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## Slavic Swimming Championships in the Years 1927–1929

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### Słowiańskie Mistrzostwa Pływackie w latach 1927–1929

#### Streszczenie

W czechosłowackich kręgach pływackich często krytykowano kluby pływackie za to, że utrzymywały aktywne kontakty sportowe z wieloma krajami, zwłaszcza z Niemcami, Austrią, Węgrami, Francją, Szwecją, Anglią, ale zupełnie zapomniały o narodach słowiańskich, takich jak Polska czy Jugosławia. Przyczyna tkwiła głównie w tym, że pływanie w krajach słowiańskich rozwinęło się dopiero po wojnie. Były też powody finansowe i większe odległości między państwami. Po udanych Mistrzostwach Europy w Budapeszcie w 1926 roku, kiedy okazało się, że pływacy narodów słowiańskich mogą rywalizować w Europie, sekretarz międzynarodowy ČSAPS inż. Hauptmann zaproponował Południowosłowiańskiemu i Polskiemu Związgowi Pływackiemu organizację mistrzostw pływackich tych narodów. Wniosek został przyjęty jednogłośnie, z wielkim entuzjazmem. Zaowocowało to konwencją, podpisaną przez czołowych przedstawicieli Związków Jugosławii, Polski i Czechosłowacji, w której wszystkie uczestniczące stowarzyszenia zobowiązały się do organizacji Mistrzostw Słowian w trzech kolejnych latach: w 1927 r. w Belgradzie, w Jugosławii; w 1928 r. w Pradze, w Czechosłowacji; i w 1929 r. w Warszawie, w Polsce. Zgodnie z tą konwencją Mistrzostwa Słowian obejmowały pełny program olimpijski zgodnie z regulaminem FINA.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pływanie, Mistrzostwa Słowian, Czechosłowacja, Jugosławia, Polska.

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## Abstract

In Czechoslovak swimming circles, swimming clubs were often criticized for having active sports contacts with many countries, especially Germany, Austria, Hungary, France, Sweden, England, but completely forgot about Slavic nations such as Poland and Yugoslavia. The reason could be found mainly in the fact that swimming in the Slavic countries developed only after the war. There were also financial reasons and greater distances between the states. After the successful European Championships in Budapest in 1926, when it turned out that the swimmers of the Slavic nations were able to compete in Europe, the International Secretary of ČSAPS, Eng. Hauptmann proposed to the South Slavic and Polish Swimming Associations to hold the swimmers' championships of these nations. The proposal was adopted unanimously with great enthusiasm. This resulted in a convention, signed by the leading officials of the Yugoslavian, Polish and Czechoslovak Associations, in which all participating associations undertook to host the Slavic Championships in three consecutive years: in 1927 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1928 in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and 1929 in Warsaw, Poland. According to this convention, the Slavonic Championships were held with a full Olympic program according to the FINA regulations.

**Keywords:** swimming, Slavic Championships, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland.

## Introduction

The history of swimming in Europe would not be complete without the three years of the Slavic Championships in swimming, diving and water polo, which were, upon approval from the Czechoslovak, Polish and Yugoslav swimming associations, held in Belgrade in 1927, in Prague in 1928, and Warsaw in 1929<sup>1</sup>.

The Slavic Swimming Championships were one of the driving forces which incited the Slavic nations to express a greater interest in this beautiful and healthy sport. The ever-improving performance and successes touted over other European leaders in swimming, such as Germany and Hungary, gradually led athletes themselves, as well as sports officials and the public, to exhibit a growing interest in swimming and everything to do with the sport<sup>2</sup>.

From the very beginning, Czechoslovak swimming faced many obstacles that impeded its development, referring to the lack of indoor swimming pools with the option of year-round training, lack of good and qualified trainers, and primarily the lack of funding from the state. Despite these unfavourable conditions, Czechoslovak swimming was in a competitive position in Europe<sup>3</sup>. The South Slavic nations (Slovenes, Croats and Serbs) boasted many talented swimmers, though they did not become Europe's swimming champions until the second half of the 1930s. This was thanks to the Ministry of Sport, which managed to raise enough funds, as well as the fact that before the war, many university students studied abroad across Europe and thus had the opportunity to train year-round in

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<sup>1</sup> M. Hoch, *Plavání*, Sportovní a turistické nakladatelství, Praha 1959, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> S. Krajíček, *Po stopách vývoje plaveckého sportu*, J. Kunstner, Česká Lípa 1947, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

indoor baths under the guidance of excellent instructors, though it was primarily the product of their diligence, perseverance and willpower<sup>4</sup>. Swimming in Poland did not take off until 1922 when the Polish Swimming Association was founded. Until then, the only swimming events held in Poland were those in which swimmers demonstrated various aquatic feats. However, this did not impress the Polish swimming experts and they began building the Polish swimming tradition from the bottom up. They began building baths, recruiting youth to swimming clubs and invited experts from abroad to train new instructors and competitive swimmers<sup>5</sup>. The Polish organization for physical education, the YMCA, greatly contributed to the popularization and support of swimming in the country. For example, in Kraków, the YMCA organized swimming competitions as early as 1922 for all ages, including school-age children and youth. Using the motto: “Let’s feel right at home in the water,” the YMCA offered free swimming lessons in the Kraków swimming pool to poor youth to increase public interest in the sport. In 1927 alone, over 150 youths attended the YMCA’s free swimming courses<sup>6</sup>.



**Image 1.** Swimming pool YMCA in Kraków, Poland (1927)

Source: YMCA Figures. (b.r.), <https://polska-ymca.ic.cz/> [accessed 20.09.2020].

