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Orel – the Catholic gymnastics organization and its foreign relations between 1929 and 1948

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Katolické Stowarzyszenie Gimnastyczne Orzeł i jego stosunki międzynarodowe w latach 1929–1948

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia historię czechosłowackiego Orła, katolickiego stowarzyszenia gimnastycznego, oraz jego stosunki międzynarodowe w latach 1929–1948. Pierwsze kontakty zagraniczne Orzeł nawiązał przed I wojną światową, w czasie, gdy organizacja nie była jeszcze w pełni niezależna. Czechosłowacki Orzeł uzyskał tę niezależność po zakończeniu I wojny światowej – w czasie, gdy zaczął się dynamicznie rozwijać i nawiązywać coraz więcej kontaktów zagranicznych. Wielka ekspansja czechosłowackiego stowarzyszenia nastąpiła jednak dopiero w latach 20. XX wieku, kiedy to zostało członkiem Katolickiego Związku Gimnastycznego UIOCEP i zorganizowało dwa wielkie międzynarodowe festiwale. Szczególne znaczenie miał festiwal, który odbył się w 1929 roku, zwiększając za granicą popularność czechosłowackiego Orła i jego filozofii wychowania fizycznego. Czechosłowacki Orzeł stopniowo stawał się jednym z najważniejszych członków UIOCEP. Dzięki szerokiej bazie członkowskiej stał się faktycznie jedną z największych organizacji w związku, zajmując ważną pozycję w kierownictwie. Rozwój stowarzyszenia został zahamowany przez wybuch II wojny światowej, a następnie reżim totalitarny, który rządził w Czechosłowacji od 1948

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roku. Planowany trzeci festiwal, na który czechosłowaccy aktywiści Orła ponownie zaprosili dużą liczbę uczestników z zagranicy, nigdy się nie odbył. Orła odbudowano dopiero na początku lat 90. XX wieku. Stowarzyszenie nigdy jednak nie rozwijało się już w taki sposób, jak w okresie przed II wojną światową.

Słowa kluczowe: Orzeł, katolickie wychowanie fizyczne i sport, UIOCEP, mistrzostwa, stosunki międzynarodowe.

Abstract

This paper looks at the history of the Czechoslovak Orel, the Catholic gymnastics organization and its foreign relations between 1929 and 1948. The Orel had begun to establish its first foreign contacts before the First World War, at a time when the organization had not yet become fully independent. The Czechoslovak Orel was given independence after the First World War had come to an end – a time when it began to expand and establish an increasing number of foreign contacts. However, the Czechoslovak organization did not experience major expansion until the 1920s, the decade when it became a member of the Catholic gymnastics union, UIOCEP, and when it organized two large-scale international festivals. The festival held in 1929 was of particular significance, increasing the popularity of the Czechoslovak Orel and its physical education philosophy abroad. The Czechoslovak Orel was gradually to become one of the most significant UIOCEP members. Due to its large membership numbers, it actually became one of the largest organizations in the union and was later honorably awarded presidency. However, the Orel suffered a major setback following the outbreak of the Second World War and the ensuing totalitarian regime that was introduced in Czechoslovakia in 1948. A planned third festival, where Czechoslovak Orel officials again predicted large numbers of participants from abroad, was never held. The Orel was not reestablished until the early 1990s. However, it was never to develop and grow in the way it had been known to.

Keywords: The Orel, Catholic physical education and sport, the UIOCEP, championships, foreign relations.

Introduction

The origins of Orel, which is primarily an association uniting people of the Catholic faith, date back to the turn of the 20th century, when the first gymnastics divisions were formed within existing Catholic associations. Their formation was provoked by a considerable disregard of religion in the Sokol organization and later in the SDTJ (Union of Workingmen's Gymnastics Associations). Literature often refers to the decision to establish and name the organization in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary as being inspired by Slovenian lands, where the Orel organization had been formed by Janez Evangelist Krek. The Orel Movement having been formed in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary, local functionaries gradually began to establish contacts with Catholic gymnastics organizations abroad.

The First World War almost destroyed the Orel Movement in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary. The number of members, both active and foreign con-

tacts, rapidly dropped and Orel leaders even discussed the possibility of the union having to cease its operations. However, the Orel Movement rose again together with a new Czechoslovakia established after the First World War had ended. The number of divisions, members and foreign contacts increased. There were two events that greatly influenced this fact. In 1922, the first National Orel Festival was held, welcoming a large number of guests from abroad. Moreover, the Czechoslovak Orel became a member of the UIOCEP (Union internationale des œuvres catholiques d'éducation physique – International Union of Catholic Gymnastics Associations) – a union that brought Catholic physical education unions from various countries around the world together to compete against each other at union championships and exchange experience of organizing physical education and sport. With an increasing number of members, the Czechoslovak Orel strengthened its position within the union. Moreover, in the mid-1920s it began to envisage its second national festival (officially called the 1929 Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival of Orel Associations), planning to invite all national UIOCEP member unions as well as many other guests from abroad.¹

The Czechoslovak Orel and foreign relations in the late 1920s

The festival itself, which became the highlight of Orel efforts in the 1920s, was preceded by a huge amount of organizational work and meetings, both at home and abroad. On 10th February 1929, a UIOCEP meeting took place in Paris with delegates from France, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Germany and Yugoslavia. The Czechoslovak Orel informed of its festival which was to include union championships to be held in Prague. An agreement was made to award the winning team the UIOCEP Challenge Prize for the first time in history. Approval was also given to purchasing union prizes for the winners of track and field events. However, there was also an exchange of views between Stanislav Zháněl, representing the Czechoslovak Orel, and Count Neipperg of the DJK (Deutsche Jugendkraft – Reichsverband für Leibesübungen in katholischen Vereinen – the German Youth Power – the Reich Union for physical exercise in Catholic associations), who spoke of the tense relations between the Czechoslovak Orel and the CDT (Christlich deutsche Turnerschaft in der Tschechoslowakei – Union of German Christian gymnastics associations in Czechoslovakia). The Czechoslovak Orel denied allegations of tense relations. The Union subsequently called on the Czechoslovak Orel to invite the CDT to the 1929 Prague Saint Wen-

