930*, Vyškov 1930, p. 33.

²⁹ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, pp. 32–33; *Zpráva předsednictva: valný sjezd Orla československého v Brně 1. května 1923*, Brno 1923, p. 5.

³⁰ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1922, no. 1, p. 7.

³¹ The Czechoslovak Orel was already essentially a member of the union despite being officially admitted at the union's annual meeting held in Paris on 15 January 1923. Evidence of the Czechoslovak Orel practically being a member of the UIOCEP from 1921 lies both in the establishment of mutual cooperation between the Czechoslovak Orel and the UIOCEP and in the fact that the federation had written documentation of its tournaments being held in Brno at the 1922 Festival of Orel Associations. *Orelský katechismus*, Třebíč 1938, p. 11; *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 32; "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1923, no. 5, p. 83.

³² At the time, Czechoslovakia was the union's newest member. The DJK (Deutsche Jugendkraft – Reichsverband für Leibesübungen in katholischen Vereinen – German Youth Power Sports Association – the Reich Union for physical exercise in Catholic associations) and the Catholic Sokol Associations (Czech and Slovakian) from the United States of America remained outside the union.

³³ Prior to the First World War, they were held twice in Rome and several times in France, but as part of the French Federation tournament. After the First World War, the union organized two

bers were reminded that this was the Union's very first tournament outside Roman countries as well as being the first tournament in Czechoslovakia to be officially announced by an international physical education organization. The whole union accepted the Czechoslovak Orel tournament exercises, turning the planned tournament into an international one.³⁴

The First Festival of Czechoslovak Orel Associations held in Brno in 1922 was host to a total of almost 3 000 gymnasts from abroad, particularly from Yugoslavia and Western Europe. At the time, this was probably the largest number of foreigners to have taken part in a single physical education event in Czechoslovakia.³⁵

The Czechoslovak Orel and foreign relations in the period between its two Orel Festivals

On Sunday 25th February 1923, there was a UIOCEP general meeting, chaired by Belgian Félix van de Kerchove. Delegates from the national unions attended, the Czechoslovak Orel being represented by Augustin Neumann. At the general meeting, representatives agreed for the Union to arrange another international tournament. The first was planned for Paris on 21st and 22nd July 1923. The FGSPF was to host it, having celebrated its 25th anniversary that year. The tournament was to be followed by a two-day congress, to discuss women's physical education organizations, football and athletics. The Southern Slavs' request to host a tournament in Ljubljana in 1924³⁶ was approved at the congress and planned to continue in Rome a year later.

However, for the Czechoslovak Orel, there was a more important matter to be resolved at this general meeting – the UIOCEP was to elect a new board. Félix van de Kerchove was reelected president but his secretaries were to be replaced. The post of president's second secretary was to go to the Dutch or the Czechoslovak Orel. However, the Dutch gave up their right, acknowledging the Czechoslovak Orel had become the second-largest Catholic physical education organization in Europe, after the French. The Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel

tournaments, one in Metz (This event took place on 24 and 25 May 1920 but the Czechoslovak Orel only sent a Greetings telegram.) and in Strasbourg. In both cases, they were again part of the French Federation tournament. "Orel: Věstník Orla Československého" 1920, no. 8–10, p. 134.

³⁴ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1922, no. 1, pp. 5–6; "Orelský věstník: Orgán zemské rady Orla Českosl. v Čechách" 1922, no. 3, p. 25.

³⁵ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1928, no. 23–24, pp. 353–355.

³⁶ Unfortunately, no records of the 1924 tournament in Ljubljana were found. This tournament was probably rescheduled for 1925 to coincide with the Third Slavic Orel Festival which should have taken place there. However, it did not go ahead in the end. "Orelský věstník: Orgán zemské rady Orla Českosl. v Čechách" 1924, no. 13, p. 201.

was subsequently asked to elect its representative by itself. On 23rd April 1923, Leopold Saňka was elected to this post by the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel. František Schwarzer³⁷ was named the second delegate for the Council of the Union. Moreover, the Union assigned the Orel the task of trying to get the Poles affiliated.³⁸ Besides, the Czechoslovak Orel was to express its opinion on a future decision that was still very tricky for western countries – whether or not to allow the Germans and the Austrians to affiliate to the UIOCEP.³⁹