In Czechoslovak swimming circles, swimming clubs were often criticized for actively forging ties with many countries, namely Germany, Austria, Hungary, France and Sweden, while entirely neglecting the Slavic nations such as Poland

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> T. Tlustý, *Budování národní organizace YMCA v Československu a Polsku. Rozvoj tělesné kultury v letech 1918–1939*, Karolinum, Praha 2017, p. 322–325.

and Yugoslavia. This was mainly attributed to the fact that swimming in the Slavic states did not gain popularity until after the war, coupled with the issue of financing and the greater distances between states. After the successful 1926 European Championship in Budapest, which proved that Slavic nations had a genuine competitive edge in Europe, the International Secretary of CSAPS, Ing. Hauptmann, made a proposal to the Yugoslav and Polish swimming associations to hold championships for the Slavic nations. The proposal was unanimously accepted with great enthusiasm<sup>7</sup>.

Negotiations began regarding Slavic events. This resulted in a convention signed by the leading officials of the Yugoslav, Polish and Czechoslovak Associations, in which all the participating associations undertook to hold the Slavic Championships in three consecutive years: in 1927 in Yugoslavia, in 1928 in Czechoslovakia and 1929 in Poland<sup>8</sup>. According to this convention, the Slavic Championships were organized with a full Olympic program following the regulations of FINA (International Swimming Federation). Swimmers registered with one of the participating associations were eligible to take part. Each association could sign up 2 competitive swimmers and 1 substitute for the swimming race, 1 team with 2 substitutes for relay swimming and 1 team with 4 substitutes for water polo. For all events in the entire competition, 5 victory points were awarded to the first-place winner, 3 points for the second place and 1 point for the third place. Relay swimming and water polo were scored double. In the water polo tournament, each team competed with every other team. The winning team received 1 point and in the event of a tie, the score was the deciding factor. The panel of judges consisted of delegates from all the participating associations. Every association could appoint 1 judge, 2 timekeepers, 1 judge for diving and 1 judge for water polo. The chief judge was appointed by prior agreement. The remaining officials were appointed by the host country's association. The host country's association had to guarantee free visas to all participating competitors from both guest associations, 25 competitive swimmers from each association were to be reimbursed for travel expenses (3<sup>rd</sup> class express train) in the host country and 3 days' worth of travel expenses were to be covered<sup>9</sup>. Some of the most prominent political representatives donated several prizes to the swimmers. President of Czechoslovakia, T. G. Masaryk, donated a large faceted vase made from Czech glass to the winner of the entire competition. Minister Dr E. Beneš donated a bronze statue. Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs also donated a bronze statue and Yugoslavia and the city of Belgrade donated large silver cups. All of the prizes became the property of the CSAPS<sup>10</sup>.

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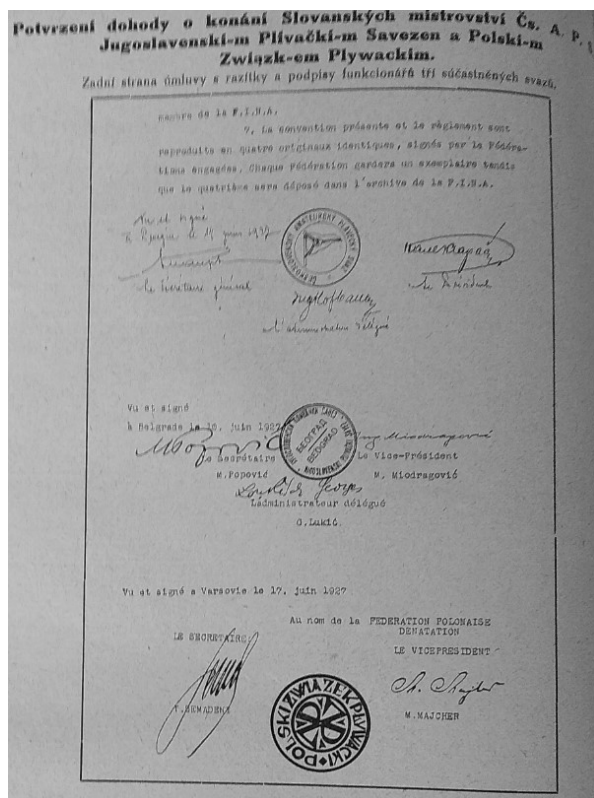
<sup>7</sup> "Československé plavectví" 1927, nr. 6–7, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> V. Srb, *Století plaveckých sportů v našich zemích*, Mladá fronta, Praha 2018, p. 27–28.

<sup>9</sup> "Československé plavectví" 1927, nr 6-7, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> S. Krajíček, *Po stopách...*, p. 64.

The above-mentioned convention was drawn up and signed in 4 copies, one of which was sent to the FINA Secretary. As the convention elucidated, the agreement that took place was of immense significance, not only in terms of bolstering ties in the world of sports and advancing the state of swimming in all Slavic countries, but it had great international significance as well. By uniting the Slavic swimming associations, their standing in international forums improved.



**Image 2.** Confirmation of the agreement on organizing Slavic swimming championships

Source: "Československé plavectví" 1927, nr 8, p. 4.

To write this article, it was necessary to compile information from archives, periodicals and literature. Most of the materials on the topic can be found in the periodical "Czechoslovak Swimming," which provides a very detailed account of different championships and swimming events including the times of the competitive swimmers. Some of the photographs of the swimmers and some of the information about the II. Slavic Championship was part of collection no. 516 from the Czechoslovak Amateur Swimming Association in the National Archive in Prague, though the information in this collection was quite sparse in general. Other photographs of Czechoslovak swimmers were found in the periodical

“Star” and some brief information on the Slavic Championships was also found in one periodical and two contemporary literary sources. To provide an outline of the situation in Poland, the chapter titled “The Development of Physical Culture and Sport in the Local YMCA in Kraków” in a monograph published by Tomáš Tlustý under the title “Building YMCA: A National Organization in Czechoslovakia and Poland. Development of Physical Culture in the Years 1918–1939”.

## **I. Slavic Championship in Belgrade 27.–28.8.1927**

CSAPS, before its week-long stay at the European Championship in Bologna and due to limited funds, decided to limit the number of competitors it would send out to Belgrade and Bologna to defend the results of the races. For this reason, a team consisting of 10 competitors, 5 female swimmers and 9 water polo players was formed. On behalf of CSAPS, participating members included Chairman Klapač, Chief Eng. Hauptmann as the leader of the team, and managing director Eng. Hofbauer. All three held judicial positions during the competition.