¹ T. Tlustý, *Orel – the Catholic physical education association: foreign relations up to 1929*, "Sport i Turystyka. Środkowoeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe" 2021, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 11–31, DOI: 10.16926/sit.2021.04.01

ceslas Festival of Orel Associations and Orel officials agreed.² The Union's presidium was also newly elected at the meeting. The existing Belgian president Félix van de Kerchove was reelected, François Hébrard being elected his first deputy and the position of second deputy was reserved for the Czechoslovak Orel.³

Finally, a considerable number of foreigners travelled to the Prague Festival. There were 2 005 South Slavs, 152 Frenchmen, 40 Belgians, 1 236 Czechs and Slovaks from the American Catholic Sokol, 900 Polish, 46 Sorbs, 100 Englishmen, 1 Dutch, 520 from the Vienna Orel, 34 members of the DJK, 3 Germans from Munich and 50 Czechs from Volyn.⁴ The Festival gave the Czechoslovak Orel the opportunity to establish a whole range of new valuable foreign contacts. Of highest significance for the Czechoslovak Orel was contact with the Reich Association for Women's Gymnastics (Reichsverein für Frauenturnen), a Union of Catholic Clubs based in Munich, which strived to organize women's physical exercise clubs in Germany and called on the Czechoslovak Orel to cooperate in the field of women's physical education in Catholic associations and the UIOCEP. The Orel Movement's women's physical exercise was indeed highly appreciated by guests from abroad during the Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival of Orel Associations.⁵

By the end of the 1920s, the Czechoslovak Orel was in touch with a considerable number of foreign Catholic gymnastics unions. It was undoubtedly closest to the JOZ (Jugoslovanska Orlovska Zveza – the Yugoslav Union of Orel Associations), with which it had previously wanted to form a Union of Slavic Orel Associations and had organized joint Slavic Orel Festivals.⁶ From 5th to 7th October 1929, there was a conference in Brno where negotiations between JOZ officials and the Czechoslovak Orel High Council were held to agree on important points for preparing the fourth Festival of Slavic Orel Associations in Ljubljana, which was planned for 1931. At that time, the Czechoslovak Orel was already suggesting that it would travel to perform at the festival. Particular exercises for a joint

² "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1929, vol. 14, no. 11, p. 167; M. Waic, *Tělesná výchova a sport v politickém životě meziválečného Československa*, Národohospodářský ústav Josefa Hlávky, Prague 2016, pp. 131–132.

³ Unfortunately, there is no record of which Czechoslovak Orel was elected as second deputy in 1929. Nevertheless, František Leiner is certain to have been appointed this function from 1930. "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1929, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 57–58. "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1930, vol. 15, no. 12, p. 186.

⁴ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1931, vol. 16, no. 7, p. 82.

⁵ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 11, Sdružení angl. klubů mladistvých 1947, Sdružení angl. klubů mladistvých, 12th May 1947.

⁶ The first Slavic Orel Festival was held in Maribor in 1920. The second Slavic Orel Festival was hosted by Brno in 1922 (the first Festival of Czechoslovak Orel Associations – Brno 1922), the third Slavic Orel Festival took place in Prague in 1929 (the 1929 Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival of Orel Associations).

performance were discussed and practised at the Brno conference. Instructions to accompany exercises were translated into Czech.⁷

However, there was a turn of events that nobody had foreseen. On 6th December 1929 legislation from the previous day gave birth to a new directive in Yugoslavia – the so-called Sokol Organization of the Yugoslavian Kingdom, whose author was King Alexandr I Karađorđević. This directive established a single state gymnastics organization called the Sokol Organization of the Yugoslavian Kingdom.⁸ No other gymnastics organization could exist alongside it. Therefore, their members were forced either to join the state Sokol organization or discontinue their activity. This legislation defined the fate of the JOZ organization, which formally ceased its operations by the end of 1929. Its request to be affiliated in the Sokol organization was unanimously rejected at the JOZ convention which took place on 22nd December 1929. The presidium of the Czechoslovak Orel sent a letter of greeting to the convention with words of encouragement. The 1931 Ljubljana Meeting was indeed cancelled.⁹ After the JOZ was forced to close down, the Czechoslovak Orel lost its closest foreign ally. Consequently, it had to seek foreign cooperation elsewhere.

The Czechoslovak Orel and foreign relations in the 1930s

By late 1929, the Czechoslovak Orel had been invited to the Belgian Catholic Gymnasts' championships, which were to take place in Antwerp from 25th to 29th July 1930. The fifth International UIOCEP Gymnastics and Track and Field Championships were also due to go ahead on this occasion.¹⁰ The Czechoslovak Orel had wanted to send both men's and women's teams.¹¹

On 25th July 1930, a team of track and field representatives travelled to Belgium, accompanied by a delegation of Orel functionaries.¹² These championships were entered by Czechoslovaks and Belgians as well as athletes from France, Holland, Germany and Luxembourg. Domestic representatives, who naturally formed the largest group of athletes, competed almost exclusively in

⁷ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1929, vol. 14, no. 20, pp. 292–293.

⁸ A. Skoupý, Slovinský orel v kontextu politických poměrů meziválečné Jugoslávie, [in:] I. Koucká, D. Papajík (eds.), *Politický katolicismus v nástupnických státech Rakousko-Uherské monarchie v letech 1918–1938*, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Olomouc 2001, pp. 105–112.

⁹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1929, vol. 14, no. 23–24, pp. 338–343.

¹⁰ "Almanach sportu a tělesné výchovy na rok 1932" 1932, pp. 102–103.

¹¹ However, the women's team was to travel only if the Belgians permitted female participation, as women athletes were still not widely recognized in UIOCEP member unions. "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1930, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 26–27. J. Jirka, *Sto let královny*, Česká atletika, Prague 1997, p. 89.