At a meeting of the board of the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel on 28th February 1923, it was announced that the FGSPF had already sent an official invitation to the planned Paris tournament. The Czechoslovak Orel reacted by immediately beginning to prepare a group to represent them abroad.⁴⁰ Indeed, a group of 198 Orel members made the trip to Paris. The tournament itself began on the afternoon of Saturday 21st July. Before departing for the exercise ground located in the Champ de Mars, František Metoděj Žampach stood before representatives of the Czechoslovak Orel and spoke to them on behalf of the attending members of the Central Council:

[...] In the whole 20-year existence of a Catholic physical education movement in our nation, since the formation of the Orel in 1909, you are the first to be sent to perform in a tournament abroad. We are absolute beginners in that field. Last year's anniversary fes-

³⁷ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1923, no. 5, p. 102; “Orelský věstník: Orgán zemské rady Orla Českosl. v Čechách” 1923, no. 8, p. 120.

³⁸ In the following year, the Czechoslovak Orel held talks with the Polish Catholic Central Committee in Poznan both on their accession to the UIOCEP and on their accession to the prepared Union of Slavic Orel Associations. However, neither of their applications was accepted. The first due to the Polish Catholic Youth Organization being affiliated to the Roman International Union of Catholic Youth (probably the FASCI – Federazione delle associazioni sportive cattoliche italiane – Federation of Italian Catholic Sports Associations), which was to represent the Poles in the Union. Unfortunately, no records disclosing the reason for the second application being rejected were found.

³⁹ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1923, no. 3, pp. 44–51. Indeed, the Austrian Union of Catholic Gymnasts had applied to become affiliated to the UIOCEP. The Czechoslovak Orel had no objections to its accession to the Union and was subsequently assigned the task of negotiating the conditions for the Austrian's accession to the UIOCEP. The Germans (Deutsche Jugendkraft) were admitted to the UIOCEP at a union meeting in Paris on 20 February 1927. It was also agreed that minority unions in individual states would be represented in the union by a delegate from the union with national majority. For the Czechoslovak Orel, this meant that its delegate in the UIOCEP would now also represent Catholic physical education and sports organizations of national minorities (Germans, Poles, Hungarians) – provided their unions wanted to become members of the Union, of course. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1925, no. 3–4, p. 53; “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1926, no. 4, p. 51; “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1927, no. 5, p. 54; P. Arnaud, J. Riordan, *Sport and International Politics: Impact of Fascism and Communism on Sport*, Routledge, London 2013, pp. 177–178.

⁴⁰ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 20; “Orelský věstník: Orgán zemské rady Orla Českosl. v Čechách” 1923, no. 15, pp. 232–233.

tival was indeed the first time we had held a domestic tournament! Bearing in mind the number and quality of competitors, let us not indulge in exaggerated hopes of any particular victories in today's tournament. Instead, we have to harness all our strength to be proud of our performance...⁴¹

Around 700 French groups and 18 foreign associations took part in the meeting and tournaments. There was a total of 30 thousand gymnasts. On Sunday, there was a procession through the city towards the exercise ground followed by the tournament itself and individual group performances.

Besides competing in the tournament, the Sunday program also involved the Czechoslovak Orel performing their traditional column group exercise format. Spectators in the main tribune were greatly impressed by the Orel teams' performance. The first exercises were performed by a group of sixteen Orel women⁴² right in front of the main tribune. Their floor exercises were of great interest to the French. Unfortunately, the men's team did not perform right in front of the main tribune. They performed their exercises more towards the left tribune, being awarded thunderous applause. The group performances were then followed by the final flag parade in front of the main tribune.

Delegates representing the Czechoslovak Orel left Paris for Strasbourg to visit the International Hygiene Exhibition, which included physical education exhibits and was held in honour of the anniversary of Louis Pasteur's 100th birthday.⁴³ A group of eighty members representing the Czechoslovak Orel arrived in Strasbourg on the evening of Tuesday 24th July. The following morning, the Orel gymnasts rehearsed their routines, attended mass in the city and then went to the Exhibition. They headed straight for the Czechoslovak Pavilion. The afternoon was set aside for physical education performances, including a march from the Bartered Bride, a "symbolical group of women Orel",⁴⁴ a men's Cossack dance, Dvorak's Fantasy, floor exercises from the Paris tournament and the Paris "sixteen Orel women". For practical reasons, a slightly extended version of the afternoon program was repeated in the evening. The Czechoslovak Orel performance was concluded by a final line-up and the national anthem was played.⁴⁵

⁴¹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1923, no. 8–9, pp. 133–138.