On Yugoslavian soil, the Czechoslovak team was welcomed with a kind speech made by the representatives of the South Slavic Swimming Association and local athletes who greeted them with flowers. Military music was played, resounding with both national anthems and the Chairman of CSAPS handed over the Czechoslovak flag. After the welcoming ceremony, the Czechoslovak swimming team were driven to their place of accommodation. This marked the end of their rosy welcome to Belgrade and disillusionment ensued. The entire team was put up in the lecture hall of the city’s technical school, where cots were prepared for the male members of the swim team whereas female swimmers were put up in a boarding house. Lack of water and extremely expensive food, coupled with the harsh sleeping conditions did not spark much enthusiasm for the Czechoslovak team during their stay in Belgrade.

On Saturday afternoon, 27.8.1927, the first events of the I. Slavic Championship in swimming, diving, and water commenced. The events took place on a makeshift racecourse in the dead arm of the Sava River. The swimmers and the audience were transported to the event by motorboats and small steamers courtesy of the Yugoslav Navy. The racecourse was nicely situated between two tugboats, a nice steamer called “Car Dušan” and the shore. The tugboats were equipped with starting blocks as well as a 10 m diving platform. Between the boats, 6 race courses were set up, along with a water polo pool. The cabins on the steamer were used as changing rooms for the swimmers. Military music was played during the event, resounding primarily with the Czechoslovak national anthem. There was a flagpole for the winner’s flag prepared.

The beginning of the race was delayed by an hour due to the late arrival of the Polish and Yugoslav competitors. In the first race, the women’s 100 m back-

strokes, Tautermannová (Czechoslovakia) came in the first place, with Poland's Kaizerowna in second and Brabcová from Czechoslovakia in the third. In the second race, the men's 400 m freestyle, Czechoslovakia's Antoš competed against Yugoslavia's best swimmer, Senjanovič, whom he defeated by a whopping 21 seconds, with Koutek (Czechoslovakia) coming in third place. First and second place in the men's 100 m backstrokes went to Czechoslovak swimmers Bělík and Legát, Yugoslavia's Smokvina came third. The first place in the women's 400 m freestyle race once again went to Czechoslovakia. Friedländerová battled it out in the last 50 m and overtook her competitor Olga Roje and won, with third place going to Czechoslovak swimmer Hradecká. The poor times during all of the events were attributed to the fact that the racecourse was longer than 50 metres. On Sunday afternoon, the races were once again delayed due to the absence of some of the swimmers. The men's 1500 m freestyle race saw Antoš once again exhibit his prowess over the other competitors, coming in almost 100 m before Senjanovič and 2 minutes and 4 seconds before Koutek (Czechoslovakia) who came in third.



**Image 3.** Václav Antoš, one of the best Czechoslovak swimmers of his time

Source: "Star" 1928, nr 29, p. 5.

In the women's 100 m race, it was a close fight. Roje from Yugoslavia came in first, with Friedländerová (Czechoslovakia) coming second and Brabcová (Czechoslovakia) coming in third place. The afternoon program commenced once again with a delay, starting with the men's 100 m freestyle race, where Senjanovič

proved himself to be an excellent freestyle swimmer, especially in shorter distances, beating out Steiner (Czechoslovakia) who came in second with Smokvina from Yugoslavia in third place. The second race, women's 200 m breaststroke, set off to a bad start, and despite the protests of some of the Yugoslav panel members, the race was repeated. The starter did not have a starting pistol throughout the competition but a small children's BB gun which did not make a single shot, meaning that the take-offs were called with a whistle only. This meant that some of the swimmers remained "seated" on their starting positions while others started on time. The biggest competitor for Czechoslovakia's was victorious Brabcová before Peťka Kaiserowna, with Tautermannová (Czechoslovakia) finishing third. The rest of the competitors forfeited the race. After this race, clouds came in and a strong wind began to pick up, which was more than unpleasant for the diving competition that was just about to begin. The next swimming race was the men's 200 m breaststroke, where Janík (Czechoslovakia) claimed his victory, beating out the talented Jurkovski (Pol.) and Kotkowski (Pol.) in third place. The women's 4 × 100 m relay ended much to the pleasure of the audience, with Yugoslavia claiming first place, beating out Czechoslovakia. The Yugoslav team consisting of Katavič, Podhorsky, Lenert, Roje competed against Czechoslovakia's team of Hradecká, Brabcová, Tautermannová and Friedländerová. The only one to swim freestyle was Friedländerová, who did so for the entire 100 m stretch, with Hradecká and Brabcová swimming only 50 m freestyle and continuing the rest of the stretch in breaststroke. Tautermannová swam the entire length in breaststroke. The Yugoslav team, in contrast, swam predominantly freestyle, in very good form, so their first and last leads were enough to win by 14 m. The Polish team came in third. In the next race, however, Czechoslovakia turned it around. Czechoslovakia's team won in the men's 4 × 200 m relay, beating Yugoslavia, with Poland coming in third place. The swimming events were followed by diving and water polo.

Czechoslovakia's swimmers exhibited their prowess over the other Slavic nations during the first Slavic Championship, taking home all of the big-ticket prizes that were generously donated by prominent individuals and representatives from all three participating countries. The victory did not come easy, as Yugoslavia's competitors either outperformed or matched Czechoslovakia's swimmers and Poland's swimmers also proved to be worthy competition.

Czechoslovakia won the championship, taking the lead with 242 points, with Yugoslavia coming in at 164 points and Poland at 94. In the men's competition, Czechoslovakia managed to gain 146 points, beating Yugoslavia with 116 points and Poland with 58, thus taking home President Masaryk's prize for the 1927 competition: a beautiful glass cup with gold metalwork. In the women's competition, Czechoslovakia won with 96 points, with Yugoslavia coming in second with 48 points and Poland finishing third with 36, taking home the prize from Obshtina. In the diving and water polo competitions, Czechoslovakia and Yugo-



slavia tied with 31 points each, with Poland coming in at 9 points. The water polo score was Czechoslovakia-Yugoslavia-Poland 21:21:210.