¹² "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1930, vol. 15, no. 14, p. 217.

events designated for their own Belgian national associations. Saturday 26th July 1930 saw the opening of the National Gymnastics Championships (floor and apparatus exercises) and of the International Mixed Enneathlon Championships (horizontal bar, parallel bars, vault, rings, floor exercise, long jump, high jump, 100 m, shot put). However, these were entered by participants from France, Germany and Belgium. The Czechoslovak Orel, which would have defended its 1929 second place, did not participate this time. The UIOCEP Track and Field Championships were not opened until Monday 28th July 1930, with the participation of France, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Vojtěch Jílek was undoubtedly the Czechoslovak team's most successful athlete, dominating the pentathlon competition.¹³

Two months later, the Czechoslovak Orel was preparing for another engagement abroad. The Polish Catholic Youth Association in Królewska Huta (today's Chorzów) was to celebrate its tenth anniversary on 6th and 7th September 1930. The celebration was to coincide with a festival that the Kadlčák regional Czechoslovak Orel organization was invited to, having maintained contact with this Polish association for several years. Around 120 members dressed in traditional costumes took trains from Moravská Ostrava and Vítkovice. This was the Czechoslovak Orel's first ever trip to Poland. Both male and female members performed exercises there, cheered on by spectators.¹⁴

In the same year, female members of the Czechoslovak Orel High Council travelled to Salzburg for the Austrian Catholic Turner Clubs' Championships and participated in a study tour in Germany.¹⁵ By the end of 1930, the Czechoslovak Orel had also squeezed in a trip to Zagreb.

In 1932, the Czechoslovak Orel presented itself in France, where its team led by Bedřich Kostelka achieved third place in the international championships (Championat Artistique A), which was organized to coincide with the UIOCEP Championships. Competition was high with 483 athletes divided into three groups competing in this category. Around four thousand competitors flocked to this spectacular event, held in Nice from 15th to 18th July. The French president himself, Albert Lebrun, took charge of the whole event.¹⁶

In 1933, the Czechoslovak Orel was to travel abroad for further engagements. On 3rd June, a team of about 800 set off from Olomouc to Poland's Kra-

¹³ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Ústřední Rada Orla československého, Prague 1931, p. 34. "Tělesná výchova: Tělocvičný věstník Československého Orla" 1930, vol. 8, no. 8, pp. 133–135.

¹⁴ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1930, vol. 15, no. 18, pp. 287–289.

¹⁵ "Almanach sportu a tělesné výchovy na rok 1932" 1932, pp. 102–103.

¹⁶ *Československý Orel: program, dějiny, statistika*, Ústřední Rada Orla československého, Prague 1931, p. 34. "Jihočeský Orel: Věstník Jihočeské orelské župy Jana Valeriána Jirsíka v Českých Budějovicích, Lannova třída 652" 1932, vol. 1, no. 3, unpaginated magazine.

ków and its surroundings.¹⁷ The next destination was Poland's Piekary Wielke (from 1934 Piekary Śląskie), where it wanted to take part in the All-Polish Festival in honor of King John III Sobieski – liberator of Vienna from the Turks. They were held from 15th to 22nd August 1933. A delegation from the Czechoslovak Orel was to make another journey abroad on 20th August 1933, travelling to Rome for the "Jubilee" celebrations. This biblical festival was declared by Pope Pius XI to mark the 1 900th anniversary of Christ's death. They returned to the republic on 31st August 1933.¹⁸

At the UIOCEP annual meeting held on 17th and 18th June 1933 in Salzburg, Austria, František Leiner was elected First Deputy Chairman of the Union. François Hébrard remained at its head while simultaneously holding the office of Chairman of the FGSPF (Fédération gymnastique et sportive des patronages de France – the French gymnastics and sports federation). At the meeting, new rules for organizing international union championships were established, now to be held once every five years. In addition, the Union's headquarters were officially transferred from Rome to Paris.¹⁹

The UIOCEP annual congress was hosted by Brussels in 1935. František Leiner, First Deputy Chairman of the Union was joined by Jiří Malášek from the Czechoslovak Orel, as physical education advisor. At this meeting, held on 14th September 1935, UIOCEP members were told of the bad news, i.e. dissolving of the German Catholic organization, the DJK.²⁰ The main focus of the Union's negotiations was to settle dates for and organize the Union's international championships and discuss corresponding championship rules. The following international UIOCEP championships were ruled to take place on 13th and 14th June 1936, in Vienna.²¹ The Union also decided to allow Catholic unions and gymnastics associations who were not yet its members to participate in a special cate-

¹⁷ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1933, vol. 18, no. 11–12, pp. 130–133.

¹⁸ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1934, vol. 19, no. 20–21, p. 236. "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1933, vol. 18, no. 9, p. 101.

¹⁹ This organization was formed in 1908 following the First International Congress and Catholic Gymnasts' Championships in the Vatican. Pope Pius X, a big fan of physical education, was involved in its establishment. He was known for his statement: "Pray and exercise." At first, the Union was located in Rome, but moved to Paris in 1920. However, Rome remained its official headquarters until 1933, when the Union left for good after changing its statutes. This was greatly influenced by the fact that the French FGSPF had become its largest member. "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1928, vol. 13, no. 12, pp. 180–182. "Nová tělesná výchova: list pro tělesnou výchovu, tělocvik, sport, hry, skauting a pro vědecké studium těchto oborů" 1928, vol. 1, p. 44. "Věstník sokolský: List Svazu československého sokolstva" 1933, vol. 35, no. 47, p. 774.

²⁰ "Národní listy" 1935, vol. 75, no. 201, p. 1. "Morgenpost: deutsches unparteiisches Tagblatt" 1935, vol. 70, no. 171, p. 1.

²¹ "Tělesná výchova: Tělocvičný věstník Československého Orela" 1935, vol. 13, no. 11, pp. 164–165.

gory of events. The Union entrusted the Czechoslovak Orel with the task of negotiating with such Slavic organizations.²²

Orel's most important foreign engagement in 1936 was undoubtedly the previously mentioned Catholic Olympics in Vienna. The Czechoslovak Orel had planned to have their athletes joined by a wider delegation who were to represent their nation and the Orel Movement in Vienna. The organizing committee wanted the Czechoslovak Orel to dress in national costume and demonstrate some of their national customs and dances. The women were to present something that would express the nature of Orel gymnastics. The same was requested of the Orel men.²³

A large group of 441 Orel representatives travelled to Vienna. The championships were opened on Friday 12th June 1936, when Czechoslovak athletes and gymnasts began their competition. Rostislav Slavotínek led the Orel team into the stadium for the opening ceremony which preceded the actual championships. On the first day the Czechoslovak team, particularly the gymnasts, seemed to be tired and lacking confidence. It was clear that the athletes had more experience with international competitions. The international championships continued on Saturday morning and the stadium witnessed several successes for the Czechoslovak Orel, particularly in track and field. Štěpán Hrstka won the 110 metre hurdles, breaking the UIOCEP record for this discipline with a time of 16.3 seconds. The Czechoslovak Orel had also set their mind on a good result in the pentathlon but to no avail. However, the Czechoslovak Orel were very pleased with their achievement at the Catholic Olympics in Vienna. Besides sporting successes, they acquired several new friends.²⁴