⁴² Exercises performed by sixteen female members of the Czechoslovak Orel.

⁴³ This anniversary was accompanied by a whole range of exhibitions and presentations, some held outside France. Strasbourg hosted a large number of physical education associations, including the Czechoslovak Sokol Community which travelled alongside the Czechoslovak Orel. National archives in Prague, Fund Ministerstvo veřejného zdravotnictví a tělesné výchovy, Praha, Boxes 116 and 117, Signature XV Š/17, Pozvání na světovou hygienickou výstavu ve Štrassburgu a spisy týkající se Štrassburgu. 1921–1928. T. Čafer, A. Sackur, *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, Basingstoke 2002, p. 100.

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the source does not precisely specify what is meant by the term "symbolical Orel woman".

⁴⁵ "Orelský věstník: Orgán zemské rady Orla Českosl. v Čechách" 1923, no. 16, pp. 240–245.

Besides France, the Czechoslovak Orel was also invited to Vienna in 1923. Its delegation was due to travel on 16th June 1923 and return the following day. However, the Czechoslovak Orel Central Office was sent a telegram on 12th June 1923, stating:

Due to constant persecution arranged by German nationalist groups and their publicity against the Orel Festival, it has been banned in its entirety by the Vienna Police. Call off your official trip to Vienna. In the current circumstances, we cannot guarantee your safety. Dr Karlický.⁴⁶

The Vienna Orel Festival was rescheduled to be held in Vienna on 24th June and, on a smaller scale, in Břeclav on 8th July. Consequently, the Czechoslovak Orel had to cancel its practically finalized trip to Vienna.⁴⁷

In 1923, another ten delegates representing the Czechoslovak Orel travelled to Switzerland for a tournament and meeting of their Catholic Gymnastics Union. This was held from the 7th to the 9th of July and included a local union tournament (horizontal bar, parallel bars, vaulting horse, high jump, pole vault, floor exercises and running), a “light athletics” tournament (stone lifting, standing and running stone-throwing, floor exercises, jumps, running and wrestling) and a so-called people’s tournament (decathlon: 100 m and 110 m hurdles, high jump, long jump and pole vault, shot put and ball throw, weightlifting, climbing and floor exercises).⁴⁸

At a meeting of the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel on 24th January 1924, Leopold Saňka announced his resignation as vice secretary of the UIOCEP. He proposed František Schwarzer, the second Orel delegate in the UIOCEP, to become his successor. The Central Council approved this change, electing František Dolanský to replace him as the second Orel delegate in the UIOCEP.⁴⁹

On 8th and 9th June 1924, Orel delegates from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia had meetings in Vienna. They discussed the Third Slavic Orel Festival to be held in Ljubljana in 1925, the issue of establishing a Union of Slavic Orel Associations, the issue of international tournaments and the Paris Olympics. Both organ-

⁴⁶ At the time, Julius Karlický was Mayor of the Viennese Orel Associations. During 1923, having resigned as Mayor of the Viennese Orel Associations, he moved from Vienna to Prague and was replaced by his brother – František Karlický. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1924, no. 4, p. 63.

⁴⁷ The Viennese festival took place one week later than scheduled, almost in secret and with hardly any guests from Czechoslovakia. Mass and sanctification of the flag took place in the morning followed in the afternoon by public exercises called “Rehearsal for the Orel Associations’ performance in Břeclav on 8 July” at the Czech Heart exercise ground. The Viennese Orel did indeed go on to appear in Břeclav. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1923, no. 6–7, pp. 114–115; *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 20.

⁴⁸ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1923, no. 4, pp. 64–66.