The official closing ceremony for the championship took the form of a small dinner for the prominent representatives and participants of all three competing states. The evening was brought to a close with speeches given by members of the host country's association as well as other officials. Klapač and Ing. Hauptmann spoke on behalf of Czechoslovakia. Prizes were awarded for the best performance of the home team – Senjanovič (silver cup) as well as flags of Polish association to the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav associations.

Early the next day, the majority of the Czechoslovak team left Belgrade to try their luck at the European Championship in Bologna. Polish and Yugoslavian representations joined them. The Yugoslavian Association provided a special train car for the Czechoslovak and Polish teams, similar to the “luxury” train cars back in Czechoslovakia. As this was a gift, it was gratefully accepted<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 1.** Final Results I. Slavic Swimming Championship

Event	1. place	2. place	3. place
men 100 m freestyle	Senjanovič, Yugoslavia, 1:09,2	Steiner, Czechoslovakia, 1:09,4	Smokvina, Yugoslavia, 1:09,6
100 m freestyle women	Roje, Yugoslavia, 1:29,8	Friedländerová, Czecho- slovakia, 1:30,5	Brabcová, Czechoslo- vakia, 1:36,4
1500 m freestyle men	Antoš, Czechoslovakia, 23:04	Senjanovič, Yugoslavia, 24:08,5	Koutek, Czechoslovakia, 25:08,4
400 m freestyle men	Antoš, Czechoslovakia, 5:30,3	Senjanovič, Yugoslavia, 5:51,7	Koutek, Czechoslovakia, 6:07
400 m freestyle women	Friedländerová, Czecho- slovakia, 7:17,1	Roje, Yugoslavia, 7:22,3	Hradecká, Czechoslo- vakia, 7:45,8
100 m backstroke men	Bělík, Czechoslovakia, 1:21,5	Legát, Czechoslovakia, 1:27,4	Smokvina, Yugoslavia, 1:30,3
100 m backstroke women's	Tautermannová, Czecho- slovakia, 1:42,7	Kaizerowna, Poland, 1:49,5	Brabcová, Czechoslo- vakia, 1:52,4
200 m breast- stroke men	Janík, Czechoslovakia, 3:13,8	Jurkowski, Poland, 3:17,8	Kotkowski, Poland 3:23,8
200 m breast- stroke women	Brabcová, Czechoslo- vakia, 3:41,2	Kaizerowna, Poland, 3:41,8	Tautermannová, Czecho- slovakia, 3:45,7
4 × 200 m free- style men	Czechoslovakia, 10:48,1	Yugoslavia, 11:20,7	Poland, 12.30
4 × 100 m free- style women	Yugoslavia, 6:28,1	Czechoslovakia, 6:42	Poland, 7:31

Source: own research.

<sup>11</sup> “Československé plavectví” 1927, nr 9–10, p. 2–3.

## Belgrade press on the I. Slavic Championship

The first Slavic Championship were the first swimming event to ever take place in Belgrade, which is why local sports officials were not as well informed as foreign officials and the local displays of patriotism were also much more exuberant than anywhere else. This is why virtually all of the dailies anticipated Yugoslavia to come out victorious, with Senjanovič, in particular, being pegged as the likely winner in all of the freestyle events. The Zagreb-based “Obzor” even wrote that in the 4 × 200 m relay, Yugoslavia did not have any real competition in Europe apart from Sweden. However, after the championship ended, Czechoslovakia’s victory was acknowledged and in the “Politika” publication (29.8.1927), an article titled “Czechoslovakia won” described the course of events in detail.



**Image 4.** Czechoslovakia defeated Yugoslavia and Poland, swimmers SHS Dabrovič, Čulič, Mirkovič, Fabrike, Bobří, Brajda, Roje

Source: National Archives in Prague, Fund 516, ČsAPS, box 26, book 229, I. Slavic championships in Belgrade in 1927.

The women’s 100 m freestyle event was described as the most beautiful race. The article further stated that: “Senjanovič has a better shape than Antoš” and also observed that “we had the chance to listen to Czechoslovakia’s beautiful anthem several times.” The same publication, in its 30.8.1927 edition, featured

a lengthy interview with Ms Friedländerova about the evolution of women's sports in Czechoslovakia. She was also inquired about her experience at the Slavic Championship. The article stated that:

Every defeat should serve as an experience, as a lesson. Our people (The South Slavs) know how to swim, but not how to race. The winner of the race is not always the best, but rather the one who knows how to assess each situation, who knows about the human psyche and who knows his opponent's weaknesses. This can only be achieved by racing against stronger competition. In this regard, we need more races of this sort [all transl. – author].

A very nice report was also published in the “Vreme” newspaper on 29.8.1927:

There was such an atmosphere, that it was clear that these were no ordinary races. The raised Yugoslav and Czechoslovak flags received a very warm welcome, though we sadly did not have the chance to hear Poland's beautiful anthem. While we might still have ways to go on an international level, Antoš, Senjanovič, and Balasz can make it to the top if they continue training diligently. We wish the Czechoslovak, Polish and our representatives a happy journey to Bologna (European Championships). We do not expect them to win, though we do expect them to make a valiant effort and make us proud. Let them know that all of us who stayed back home would be thrilled to find a Slavic flag raised in Bologna.<sup>12</sup>

## II. Slavic Championship in Prague 21.–22.7.1928

The second swimming competition for the Slavic states of Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia took place on 21.–22.7.1927 in Prague. The Czechoslovak swimmers and CSAPS had two tasks: to take home the victory once again in a rather lukewarm Czechoslovak atmosphere and to take home the prizes from President Masaryk, Minister Dr Beneš, Polish Minister Záleski and Skupštiny from the city of Belgrade while also preparing the sporting events and providing conditions that would be at least as decent as those in Belgrade.