In 1936, the UIOCEP annual conference took place in Prague on 25th October. The meeting was chaired by president of the union, François Hébrard and his first deputy, František Leiner, was there too. All union members were invited to Paris for a great sporting festival to take place on 10th and 11th July 1937, in commemoration of the World Exhibition. All of the French delegates supported the participation of Czechoslovak women in all age groups. The French Federation was actually intending on introducing physical education for Catholic women and girls in the near future. The Orel women were indeed to become a certain model for French women. They were also reminded of their success at the Vienna Catholic Olympics. Consequently, the French were promised a large number of participants by the Czechoslovak Orel. It wanted both to repay them for their participation in the 1929 Prague Saint Wenceslas Festival of Orel Associa-

²² "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1935, vol. 20, no. 18, pp. 205–206.

²³ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1936, vol. 21, no. 1–2, pp. 6–8.

²⁴ "Tělesná výchova: Tělocvičný věstník Československého Orela" 1936, vol. 14, no. 7, pp. 110–115.
"Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1936, vol. 21, no. 12–14, pp. 135–139.

tions and to encourage their participation in its planned 1939 Third National Orel Festival. This indeed was a very significant event for the Czechoslovak Orel. In fact, the Mayor of the Czechoslovak Orel and concurrent long-term Czechoslovak minister, Jan Šrámek, announced that he would lead the whole team.²⁵

The organizing committee discussed membership applications received from the CDT and the Reich Catholic Youth Union in Austria. The Czechoslovak Orel recommended admission of the CDT and its request was granted. The CDT was admitted as a minority union, being granted only an advisory vote in the Union's headquarters. Technically, though, it had the same rights and benefits as the other members.²⁶ The Reich Catholic Youth Union in Austria was not admitted due to the Union's policy of admitting only one national sports union from each state.²⁷ The Union of German Christian Gymnastics Associations had been running in Austria for a number of years.²⁸

Towards the end of 1937, the Czechoslovak Orel succeeded in partially renewing the interrupted relations with the JOZ. Members of this union, which had previously been forced to close down, had entered public enlightenment organizations. In Slovenia these were Educational Associations (*Prosvetna zveza*), which incorporated the ZFO (*Zveza fantovskih odsekov – Union of Young Boys' Divisions*) and the ZDK (*Zveza dekliških krožkov – Union of Girls' Clubs*), which were given permission to add physical exercise and sport to their activities in late 1937.²⁹

This union's first planned event was a festival in Ljubljana, which was to take place from 26th to 29th June 1938. The Slovenians tried to attract large numbers of international competitors, including sportsmen from the Czechoslovak Orel.³⁰ The Czechoslovak Orel was aware of the fact that if it wanted to raise its chances of the Slovenians sending a large team to its planned third national festival, it would have to send a large delegation to Slovenia.³¹ The Czechoslovak Orel met

²⁵ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1937, vol. 22, no. 9, p. 97.

²⁶ So, it could send teams or individuals directly and fully independently to international championships.

²⁷ This problem had already been discussed in the UIOCEP. It was actually the Czechoslovak Orel that had proposed the rule of each state being allowed to be represented in the Union by only one national federation. However, its proposal was rejected in 1929. So, it was probably the new Union statutes, approved in 1933, that introduced this change.

²⁸ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1936, vol. 21, no. 21, pp. 242–243.

²⁹ Actually, the 17th October saw the start of a struggle to restore the name Orel, but with no success at that time. However, the Slovenians gradually began to use the name in their forms. The FGSPF used it too, at a time when it informed its members of its intention to hold this festival.

³⁰ "Orelský věstník: List středočeské orelské župy Pospíšilovy" 1937, vol. 7, no. 12, pp. 5–6.

³¹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1937, vol. 22, no. 20, pp. 234–236. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí ústřední rady 1938–1947, VII. období – Zápis ze 75. schůze předsednictva Čsl. Orla za dne 1. prosince 1937.

Slovenian officials in Vienna on 6th and 7th November 1937, agreeing on conditions for participation in the Ljubljana festival. The Slovenians depended on the Czechoslovak Orel sending more than 3 000 people to Ljubljana, expecting them to perform their own floor exercises and hoping at least half of them would join the Slovenians in their floor exercises. The Southern Slavs had also aspired to hold their “First Slavic Olympics”, which would include volleyball and team races as well as skiing. After agreeing on all necessities, the Czechoslovaks and the Slovenians went their ways.³²

On 12th January 1938, the presidium of the Czechoslovak Orel decided to send both a women’s volleyball team and a men’s volleyball team to Slovenia. In addition to those, the Czechoslovak team was to comprise twelve best Orel athletes and six best Orel gymnasts.³³ The ski races to take place in the “First Slavic Olympics” were eventually scheduled for 11th to 13th February 1938. The presidium of the Czechoslovak Orel agreed to send four best Orel skiers and one head of team.³⁴

However, in early 1938, the Union of German Christian Gymnastics Associations was dissolved by the new Austrian government. This Union had not only been a UIOCEP member but had also actively cooperated with the Czechoslovak Orel. One of its intentions had been to send a delegation to the planned Third National Orel Festival, scheduled to take place in Prague in 1939.³⁵

The Czechoslovak Orel’s first big trip to Yugoslavia was scheduled from 25th to 30th June 1938. It intended to present how it had advanced and show how it had expanded and developed over the last 20 years. The team comprised of a total of around 2 000 participants. The government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia considered the Ljubljana Festival a transnational event. This was reflected in their presidium, which included Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović. The Yugoslavian King Petar II Karađorđević himself took the auspices over the event. The festival as such was a great manifestation of the Slavic Czechoslovak-Yugoslavian brotherhood.

The Orel athletes had little chance of winning against the French runners in the international race. At that time, the French were likely to have no trouble winning on a national level at the Czechoslovak Championships.³⁶ The Czecho-

³² “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva“ 1937, vol. 22, no. 21–22, pp. 245–249.