⁴⁹ František Schwarzer maintained his position as Second Vice-chairman even when a new board was elected at the turn of 1926. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1926, no. 1, pp. 9–10.

izations agreed on holding the Third Orel Festival in Ljubljana in 1925 and on its program.⁵⁰ During talks on the forming of a Union of Slavic Orel Associations, the Yugoslavians proposed the union headquarters be located in Brno and most of the union functionaries be taken from the Czechoslovak Orel. Each of the potential member states was to have its representative in the Union of Slavic Orel Associations. Sending union members to compete in international tournaments was also debated. According to the proposal, each member state should be entitled to send one team to compete in international tournaments. The number of competitors sent to take part in special tournaments and union tournaments should not be limited in any way.⁵¹

Unfortunately, the third Slavic Festival did not go ahead in Ljubljana in 1925. This time, it was postponed indefinitely though, mainly due to the complicated domestic political situation in Yugoslavia involving the government's persecution of Slovenian Catholics, violent anti-Catholic acts of Serbian nationalists⁵² along unresolved disputes between Slovenian and Croatian Orel movements. Moreover, participants would not be provided with cheaper train fares or accommodation in schools and barracks. This might have been at least partly compensated for by the HOS (Hrvatski Orlovski Savez – Croatian Orel Union) inviting the Czechoslovak Orel to its Festival, which took place on the 9th August 1925 in Šibenik. The Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel decided to send a delegation of 3 or 4, accompanied by other interested members. In the end, a group of 6 travelled to Šibenik.⁵³

The third Slavic Festival in Ljubljana was not the only event to be shifted. The previously mentioned UIOCEP tournament did not go ahead either. This was to have been organized in 1925 mainly by the FASCI⁵⁴ but it was postponed until 1926 to prevent it from coinciding with another festival that was to go ahead in Rome in 1925. Instead of the great Rome tournament, the FASCI held a much smaller tournament, which was seen as a kind of preparation for Rome. This took place in Asti but the Czechoslovak Orel team did not participate, the Czechoslovak association sending a delegation of only two.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ “Věstník sokolský: List Svazu československého sokolstva” 1924, no. 26, p. 408.

⁵¹ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1924, no. 5, pp. 86–87.

⁵² Not nationalists but fascists is the word, which Czech Orel used in its journal. But in my opinion its not completely correct.

⁵³ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1925, no. 11, p. 140; “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1926, no. 20–21, p. 307.

⁵⁴ FASCI was formed in Italy in 1906, associating 16 sports clubs. Its primary aim was to organize Catholic sport. Just as in the FGSPF, FASCI members were mainly involved in gymnastics, although they did later begin to do other sports like light athletics, swimming, cycling, hiking, horse riding and football. P.D. Toso, *Nascita e diffusione dell'ASCI: 1916–1928*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2006, pp. 18–20.

⁵⁵ *Orelský katechismus*, Třebíč 1938, p. 14; *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, pp. 32–33.

The Czechoslovak Orel had already announced in 1925 that it was intending to participate in the festival and tournament in Rome in 1926. It had also arranged to dispatch a special train. The tournament was scheduled for the 1st to the 15th of September, its program being drawn up by the FASCI. At the UIOCEP general meeting in Paris on 8th March 1925, it was agreed that each state could send a team of eight with four substitutes to the Rome international tournament and that it would be composed of the following events: floor exercises with routines as per organizing union, floor exercises as per each team's union's individual routines (proposed by the Czechoslovak Orel), the horizontal bar, the rings, the parallel bars and the vaulting horse (each with one compulsory and one voluntary exercise) and the long jump.⁵⁶

All the excitement ended in disappointment on 31st August 1926, when Orel members read the news of the Rome tournament being cancelled. Participants themselves were surprised, having been informed by telephone and telegram on Sunday and Monday to stay at home. Everybody immediately began to ask why the tournament had been cancelled. In the telegram sent from Rome, there was only: "International tournament of Catholic gymnasts cancelled by the Church authorities. F.A.S.C.I." On Tuesday morning, the Czechoslovak Orel read the news brought by the Czechoslovak Press Office, taken from the "L'Osservatore Romano", informing that

[...] due to emergencies, the Church authorities have been forced to call off the international physical education and sports meeting of European Catholic unions that was to take place in Rome from 3rd to 6th September [...].

On the same day, the Czech Press Office released further news stating

[...] According to the communiqué of the Prime Minister's press office, the International Physical Education and Sports Congress of European Catholic Unions were cancelled due to incidents in Mantua and in Macerata, where Catholic scouts clashed with storm troop members (i.e. fascists). However, these clashes did not result in anything serious. Moreover, the government has already begun investigations [...]⁵⁷.