Unfortunately, the financial resources of CSAPS were entirely insufficient without the help of authorities and public officials. CSAPS officials thus hoped that just as the official and military circles of Belgrade were accommodating to the Yugoslav Swimming Association, the city of Prague would also acknowledge that this was not an ordinary event but rather a significant sporting competition for three Slavic states. However, the association's request was not heeded and the CSAPS was thus confronted with the sad fact that it could only rely on itself. The city of Prague, at a city council meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup>, only undertook to protect the championships, nothing more. The organizers did not receive any financial support or equipment for the racecourse, nor were they loaned the necessary ma-

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<sup>12</sup> “Československé plavectví” 1928, nr 1, p. 1.

terials<sup>13</sup>. A request filed on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1928 asking for a tax exemption for the Slavic Championship, was also denied on allegedly solid grounds. Only the board of directors of Prague's electrical companies agreed to provide a discount to the participants of the Slavic Championship for their train fare, offering them a reduced price of 50 Hellers for one ticket (one ride)<sup>14</sup>.

No interest in the course of the championship itself was exhibited by the authorities or the city council. Out of all of the invited ministries and government officials, the only one who attended was the Deputy Minister of Health, Očenášek. Mayor Dr Baxa attended the Saturday races on behalf of the city of Prague. The trivialization of such a significant event and the complete lack of interest severely demotivated the organizers, especially upon hearing how much funding and support the sport was receiving in the other Slavic countries. For the above reason, it was obvious that the association was extremely burdened by this championship in terms of time but primarily money. It was thus clear that such an event could not be held in Prague again under such conditions, much to the detriment of the prestige of Czechoslovak swimming. The only way this could happen would be if a suitable swimming stadium was built and if the event received the support it needed<sup>15</sup>.

On Saturday and Sunday 21. and 22.7., representatives from Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia competed on the 50 m racecourse which was set up above the lock chambers by Židovský Island (now Dětský Island). The race course consisted of three raft bridges with a wide finish line, located directly by the entrance to the floodgates, the starting line was parallel to the finish line with a 50-meter distance in between along with a third, narrow bridge connecting the two. The audience stands were located on one side, on sand boats, and on the other side on Židovský Island, where a wooden tribune was built directly next to the tents for the participants, next to tents that served as makeshift changing rooms for the swimmers and a spot designated for musicians. The riverbank, the entire sidewalk to the park by the bridge leading to the Židovský Island, was reserved for standing members of the audience. The disadvantage of this race course was the danger that the races could be disrupted by passing boats, which, considering the importance of the races and the presence of visitors from abroad, could simply not happen. Men competed in the 100 m, 400 m and 1500 m free-style races, 200 m breaststroke, 100 m backstrokes, platform and springboard diving and water polo. The women's program included 100 m and 400 m free-style, 200 m breaststrokes, 100 m backstrokes, platform and springboard diving<sup>16</sup>.

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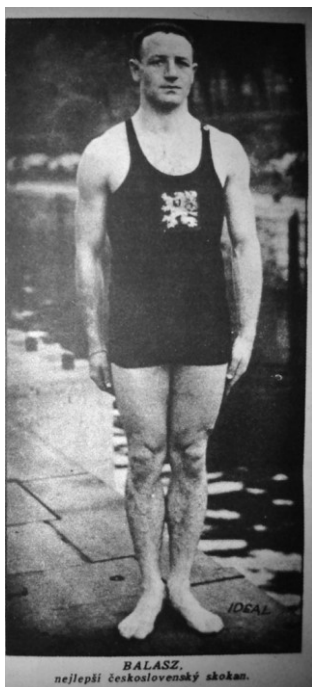
<sup>13</sup> National Archives in Prague, Fund 516, ČsAPS, box 26, book 230, II. Slavic championships in Prague in 1928.

<sup>14</sup> National Archives in Prague, Fund 516, ČsAPS, box 26, book 230, II. Slavic champions. in Prague in 1928.

<sup>15</sup> "Československé plavectví" 1928, nr 6–7, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> National Archives in Prague, Fund 516 ČsAPS, box 26 book 230, II. Slavic champions in Prague in 1928.

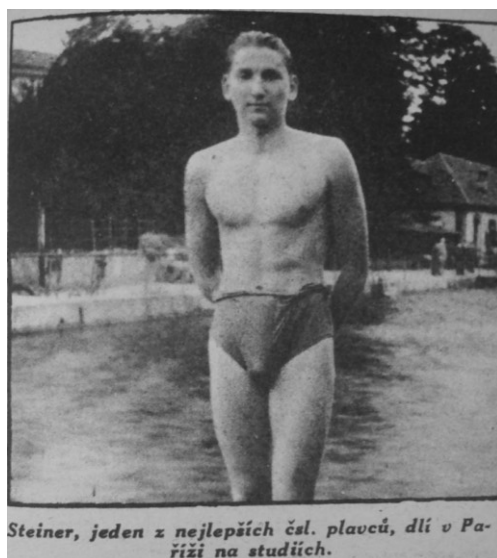
Saturday program began with the playing of the national anthems of the competing nations. The competitors appeared in front of an unusually large audience wearing the jerseys of their associations and the mayor of Prague, Dr Baxa, was also in attendance, along with the inspector of the Ministry of Health Očenášek. Representatives of the Yugoslav and Polish delegations were also present, along with representatives of other sports corporations and the press. The races ran quite swiftly, resulting in very good times for the swimmers, meaning that in some of the events they even broke records for all three associations. The Polish Association generally came as a surprise with their increasingly impressive condition, as evidenced by their accumulation of points. Yugoslavia, in contrast, slowed down a little when compared to the previous year. Czechoslovakia proved to be the frontrunner of Slavic swimming when the women's 100 m backstroke race was won by Dopplerová (Czechoslovakia), the men's 400 m freestyle went to Antoš (Czechoslovakia), the men's 100 m backstrokes went to Bělík (Czechoslovakia) and the women's 400 m freestyle landed Friedländerová (Czechoslovakia) in the first place. On Sunday morning, the diving competition commenced at the swimming pool at Slovensky Island. Czechoslovakia's Balasz came in first with 151.71 points.