³³ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí ústřední rady 1938–1947, VII. období – Zápis ze 78. schůze předsednictva Čsl. Orla za dne 12. ledna 1938.

³⁴ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí ústřední rady 1938–1947, VII. období – Zápis ze 75. schůze předsednictva Čsl. Orla za dne 1. prosince 1937. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva“ 1938, vol. 23, no. 1–2, pp. 16–17.

³⁵ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva“ 1938, vol. 23, no. 6, p. 70.

³⁶ If we were to compare the achievement of Orel athletes with the best Czechoslovak results, we would have to state that the level of Orel athletics at that time was not very high, apart from a few exceptions. P. Bahenský, M. Semerád, *Analýza vývoje výkonnosti v běhu mužů na*

slovak Orel was actually most successful in the Slavic Championships at short and middle distances, where they gained top positions. Štěpán Hrstka was acknowledged as the most successful athlete in the Slavic Championships at middle distances, winning the 110 metre hurdles and the javelin, coming second in the hammer throw and third in the shot put. In addition, he had two fourth places and one sixth place. He also ran in both relays (4×100 metres and Swedish relay), the Czechoslovak Orel finishing second. Consequently, Štěpán Hrstka was awarded the title of Champion Orel along with the prize for the most versatile athlete.³⁷ The Czechoslovak Orel also performed in the planned floor exercises, although it probably considered its biggest team achievement its results in the volleyball tournament, where both its men's and women's teams made it into the final groups of four. The Orel teams went on to dominate both groups, taking first and second place in both cases.³⁸

A similar trip was scheduled for 24th to 26th September 1938. This time the Czechoslovak Orel was to visit the Polish town of Częstochowa. However, events on the world stage and the mobilization of Czechoslovakia, declared on 23rd September 1938, prevented them from travelling.³⁹ In addition, Czech-Polish relations suffered a setback as Poland pursued claims on parts of the Czechoslovak territory.⁴⁰

Mobilization, the signing of the Munich Agreement and Poland's claims on parts of the Czechoslovak territory almost immediately raised questions as to whether the 1939 third National Orel Festival would go ahead in Prague or not. Orel associations were forced to acknowledge that, if the festival was to go ahead, it would definitely not be on a scale it had originally planned. The participation of foreign guests raised another question. It was clearly out of the question for some foreign teams to take part. By the end of 1938, the Czechoslovak Orel could de facto only count on the Slovenians coming.⁴¹ On 18th December

1500 m v ČR 1945-2013, "Studia Kinaanthropologica" 2014, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 131–140, DOI: 10.32725/sk.2014.049. P. Bahenský, P. Tlustý, *Analýza vývoje výkonnosti v běhu mužů na 5000 m v ČR 1945–2016*, "Studia Kinaanthropologica" 2017, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 97–107, DOI: 10.32725/sk.2017.024.

³⁷ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1939, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 21–23.

³⁸ "Tělesná výchova: Tělocvičný věstník Československého Orla" 1938, vol. 16, no. 7–8, pp. 107–112. J. Bránský, J. Vítek, J. Parma, *Orel v Boskovicích – 100 let*, Orel, Boskovice 2009, p. 40.

³⁹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla" 1946, vol. 27, no. 1, p. 14. *Zprávy k VIII. sjezdu Čsl. Orla*, Typos, Brno 1947, p. 15.

⁴⁰ In addition, the Orel had been preparing to visit the Festival of Catholic Gymnastics Associations in Poznań in 1938 and had considered an invitation to a festival in Fontainebleau from the Federation of French Gymnasts – the Avon Stags. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí ústřední rady 1938–1947, VII. období – Zápis ze 75. schůze předsednictva Čsl. Orla za dne 1. prosince 1937.

⁴¹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orelstva" 1938, vol. 23, no. 22, p. 254.

1938, the Czechoslovak Orel released its declaration saying that due to the economic situation at both state level and in terms of individual associations the 1939 Czechoslovak Orel Festival would not go ahead.⁴²

In mid-March 1939, Slovakia's secession from the rest of the republic was advocated and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared. The Czechoslovak Orel had to rename itself the Czechomoravian Orel. Despite extremely tense relations that existed in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Orel members tried to carry on with their activity. Even in this difficult time, the Czechomoravian Orel managed to maintain its closest relations with the Yugoslavians. In mid-1939, great appreciation was shown to the Czechoslovak Orel's deputy mayor, František Leiner:

In recognition of the Czechoslovak Orel's deputy mayor, František Leiner, the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Sava was handed over at the Southern Slavic General Consulate in Prague on 7th June 1939, awarded to him as proposed by the Southern Slavic Ministry Executive and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for his contribution to the fraternal relations between the Southern Slavic and Czech nations by His Majesty King Petar II.⁴³

However, even this contact was soon broken off. During the Second World War, Czechoslovak Orel members began to take part in resistance activities, were involved in the assassination of the Deputy Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich and its former Mayor Jan Šrámek became Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia in exile. This all resulted in the Czechomoravian Orel being dissolved in 1941, in Moravia and a year later in Bohemia.

The Czechoslovak Orel and foreign relations between 1945 and 1948

After the Second World War and the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Orel was very keen to recommence its activity and to reestablish foreign relations. In 1946, it spoke of communicating with the Dutch, Belgians and French. Unfortunately, it seemed that it would be the only Slavic nation to remain in the Union. However, it was prepared to continue its efforts and activity.⁴⁴

The Orel's first larger meeting with foreign colleagues probably took place in August 1946. The French Federation of Catholic Gymnastics organized a phys-

⁴² *Zprávy k VIII. sjezdu Čsl. Orla*, Typos, Brno 1947, pp. 18–19.

⁴³ The Order of Saint Sava was an Order of Merit, first awarded by the King of Serbia, Milan Obrenović, in 1883 and later by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Five grades were awarded. The Knight Grand Cross (sash over the shoulder, star on the right breast) was the first grade. "Orel: Ústřední list Orelstva" 1939, vol. 24, no. 11, pp. 109–110.