The Czechoslovak Orel might have considered itself lucky to have received news of the tournament being cancelled in time. Not all teams were that lucky, some finding out the tournament had been cancelled on their way. The French and Belgians turned round on their way. A special train was dispatched for the Germans and Swiss, which led to their decision to reach Rome. They were joined in Rome by the Southern Slavs, the Danes and the Dutch. In the end, the Italians exercised in the Vatican before Pope Pius XI on their own.⁵⁸

The cancellation of the international tournament in Rome had a very negative effect on the whole UIOCEP organization and particularly on its gymnasts, who saw the tournament as an extremely important part of this organization's pro-

⁵⁶ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1925, no. 7, pp. 89–98.

⁵⁷ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1926, no. 17, pp. 257–259.

⁵⁸ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1926, no. 22–23, pp. 347–348.

gram. Indeed, the last international UIOCEP tournament had been in Paris in 1923. Furthermore, they had all spent a great deal of time preparing for the Rome tournament. At a UIOCEP meeting in Paris on 20th February 1927, the JOZ (Jugoslavanska Orlovska Zveza – Yugoslavian Orel Union) requested the tournament rules and following tournament exercises be provided to each union by 15th March 1927, saying the tournament should be held in 1927 anywhere else than in Italy. That was a nearly impossible task for the Union though. The question remained whether or not (and, as the case may be, where) to organize (the tournament in 1928. However, the Union did not feel it was appropriate to hold the tournament just one year before the planned second National Orel Festival in Prague. Consequently, the following statement was issued:

Union meetings and tournaments will not be held in either 1927 or 1928 and are scheduled for 1929 in Prague on the occasion of the second Festival of Czechoslovak Orel Associations.⁵⁹

However, the FASCI situation in Italy was becoming more and more complicated. Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini was beginning to interfere more and more in the development of Italian physical education and sports associations in a way that practically meant they were forcibly suppressed and all of their youth members were indoctrinated in the ideology of a national fascist organization. He achieved that through law number 2 247 “Establishing the Opera Nazionale Balilla⁶⁰ to support and develop young people in their physical and moral education” dated 3rd April 1926 and by Royal Decree number 5 dated 11th January 1927 “Revising the law in question.” The FASCI was later dissolved on 24th April 1927, the decision to break up being made at a board meeting.⁶¹

In spring 1927, the Central Committee of the Czech Catholic Sokol in the United States of America asked the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel to send one qualified instructor to the United States of America. The dispatched worker was to take over responsibility for the reorganization of physical education work in both the Czech and Slovak Catholic Sokol in the United States. He was also assigned to oversee the preparation of Catholic Sokol gymnasts for the Festival of Orel Associations in 1929. The Czechoslovak Orel suggested sending Jan Mádl from Prague. Besides doing his job, he was to study and promote Orel ideology. This was the first time that the Czechoslovak Orel had been requested to send a worker to the United States of America. Jan Mádl was to be dispatched there for anything between several months and a year.⁶²

⁵⁹ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1927, no. 5, pp. 53–54.

⁶⁰ Balilla (Opera Nazionale Balilla) was an Italian youth organization promoting fascism. It existed from 1926 to 1937. U. Schleimer, *Die Opera Nazionale Balilla bzw. Gioventù Italiana del Littorio und die Hitlerjugend – eine vergleichende Darstellung*, Waxmann, Münster 2004, p. 13.

⁶¹ “Nová tělesná výchova: list pro tělesnou výchovu, tělocvik, sport, hry, skauting a pro vědecké studium těchto oborů” 1928–1929, p. 37.

⁶² “Nová tělesná výchova: list pro tělesnou výchovu, tělocvik, sport, hry, skauting a pro vědecké studium těchto oborů” 1927–1928, p. 174.

The Imperial Meeting and German Catholic gymnasts' championships took place in Cologne from 5th to 8th August 1927. They were organized by a new UIOCEP member – the DJK. Being a member of the UIOCEP as well as the union that had arranged for the Germans to be affiliated to the UIOCEP, the Czechoslovak Orel was officially invited to the festival and championships.⁶³ However, it refused to compete in the championships due to the competition system being different from what the Orel teams were used to. However, it did plan to send a small number of delegates to the festival who were assigned tasks such as acquiring information about the championships so that the Czechoslovak Orel could take part in similar events in the future.⁶⁴