**Image 5.** Július Balasz, the best Czechoslovak jumper

Source: "Star" 1928, nr 15, p. 7.

The swimming races continued on the racecourse by Židovský Island in the events for men's 1500 m freestyle, with Antoš (Czechoslovakia) coming in first, Senjanovič (Yugoslavia) second and Pešta (Czechoslovakia) third. The women's 100 m freestyle was dominated by Roje (Yugoslavia) who broke Yugoslavia's record, with Friedländerová (Czechoslovakia) in second place and Lenertová from Yugoslavia in third. The morning program ended with a polo match between Czechoslovakia and Poland, ending at 10:0. The afternoon program began with a very suspenseful race: men's 100 m freestyle, featuring Czechoslovakia's Steiner, who ended up beating out Senjanovič (Yugoslavia) and Švehla (Czechoslovakia) who came in third.



**Image 6.** Pavel Steiner, one of the best Czechoslovak swimmers of his time

Source: "Star" 1928, nr 29, p. 5.

Czechoslovakia dominated the first two places in the women's 200 m breaststroke race, with Brabcová followed by Drážková. Third and fourth place went to Polish swimmers Kaizerowna and Fitzówna. Yugoslav swimmer Prekuh was disqualified for bad form. The men's 200 m breaststroke race saw Czechoslovak Kortschak win first place, ahead of Kodat (Czechoslovakia) and Jurkowski from Poland who came third. The women's 4 × 100 m freestyle relay brought Yugoslavia their second and last victory. All of the teams broke their country's national records. Czechoslovakia was leading in the relay throughout the entire race, though towards the end, Friedländerová lost out to her better-performing competition, Roje from Yugoslavia with Poland coming in third. The winner of the men's 4 × 200 m freestyle relay was the Czechoslovak team (Plzeňský, Pešta,

Getreuer, Antoš) in record time, beating Poland in second place and Yugoslavia in third.

The closing ceremony, which was attended by the competitors from all three Slavic states, was closed with the award ceremony. Czechoslovakia proved victorious with 277 points, followed by Yugoslavia with 158 points and Poland with 123 points. In the men's category, Czechoslovakia won with 122 points, beating Yugoslavia with 48 points in second place and Poland with 42 points in third. In the women's category, Czechoslovakia received 87 points in total, with Yugoslavia at 58 and Poland at 34. In the diving category, Czechoslovakia came in first with 42 points, Poland second with 37 points, and Yugoslavia finished third with 26 points. In water polo, Czechoslovakia raked in a total of 26 points, with Yugoslavia behind with 16 points and Poland third with 10.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 2.** Final Results II. Slavic Swimming Championship

Event	1. place	2. place	3. place
100 m freestyle men's	Steiner, Czechoslovakia, 1:06,4	Senjanovič, Yugoslavia, 1:07,5	Švehla, Czechoslovakia, 1:10
100 m freestyle women's	Roje, Yugoslavia, 1:24,4	Friedländerová, Czechoslovakia, 1:27,8	Lenertová, Yugoslavia, 1:34,1
1500 m freestyle men's	Antoš, Czechoslovakia, 22.58,2	Senjanovič, Yugoslavia, 23:55	Pešta, Czechoslovakia, 24:33,2
400 m freestyle men's	Antoš, Czechoslovakia, 5:28,8	Senjanovič, Yugoslavia, 5:42,2	Plzeňský, Czechoslovakia, 5:44,5
400 m freestyle women's	Friedländerová, Czechoslovakia, 6:59,4	Roje, Yugoslavia, 7:00,5	Brabcová, Czechoslovakia, 7:40,4
100 m backstroke men's	Bělík, Czechoslovakia, 1:19,8	Landan, Czechoslovakia, 1:25,3	Mirkovič, Yugoslavia, 1:27,4
100 m backstroke women's	Dopplerová, Czechoslovakia, 1:38,2	Tautermannová, Czechoslovakia, 1:42,4	Nowakowna, Poland, 1:49,8
200 m breaststroke men's	Kortschak, Czechoslovakia, 3:13,4	Kodat, Czechoslovakia, 3:14,8	Jurkowski, Poland, 3:15,6
200 m breaststroke women's	Brabcová, Czechoslovakia, 3:34,4	Drážková, Czechoslovakia, 3:38,8	Kaizerowna, Poland, 3:40,4
4 × 200 m freestyle men's	Czechoslovakia, 10:39	Poland, 11:27,5	Yugoslavia, 1:28,8
4 × 100 m freestyle women's	Yugoslavia, 6:09,8	Czechoslovakia, 6:10	Poland, 6:48

Source: own research.

<sup>17</sup> "Československé plavectví" 1928, nr 8–10, p. 1–2.

### III. Slavic Championship in Warsaw 17.–18.8.1929

The departure to the III. Slavic Championship was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 14.8.1929 at 1:45 p.m. from Prague for divers and women and on Thursday 15.8. at 1:45 p.m. for men.

The leader of the Czechoslovak team was Ing. Hauptmann, representatives of CSAPS and ČsAPS were Ing. Hofbauer, A. Novotný and S. Beinhacker. The nominee for the men's 100 m freestyle was Steiner, 400 m freestyle Getreuer and Pacovský, 1500 m freestyle Pacovský and Koutek, 200 m breaststroke Vodička, 100 m backstroke Heiling, 4 × 200m Getreuer, Pacovský, Koutek, Švehla. The women's nominees were: 100 m freestyle Svitáková and Besterová, 400 m freestyle Svitáková and Havlová, 200 m breaststroke Hanslová and Nezavdalová, 100 m backstrokes Dopplerová (Tautermannová), 4 × 100 m freestyle relay Svitáková, Besterová, Hanslová and Havlová<sup>18</sup>.