⁴⁴ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla" 1946, vol. 27, no. 1, p. 14.

ical education course in Joinville from 19th to 31st August 1946. The Czechoslovak Orel joined the course, sending a four-member delegation. The course was divided into two main groups – men and women. The men's course focused on apparatus exercises, appropriately complemented with track and field activities, while the women's course mainly comprised of games, particularly basketball. Both the men's and the women's groups met in the evening to discuss acquired knowledge. The Czechoslovak delegation was not only actively engaged in the course during the day but also tried hard to inform participants of its experience in organizing physical education and of Czechoslovak physical education trends.⁴⁵

The UIOCEP conference, held in Zurich on 19th and 20th October 1946, enabled the Czechoslovak Orel to establish more contacts with Catholic gymnastics organizations abroad. Of all the member unions, the Swiss Catholic Men's Gymnastics Union based in Zurich and the Swiss Catholic Women's Gymnastics Union based in Basel were least affected by the Second World War. For their strength and geographical location, they also aspired to take charge of the whole organization. These unions also proposed for the UIOCEP headquarters to be transferred from Paris to Switzerland. However, the Zurich conference was mainly concerned with restoring the organization as a whole and reestablishing cooperation between those unions that had "survived" the war.⁴⁶

The UIOCEP's first official post-war meeting again took place in Zurich on 4th and 5th January 1947 and was chaired by FGSPF⁴⁷ Mayor, François Hébrard. The meeting was attended by officials from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and Czechoslovakia. František Leiner was again elected First Deputy Chairman of the Union, which was renamed the FICEP (Fédération internationale catholique d'éducation physique et sportive – International Catholic Federation of Physical and Sports Education). The headquarters of its general secretariat remained unchanged. In addition, the Chairman of the Swiss Gymnastics Union invited him to its Union Gala, which was to be held in Basel from 4th to 6th July 1947⁴⁸ and he was also invited by the FGSPF chairman to the Gala planned for

⁴⁵ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 6, Oreľská delegace v Joinville 1946, Zpráva o účasti oreľské delegace na tělovýchovném kurse pořádaném francouzskou federací katolických gymnastů ve dnech 19.–31. srpna 1946 v Joinville.

⁴⁶ S. Vejvar, *Dějiny tělovýchovné organizace Orel v Čechách v letech 1909–1948* (Dissertation thesis), Charles University, Prague 2014, pp. 385–386.

⁴⁷ In 1942 in German-occupied France, the FGSPF was amalgamated with its women's equivalent, the RSF (*Rayon sportif feminine* – Women's Sports Department), becoming the UGSPF (Union gymnique et sportive des patronages de France – the French gymnastics and sports federation). However, this Union suspended activity in 1944, again becoming the FGSPF after the war, their merge with the RSF not being affected.

⁴⁸ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy schůzí náčelnické rady mužů 1946–47, Zápis o schůzi náčelnické rady mužů Čsl. Orela, konané dne 29. a 30. března 1947 v ústřední kanceláři Čsl. Orela v Brně, Veveří 6.

1948. FICEP member unions also agreed on organizing apparatus championships for all member unions. These were to take place in Paris in 1947, each member union being entitled to send a four-member team to represent it.⁴⁹

In February 1947, Ludmila Hudečková, Helena Mlčochová, Jiří Maláček and Rostislav Slavotínek were appointed members of the FICEP technical committee. At its meeting held in Prague from 18th to 20th April 1947,⁵⁰ the Czechoslovak Orel requested being given the chance to hold the 1949 international championships in Prague to coincide with the 1949 Orel Gala. This was to become the third Festival of the Czechoslovak Orel.⁵¹ The Czechoslovak Orel wanted to strive to get the other Czechoslovak Catholic organizations and institutions to join the planned Gala. These would be accompanied by delegations of foreign Catholic gymnastics unions and Catholics from “all allied states around the world.”⁵²

The women’s FICEP committee also made several important decisions in Prague in April 1947. The meeting was chaired by the French general secretary Marie-Thérèse Euquem. She was joined by French federation chief Olga Batany, Swiss women’s union president Elsie Widmer, Belgium’s Mrs Nayer and Czechoslovak Orel women’s chief Ludmila Hudečková along with female members of the High Council M. Šmoková, Helena Mlčochová and M. Leinerová. A number of issues were discussed at the meeting – rules for international championships, female gymnast exchanges, female trainers and instructors and schedules for future championships and events.⁵³

At the end of its meeting, the FICEP technical committee headed from Prague to Brno. At a meeting of the Czechoslovak Orel presidium, Brno had been approved as the venue to host a ceremonial parade, which would include demonstrations of French and Czech gymnastics and rhythmic gymnastics. The parade took place there on 20th April 1947.⁵⁴ It was concluded the day after in the Typos Palace, where the audience watched demonstrations of French and Czech methods of rhythmic gymnastics. Following the opening speeches of the Czechoslovak Orel’s sitting deputy mayor František Leiner and the General Secretary of the FICEP and the FSF (Fédération sportive de France – French Sports

⁴⁹ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla” 1947, vol. 28, no. 1–2, p. 6.

⁵⁰ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy schůzí náčelnické rady mužů 1946–47, Zápis o schůzi náčelnické rady žen, konané dne 1.–2. února 1947 v místnostech ústřední kanceláře v Brně, Veverí ul. 6. “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla” 1947, vol. 28, no. 3, p. 36.

⁵¹ As previously mentioned, this festival had originally been planned for 1939 but was prevented from going ahead by events on the world stage in 1938 and 1939.

⁵² “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla” 1947, vol. 28, no. 7, p. 80.

⁵³ “Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla” 1947, vol. 28, no. 10, pp. 128–129.

⁵⁴ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí předsednictva 1945–1948, Pořad jednání schůze Čsl. Orla, konané dne 2. dubna 1947.

Federation)⁵⁵ Armanda Thibaudeau, the floor was passed over to Marie-Thérèse Eyquem – physical exercise inspector for the state physical exercise under secretariat in Paris. Besides other things, she justified the formation of women’s Catholic gymnastics associations in various countries, stressing that Catholic gymnastics encourages the idea that

[...] the body should never become superior to the soul but the body should remain obedient to the soul given to us by God. Catholic physical education strives not to turn women into record breakers but to create healthy women prepared for the role of the Christian mother [...].