As in 1925, the HOS invited the Czechoslovak Orel to its festival in 1927. This time, it took place in Sarajevo from 13th to 15th August. The Czechoslovak Orel again decided to send a small group to the festival.⁶⁵ At the end, that comprised of six members. They took part in the Monday procession but did not actively participate in the physical education festival. They mainly hoped that by maintaining good relations with the HOS, the HOS would send a large number of participants to the Orel Festival in Prague in 1929.⁶⁶

The UIOCEP annual meeting took place in Paris on 26th February 1928, when several proposals regarding the reorganization of the Union and its international tournaments were debated and approved. Representing the Czechoslovak Orel, František Dvorník and Stanislav Zháněl gave information on the scheduled tournament coinciding with the second Orel Festival, which was officially named the 1929 Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival of Orel Associations. Countries that were to host the Union's international tournaments in 1930 and 1931 were approved. They were to take place first in Belgium and a year later in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the Union wanted to expand the number of member unions affiliated with it. The Czechoslovak Orel was assigned to hold talks with the Poles, who it had planned to invite to Prague in 1929, and with the Catholic Sokol in the USA. The Union would also have appreciated other new members such as the Canadians or the Lithuanians.⁶⁷

Another UIOCEP meeting took place in Prague from 9th to 11th June 1928. Not all member unions were notified though (the Germans, Swiss, Austrians and Poles excused themselves). The meeting was summoned to attempt to reorganize the Union to make it more effective in meeting the requirements of member unions and handling information. It was also necessary to set precise criteria for the

⁶³ *Orelský katechismus*, Třebíč 1938, p. 14. National archives in Prague, Fund Státní tajemník u říšského protektora v Čechách a na Moravě, Box 132, sg. 109-8/59, Sicherheitsdienst-RFSS, SD-Leitabschnitt Prag, Prag, den 1.2.1940.

⁶⁴ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1927, no. 6, pp. 71–72.

⁶⁵ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Prague 1931, p. 32.

⁶⁶ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1927, no. 17, pp. 207–207.

⁶⁷ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1928, no. 5, pp. 65–68.

exercises to be included in the 1929 Prague international tournament and to create a set of rules for international tournaments. Delegates highlighted the need to foster the introduction of the tradition of Catholic Olympics, the first to be held right here in the city of Prague. In this regard, each union was assigned to provide appropriate stadiums.⁶⁸ The Belgians and Czechoslovaks also asked for a fixed set of tournament rules to be created. The meeting also dealt with all kinds of problems and proposals concerning the 1929 Prague international tournament. Despite particular difficulties agreeing on a single set of rules for union tournaments that should remain valid for all future international tournaments, an agreement was finally reached. Besides, it was agreed that international tournaments would be held no more than once a year. The whole of this meeting marked a great achievement for the Czechoslovak Orel. Thanks to the new set of rules for union tournaments, which was more adapted to its conditions, it would now be better prepared to compete with other Union affiliates.⁶⁹

It did not all go that smoothly though. Not long afterwards, at a meeting of the Board of the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Orel, a letter from the JOZ was being discussed. The letter said that this organization had already received the set of rules for the next UIOCEP international tournament. This contained several points that were inconsistent with the Prague agreement. These changes had been added to the text without the Czechoslovak Orel knowing. It agreed with the JOZ to inform the Union Secretariat that it insists on the set of tournament rules that were established at the meeting in Prague. Neither the Czechoslovak Orel nor the JOZ wanted to resort to making any autonomic changes.⁷⁰

The Czechoslovak Orel made further efforts to strengthen its good relations with the French not by sending a team to compete but at least by sending several functionaries to represent them in Verdun at the Meeting of French Catholic Gymnasts, held on Sunday 22nd July 1928. Bohumil Smutník, MP Antonín Čuřík and Leopold Saňka were among them. Besides passing on best regards and wishes of luck from Brno, it was about promoting the Czechoslovak Orel abroad and publicizing the coming 1929 Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival.⁷¹ Similarly, a delegation representing the Czechoslovak Orel was sent to the Slovenian Orel Festival, held in Ljubljana from 29th June to 1st July 1928. This time it was Vojtěch Marzy who travelled to Slovenian lands.⁷²

Throughout its existence, the Czechoslovak Orel had maintained contact with Czech emigrant colonies like those in Poland, Romania, France and the USA,

⁶⁸ An even better option would have been for individual member unions to have their own representative stadium built and, according to the proposal, they were actually asked to try to build one.