The Polish swimmers, who had been the weakest competition out of the three Slavic nations, came back in a big way with an improvement in form and excellent organization. During the first championship, three years prior, none of the three nations had their swimming stadium. The third round of the Slavic Championships was now taking place in a beautiful stadium in Warsaw, which had been commissioned for 5 million Zloty. Poland was not the only country to boast a brand new stadium. Swimmers from Yugoslavia already had a new stadium in Ljubljana for their swimmers to train and race. Unfortunately, Czechoslovakia, despite having won all of the trophies and being at the forefront of Slavic swimming, still did not have its swimming stadium to boast, which could help Czechoslovak swimmers hone their craft.

During the III. Slavic Championship, more focus had to be put on Polish swimming, which, under humble and difficult conditions, and through the hard work of those involved and the moral and financial support of the state and public officials and authorities, vastly improved and flourished. The difference it makes when swimmers can perform on a regulation course was never as evident as it was in Warsaw that year, as the city boasted a beautiful 50 × 20 m pool, a diving tower with 1 and 3 m platforms, 5, 7, 8,5 a 10 m above the water. The Polish organizer, Związek Pływacki, took all of the necessary measures to ensure that the event would run smoothly and that all of the competitors were well taken care of. The male competitors were accommodated directly in the stadium which was equipped with double and triple rooms with lockers and cots. The female competitors were accommodated in a student dormitory not far from the stadium. Catering was provided in the stadium. Participants were offered home-cooked meals.

The Czechoslovak team consisted of 26 members. Under the leadership of Ing. Hauptmann, the first group, including Schmuck, Reitmann, Nesvadba, Bes-

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<sup>18</sup> "Československé plavectví" 1929, nr 6–7, p. 5.



terová, Dopplerová, Hanslová, Havlová-Friedländerová, Kröngeigerová, Marklová, Nezavdalová, Svitáková and Tautermannová, departed on Wednesday 14.8. The following day, the second part of the team left, led by Antonín Novotný and Ing. Hofbauer, comprising Pacovský, Bušek, Švehla, Koutek and Vodička, accompanied in Bohumín by swimmers PTE Steiner, Kroc and Heiling, as well as Balasz, Wollner and Getreuer who joined the group in Dziedzice. The entire Yugoslav team, comprising 29 members, boarded the train in Bohumín.

The championship itself commenced on Saturday 17.8. in the afternoon with the arrival of the participants, in the following order: Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland. The first event was the women's 100 m backstrokes. Tautermannová took the lead for the entire first half of the race, though she was overtaken by Dopplerová, who managed to win the race, beating out Poland's Nowakowna and Yugoslavia's Volfartova. Tautermannová did not manage to keep up the pace and ended up fourth. The next event was the men's 400 m freestyle. Getreuer took an enormous lead, followed by Pacovský and Bochenski, who fought to the bitter end, with a close finish won by the young Pacovsky. Poland's Bochenski broke his country's record and was a breath of fresh air and hope for his country. Senjanovič, the dreaded rival of Antoš from Belgrade and Prague, did not put up much of a fight and ended up resting comfortably in fourth place. This was followed by men's platform diving, though Czechoslovakia did not compete in the event due to insufficient training. The men's 100 m backstroke event was won by junior swimmer Heiling (Czechoslovakia), though at no extra effort. Second place went to Marcetta and third to Grlič, both from Yugoslavia. In the women's 400 m freestyle event, first and third place went to swimmers from Yugoslavia, Roje and Godina, with Czechoslovakia's Havlová and Svitáková coming in second and fourth, with Poland's Kaiserowna and Tratona finishing fifth and sixth. The day culminated in a water polo match. The championship continued on Sunday morning with the men's 1500 m freestyle, with Pacovský taking a clear win, though the second place was a battle to the bitter end, going to Poland's Kota in the country's record time. Third place went to Jihoslovan Bulat. The next race was the women's 100 m freestyle, with Roje from Yugoslavia coming in first, followed by Besterova in second and Svitáková in third, both from Czechoslovakia. In the water polo match, Czechoslovakia faced off with Poland, ending in 8:0. The afternoon program started with a delay because the participating nations were to be introduced with musical accompaniment once more as it did not go as planned during the opening ceremony. Unfortunately, this was not a success even the second time around. The first event of the afternoon was the men's 100 m freestyle, in which Steiner (Czechoslovakia) finished with a generous lead and in record time. Senjanovič (Yugoslavia) just barely defended second place ahead of Švehla (Czechoslovakia). The women's 200 m breaststroke was won by Hanslová (Czechoslovakia), with Nezavdalová (Czechoslovakia) coming in second and Volfart (Yugoslavia) in third. Poland's Reicherowna did not finish. The win-

ner of the men's 200 m was Vodička (Czechoslovakia), who finished in record time, with Fabris from Yugoslavia in second with Birimisa (Yugoslavia) and Jurkowski (Pol) battling it out for third, ending in a draw. In the women's 4 × 100 m freestyle relay, Havlová (Czechoslovakia) started with a slight lead, though the other swimmers lagged significantly as well. Yugoslavia's biggest talent, Roje, tried to win the relay for Yugoslavia with a swift race to the finish, though the distance was too great. Besterová beat her to it, making this the first women's relay win for Czechoslovakia. All three teams broke the records in their respective countries. In the men's 4 × 200 m freestyle relay, the Czechoslovak team, consisting of Pacovský, Koutek, Švehla and Getreuer, was disqualified because Getreuer did not touch the edge of the pool with his hand during his last turn. First place in relay thus went to Yugoslavia with Poland in second and in the country's record time. The championship came to a close with a water polo match between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia that finished with a 2:2 draw.



**Image 7.** Diploma for František Getreuer at the third Slavic Swimming Championships in Warsaw  
Source: Fund of swimming 1919–1951, Archive of the History of Physical Education and Sport of the National Museum.