She also praised the work of the Czechoslovak Orel, which was the first of all European Catholic gymnastics associations to blaze the trail for women’s physical education.⁵⁶

At the 1947 FICEP meeting in Paris, an agreement was reached to include the Catholic Olympics in the 1949 Orel Gala to be held in Prague. This confirmed the Union’s participation in the Gala and the Czechoslovak Orel could begin to prepare to welcome thousands more members of foreign Catholic gymnastics unions from Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Austria. This occasion provided an ideal opportunity to familiarize its guests with the post-Second World War Orel movement.⁵⁷

The Czechoslovak Orel sent a team of fifteen, led by František Leiner and Jiří Malášek, to the Eighth Congress of Swiss Gymnasts and Sportsmen held in Basel from 4th to 6th July 1947. A team of twelve representative gymnasts was led by František Dofek. Orel Chief Rostislav Slavotínek joined them in Switzerland as well.⁵⁸ This gala was held for the first time since the Second World War had ended and was the first chance for “apparatus gymnasts” and athletes from France, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium and Austria to meet and confront their strengths.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, representatives from the Netherlands, who

⁵⁵ It was the FGSPF’s successor. The FSF began its activity on 22nd March 1947. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 5, závody – Laval 1947, Čsl. Orel Ministerstvu školství a osvěty, 10th July 1947. Y. Gastaut, S. Mourlane, *La Semeuse, 1904–2004: histoire d'un patronage niçois*, Serre Éditeur, Nice 2004, p. 105.

⁵⁶ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Večer francouzské a české gymnastiky a rytmiky.

⁵⁷ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Oběžník č. 6 Středočeské orelské župy Pospíšilovy v Praze I., Revoluční, č. 5., 1st August 1947.

⁵⁸ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 5, Sport. slavnosti – Basilej 1947, Seznam účastníků gymnastického družstva, které vysílá Čsl. Orel. na VIII. tělocvičné slavnosti Švýcarského katolického tělocvičného a sportovního svazu, pořádané ve dnech 4.–6. července 1947 v Basileji. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 5, Sport. slavnosti – Basilej 1947, Čsl. Orel Ministerstvu školství a osvěty, 17th June 1947.

⁵⁹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Orelské zprávy.

had committed themselves to coming, were unable to travel due to passport problems. The Orel delegation in their folk costumes raised great interest, resulting in the Swiss committing to send a team of at least 100 to take part in the 1949 Orel Gala. The occasion also saw the Czechoslovak Orel being invited to three other galas in Laval, Brussels and Paris. In addition, arrangements were made for Orel skiers to take part in championships scheduled for March 1948 in the French Alps. In return, Czechoslovak Orel officials were again promised participation in the 1949 Orel Gala. The Czechoslovak Orel team won great recognition in Basel and received several prizes and souvenirs.⁶⁰

A team of four Czechoslovak Orel representatives was sent to Laval for the FSF gymnastics championships on 19th and 20th July 1947. The team was led by Jiří Malášek,⁶¹ who again invited the French to Prague for their gala.⁶² On the evening of their arrival, Czechoslovak Orel gymnasts demonstrated a routine on the parallel bars but they were to be truly competing the following day. After the gala had finished, V. Kokeš and two other members of the Czechoslovak Orel High Council remained in France, in the commune of Joinville, to take part in an apparatus gymnastics course organized by the French federation from 4th to 14th August 1947.⁶³

On 20th August 1947, the Czechoslovak Orel presidium, having been invited by the Association of Friends of the Soviet Union, agreed to participate in the 30th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Clubs were actually advised to ensure the highest possible participation. Pre-war anti-communism, i.e. anti-Sovietism, had been sidelined in the post-war climate and out of general gratefulness towards the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

In 1947, the Czechoslovak Orel was also invited to the gymnastics and sports gala held in Helsinki. Unfortunately, the invitation was late in arriving and the Czechoslovak Orel did not have time to form a team to represent them. Consequently, the gala was attended by only one female member of the High Council, Helena Mlčochová.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla" 1947, vol. 28, no. 13, p. 169. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Žádost o zveřejnění zpráv Tiskovou orelskou službou, 11th July 1947.

⁶¹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Unspecified document of the Orel Press Service. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy schůzí náčelnických rad mužů i žen 1946–48, Zápis o schůzi náčelnických rad Čsl. Orla, která se konala 6. září 1947 v 17 hod. v ústřední kanceláři Čsl. Orla.

⁶² At that time, the French had already confirmed that more than a thousand of them would travel to Prague.

⁶³ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla" 1947, vol. 28, no. 14, p. 187.

⁶⁴ S. Vejvar, *Dějiny tělovýchovné organizace Orel v Čechách v letech 1909–1948* (Dissertation thesis), Charles University, Prague 2014, p. 388.

⁶⁵ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Orelské zprávy.

At the meeting of the Czechoslovak Orel High Council in October 1947, Bartoloměj Kameník suggested challenging Austria and Belgium in a track and field competition.⁶⁶ His request was not granted but Jiří Maláček was subsequently assigned the task of trying to arrange friendly volleyball, basketball and table tennis matches against Austrian, Belgian or French teams. The question was raised to the Austrians that same year.⁶⁷ Following talks with the Austrian Gymnastics and Sports Union, two apparatus gymnastics meetings were agreed on in the end, one to be held in Brno in December 1947 and the other in Vienna in March 1948. A letter was also sent to raise the question of organizing a similar event against Belgium. However, no agreement was reached. A team of only six Orel representatives was sent to Belgium to compete in an apparatus gymnastics competition held in mid-November 1947.⁶⁸

Conditions for member union instructor exchanges were settled at the 1947 international conference of FICEP technical committees. The Belgian union was the first to send its female instructors, students of physical education at the Catholic University in Leuven, to Czechoslovakia. Their stay included a visit to Líšeň, where women and junior women from the Líšeň club demonstrated their floor exercises, dances and rhythmic gymnastics routines. The Orel's women's physical education was of great interest to the Belgian women, as women's physical education did not have its own style in Belgium, consisting exclusively of men's elements.⁶⁹

As previously mentioned, three Orel skiers were to take part in a ten-day ski course in the French Alps, starting on 5th February 1948. Another three Orel sportsmen were scheduled to join them to travel to the FSF skiing championships, held on 14th and 15th February 1948.⁷⁰ The best Orel skiers were to pit their

⁶⁶ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy schůzí náčelnických rad mužů i žen 1946–48, Zápis o schůzi náčelnické radě mužů Čsl. Orla, která se konala 12. října 1947 v 8 hod. v ústřední kanceláři Čsl. Orla.