⁶⁹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1928, no. 12, pp. 180–182.

⁷⁰ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1928, no. 16, p. 248.

⁷¹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1928, no. 14–15, pp. 223–225.

⁷² "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1928, no. 17, pp. 262–263.

with purely physical education or sports associations like those in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Poland and the USA and with physical education organizations cultivating military physical education, located in Poland, France, Belgium, Holland, Spain and Italy. It had also been in contact with Scouts organizations in Austria, Spain, England and Germany and educational groups in France, Ireland, Germany and Poland. Contact with these foreign organizations involved sharing information regarding scheduled events, including invitations to them, printed materials, pictures, photographs and historical facts. They also often cooperated in organizing festivals, international tournaments and establishing international sets of rules. Trips were made by delegates and sportsmen. The Czechoslovak Orel could have been proud of its ten years of achievement in foreign relations.

Indeed, it now seemed to be time for the Czechoslovak Orel to establish closer relations with other countries, particularly overseas ones.⁷³ The scheduled 1929 Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival of Orel Associations was to prove to be instrumental in this.

Conclusion

The origins of the Orel physical education organization go back to the turn of the 20th century when the first physical education divisions began to form in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary under the auspices of existing Catholic associations. Inspiration for the establishment and organization of the Orel movement can be found both in the Czech Sokol institution, from which the Orel institution adopted a large part of its organizational structure and in Slovenian lands, where a Catholic physical education organization called Orel had also been established.

It was the Slovenian Orel that the Orel institution in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary established its first foreign relations with. In the period before the outbreak of World War One, the Orel movement in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary was relatively small and not fully integrated. Yet it still managed to maintain contact with other Catholic physical education organizations in many countries around the world. However, the First World War held back any further development of such a promising kind. The Orel's foreign contacts were broken off and the whole movement was almost destroyed.

It was after the end of the First World War that the Orel movement began to rapidly expand in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary. Its importance and number of international contacts also rose. Just as other large physical education organizations in Czechoslovakia – Sokol and the SDTJ, the Czechoslovak Orel was affiliated to an international physical education union – the UIOCEP. This union,

⁷³ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva” 1928, no. 23–24, pp. 353–355.

the Association of French Catholic Sportsmen being their largest member, made efforts to hold its physical education festivals and tournaments in various European states. In the 1920s, they were actually to be hosted by Czechoslovakia twice – in 1922 and 1929.

Besides being affiliated to the UIOCEP, the Czechoslovak Orel held talks with the Slovenians on forming a Union of Slavic Orel Associations, which the Czechoslovak Orel was to preside. This can again be said to have been another case where the Czechoslovak Orel had drawn inspiration from the Czech Sokol, which presided over the Union of Slavic Sokol institutions, established in 1908. However, a Union of Slavic Orel Associations was not formed and the Czechoslovak Orel had to make do with being affiliated to the UIOCEP. Nevertheless, its importance within the Union rapidly grew, also thanks to a rise in membership. Consequently, in the 1920s, the Czechoslovak Orel was offered the chair of the second vice secretary of the whole union. The Czechoslovak Orel had indeed made efforts to establish close cooperation with this Union even before the outbreak of World War One. It had invited members of this Union to its scheduled first Imperial Festival, which was to be held in Kroměříž in 1915. It can therefore be assumed that, if it was not for the First World War, the Orel would have probably gained a more important position in the UIOCEP earlier.

Affiliation to the UIOCEP, which was given in the early 1920s, was of great benefit. The affiliated unions mutually enriched each other. Moreover, the Czechoslovak Orel could now compare its gymnasts with those from abroad. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak Orel became a pioneer for women's physical education within the UIOCEP, inspiring other affiliated unions with its highly developed program for women gymnasts.⁷⁴

The Czechoslovak Orel established many other foreign contacts, even with unions that were not affiliated with the UIOCEP. The second National Orel Festival, called the 1929 Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival of Orel Associations, was regarded by the Czechoslovak Orel as the highlight of its efforts in the 1920s, a number of foreign guests having already committed their presence in advance.

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⁷⁴ Here is necessary to add that in Slovenian Orel the first women units were already formed before WWI. After forming Yugoslav Orel were within it in 1922 organised so called Orliška podzveza (Women Orel sub-alliances).

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