Thus the third and final Slavic Championships came to a close, with Czechoslovakia once again dominating the entire championship and claiming all of the prizes. Czechoslovakia thus came in first place with 230 points, followed by Yu-

goslavia with 193 points and Poland in third with 127 points. In the men's solo category, Czechoslovakia received 101 points, Yugoslavia 99 points, and Poland 62 points. In the women's category, Czechoslovakia received a total of 103 points, followed by Yugoslavia with 78 points and Poland with 55. Water polo went to Czechoslovakia with 26 points, followed by Yugoslavia with 16 points and Poland with 10. In the diving category, Poland came in first with 43 points, followed by Yugoslavia with 41 points and Czechoslovakia with 39.

The closing ceremony took the form of a banquet during which honorary prizes were awarded. The First Deputy Chairman Ing. B. Domoslowski spoke on behalf of Poland, Ing. Hauptmann on behalf of Czechoslovakia and Dr Bukovala on behalf of Yugoslavia. Each winner received a nice honorary award donated by the various press, companies, officials and sports corporations.

On Monday 19.8. in the afternoon, the Czechoslovak team returned home<sup>19</sup>.

**Table 3.** Final Results III. Slavic Swimming Championship

Event	1. place	2. place	3. place
100 m freestyle men	Steiner, Czechoslovakia, 1:04,5	Senjanovič, Yugoslavia, 1:05,9	Švehla, Czechoslovakia, 1:06,4
100 m freestyle women	Roje, Yugoslavia, 1:22,1	Besterová, Czechoslovakia, 1:26,2	Svitáková, Czechoslovakia, 1:26,7
1500 m freestyle men	Pacovský, Czechoslovakia, 23:00	Kot, Poland, 23:29	Bulat, Yugoslavia, 23:29,1
400 m freestyle men	Getreuer, Czechoslovakia, 5:30,8	Pacovský, Czechoslovakia, 5:35	Bochenski, Poland, 5:36
400 m freestyle women	Roje, Yugoslavia, 6:38,4	Havlová, Czechoslovakia, 7:04	Godina, Yugoslavia, 7:12,8
100 m backstroke men	Heiling, Czechoslovakia, 1:20,5	Marcetta, Yugoslavia, 1:22,1	Grlič, Yugoslavia, 1:24,2
100 m backstroke women's	Dopplerová, Czechoslovakia, 1:34,9	Nowakowna, Poland, 1:38,4	Volfart, Yugoslavia, 1:38,6
200 m breaststroke men	Vodička, Czechoslovakia, 3:02	Fabris, Yugoslavia, 3:11,7	Birimisa, Yugoslavia, 3:12
200 m breaststroke women	Hanslová, Czechoslovakia, 3:31,6	Nezavdalová, Czechoslovakia, 3:33,3	Volfart, Yugoslavia, 3:34,5
4 × 200 m freestyle men	Yugoslavia, 10:40,8	Poland, 10:50	Czechoslovakia, Disqualified
4 × 100 m freestyle women	Czechoslovakia, 5:57,5	Yugoslavia, 5:59,6	Poland, 6:37

Source: own research.

<sup>19</sup> "Československé plavectví" 1929, nr 8–9, p. 1–2.

## Conclusion

The first encounter between competitive swimmers from the Slavic states took place in Belgrade in 1927. As Belgrade did not have its swimming stadium at the time, the races took place on makeshift swimming courses on the dead shoulder of the Sava River. The results were thus often affected by the weather conditions and the length of the racecourse was not entirely precise, meaning that the race times were skewed and scarcely comparable to times recorded in regular swimming pools. Regardless of the conditions, the Czechoslovak team managed to win in all categories except for the water polo match against Yugoslavia, which ended in a draw. II. Slavic Championship in 1928 was hosted by Prague. Unfortunately, the construction of the Barrandov swimming stadium had not yet been completed, meaning that the races once again took place under improvised conditions, this time on the Vltava River in the floodgates by the Židovský Island, which proved to be a lot of work for the CSAPS, as they had to make many appeals to the city authorities. Czechoslovakia won the entire competition this time around as well. However, the most socially and logistically successful championship was the one held in 1929 in Warsaw. This was attributed to the fact that Poland already had ample experience from the previous two championships, where they were able to learn from their rivals, as well as their entirely new and beautifully constructed swimming stadium in Warsaw. The third time proved to be a charm for Czechoslovakia as they won the championship once again and took home all of the prizes.

At the last meeting, after the end of the III. Slavic Championship in August 1929, representatives of all three participating states agreed to extend their contracts for another Slavic Championship to take place the following year, in 1930. It was set to take place in Yugoslavia once again, though this time in an entirely new stadium in Ljubljana. However, as we already know from archival documents and periodicals, another championship did not take place, namely due to the lack of funds which were very hard to come by after the global financial crisis broke out in October 1929. This was potentially also brought on by the notable dominance of Czechoslovak swimmers and the political context which could have discouraged Poland and Yugoslavia from pursuing further participation in these championships. Regardless of that, the purpose of the Slavic Championships had been fulfilled. The level of competitive swimming and the conditions furnished for the sport resulted in vast improvements in both Poland and Yugoslavia and all three of the Slavic nations maintained close ties in the form of competitions between Poland and Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The Czechoslovakia-Poland competition which took place in 1930 in Warsaw finally garnered Poland its first victory. However, in the competition that shortly followed, also in Warsaw, Czechoslovakia claimed the victory once again. In 1934, Brno was set to host another championship for the two nations,

though Warsaw pulled out at the last minute and Czechoslovakia did not face-off with Poland in swimming again. In 1937, Yugoslavia invited Czechoslovak swimmers to Dubrovnik to compete in the waters. At that time, Yugoslavia was already a force to be reckoned with in Europe, on par with Germany and Hungary, and so they avenged their losses from the Slavic Championships.

The friendly ties between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia long remained intact, only to be disrupted by the Second World War.

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