⁶⁷ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí předsednictva 1945–1948, Zápis o 10. schůzi předsednictva Čsl. Orla XI. období, konané dne 17. prosince 1947 v klubovně restaurace Typos. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Tisková orelská služba, 18th December 1947.

⁶⁸ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy schůzí náčelnických rad mužů i žen 1946–48, Náčelnická rada mužů – Připomínky ze schůze náčelnické rady 11. a 12. října 1947. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápis o schůzi náčelnické rady mužů Čsl. Orla, která se konala 6. září 1947 v 21 hod. v ústřední kanceláři Čsl. Orla. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy schůzí náčelnických rad mužů i žen 1946–48, Zápis o schůzi náčelnické radě mužů Čsl. Orla, která se konala 12. října 1947 v 8 hod. v ústřední kanceláři Čsl. Orla.

⁶⁹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 13, Tisková orelská služba 1946–48, Blíže neoznačený dokument Tiskové orelské služby.

⁷⁰ National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí předsednictva 1945–1948, Zápis o 11. schůzi předsednictva Čsl. Orla XI. období, konané dne 14. ledna 1948 v malém salonku restaurace Typos, Brno, Běhounská ul.

strength in the French Alps against French, Swiss, Belgian and Austrian competitors. The Orel team was to be led by Jiří Maláček, who was subsequently due to head for Paris to discuss the Orel's participation in the French Federation Gala, scheduled to go ahead on 7th and 8th August 1948.⁷¹ However, the skiing championships in France were probably held without Czechoslovak participation.

Arrangements were made with the Austrian Gymnastics and Sports Union for teams of six representing both organizations to take each other on in apparatus gymnastics and floor exercise routines in Brno on 10th April 1948. The Czechoslovak Orel was again scheduled to travel to Paris at the end of July 1948. This time, a group of women gymnasts were to travel, the Women's High Council having begun preparations in 1947.⁷² However, neither this nor the apparatus gymnastics competition against the Austrians in Brno went ahead.

After the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, a new directive came into force on 27th February 1948, allowing the existence of only one single Czechoslovak physical education organization - the Sokol. All physical education, sports and hiking organizations, societies and clubs would be taken over by the Sokol, both in terms of property and members. This de facto brought the downfall of the Czechoslovak Orel, time again preventing it from going ahead with its planned third National Festival in Prague. This time, the Czechoslovak Orel had to wait years and years to be reestablished. The Communists had seized power and the totalitarian Communist regime would remain in Czechoslovakia, to varying degrees, until 1989.

Conclusion

The origins of the Orel gymnastics 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 organization structure, and in Slovenia, where a Catholic gymnastics organization called Orel had also been established. It was the

⁷¹ "Orel: Ústřední list Československého Orla" 1948, vol 29, no. 1, p. 16.

⁷² National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 1, Zápisy ze schůzí předsednictva 1945–1948, Zápis o 11. schůzi předsednictva Čsl. Orla XI. období, konané dne 14. ledna 1948 v malém salonku restaurace Typos, Brno, Běhounská ul. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy o schůzi náčelnických rad Čsl. Orla, která se konala 11. října 1947 v 17. hod. v ústřední kanceláři Čsl. Orla. National archives in Prague, Fund Československý Orel, Box 2, Zápisy schůzí náčelnických rad mužů i žen 1946–48, Zápis o schůzi župních náčelníků a náčelnic, která se konala 22. listopadu 1947 v 17 hod. v zasedací síni Typosu v Brně.

Slovenian Orel that the Orel institution in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary established its first foreign relations with.

After the end of the First World War, the Orel institution gained independence from the Catholic associations in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary. The Orel became an independent association operating nationwide and was named the Czechoslovak Orel. Its number of international contacts rapidly rose, helped in the 1920s by its two national Orel festivals and by its UIOCEP membership. Just as other large gymnastics organizations in Czechoslovakia – Sokol and the SDTJ, the Czechoslovak Orel was affiliated to an international gymnastics union.

Besides being affiliated to the UIOCEP in the 1920s, the Czechoslovak Orel held talks with the Slovenians on forming a Union of Slavic Orel Associations, which the Czechoslovak Orel was to preside over. This can again be said to have been another case where the Czechoslovak Orel had clearly drawn inspiration from the Czech Sokol, which presided over the Union of Slavic Sokol Associations, established in 1908. Another large Czechoslovak gymnastics organization – the SDTJ – was a member of the International Association of Red Sports and Gymnastics Associations. The importance of the SDTJ within the International Association of Red Sports and Gymnastics Associations grew over the years. However, unlike the Czechoslovak Orel, whose position within the UIOCEP grew continually, the SDTJ was significantly helped on its road to glory by the dissolution of workers' gymnastics associations in Germany and Austria in 1933 and 1934. However, a Union of Slavic Orel Associations was not formed and the Czechoslovak Orel had to make do with being affiliated to the UIOCEP.

Affiliation to the UIOCEP, which the Czechoslovak Orel was given in the early 1920s, was of great benefit. The affiliated unions mutually enriched each other. The Czechoslovak Orel could now compare its gymnasts with those from abroad. Actually, 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. The Czechoslovak Orel was not only becoming a significant player within the UIOCEP but also one of the largest organizations affiliated to this Union. Consequently, the Czechoslovak Orel was offered first the chair of its second deputy president and later that of its first deputy president. This secured a more convenient position for Czechoslovak Orel officials to strive to have union rules modified to the benefit of their organization, at least in certain respects.

The Czechoslovak Orel actually established a number of other foreign contacts, not only with unions that were not affiliated to 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. The third Orel Festival, scheduled to take place in Prague

in 1939, was to be the peak of its efforts in the 1930s. However, the festival was called off in 1938 due to the complicated international situation. Efforts to organize the third festival in 1949 again failed, the totalitarian Communist regime having been introduced in Czechoslovakia a year earlier.

This de facto meant the end of the Czechoslovak Orel for many years to come and foreign relations were completely broken off. This forced the Czechoslovak Orel to operate in exile at least, not being reestablished in Czechoslovakia until the 1990s. However, it was never to follow up its achievement and regain its position in Czechoslovak gymnastics and sport and the FICEP.

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