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History of the Czechoslovak Tourist Society until 1938

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Historia Czechosłowackiego Towarzystwa Turystycznego do 1938 roku

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy historii drugiej co do wielkości organizacji turystycznej międzywojennej Czechosłowacji. W przeciwieństwie do innych organizacji turystycznych tego okresu, Czechosłowackie Towarzystwo Turystyczne zostało założone stosunkowo późno, bo w 1925 roku. Jego członkowie składali się głównie z przedstawicieli klasy średniej i niższej. W związku z tym jego głównym celem było oferowanie mniej zamożnym obywatelom niedrogich wycieczek grupowych, zwiedzania pięknej przyrody Czechosłowacji lub pobytów rekreacyjnych w uzdrowiskach przy minimalnych składkach członkowskich. Poprzez te działania Czechosłowackie Towarzystwo Turystyczne starało się przyczynić do poprawy zdrowia robotników, uważając, że sprawność fizyczna i psychiczna robotników jest niezbędnym warunkiem pomyślności gospodarczej państwa i zdolności narodu do samoobrony. Drugorzędnymi celami było oznakowanie szlaków turystycznych oraz utworzenie pewnej liczby punktów wsparcia, które umożliwiłyby Czechosłowackiemu Towarzystwu Turystycznemu rozwój działalności rekreacyjnej lub szkoleniowej. Choć było drugą co do wielkości organizacją turystyczną w międzywojennej Czechosłowacji, liczba jego członków była stosunkowo niewielka w porównaniu z dominującym Klubem Czechosłowackich Turystów. Pod

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koniec lat 30. tematem powracającym w turystyce czechosłowackiej było utworzenie jednolitej organizacji turystycznej, niemniej jednak Czechosłowackie Towarzystwo Turystyczne nie zgodziło się z proponowaną strukturą i dlatego nalegało na swoją, przynajmniej tymczasową, niezależność.

Słowa kluczowe: Czechosłowackie Towarzystwo Turystyczne, międzywojenna Czechosłowacja, turystyka, oznakowanie szlaków, rekreacja, urzędnicy.

Abstract

The present paper examines the history of the second largest tourist organisation of interwar Czechoslovakia. Unlike other tourist organisations of the period, the Czechoslovak Tourist Society was founded relatively late, in 1925. Its membership was composed mainly of members of the middle and lower walks of life of the nation. Consequently, its primary objective was to offer the less well-off classes of the nation inexpensive group tours, visits to the natural beauties of Czechoslovakia or recreation stays in spas, while paying minimum membership fees. Through these activities, the Czechoslovak Tourist Society sought to contribute to the improvement of health of working people, believing that the physical and mental fitness of working people constituted a necessary prerequisite for the economic prosperity of the State and the nation's ability to defend itself. The secondary objectives were to mark hiking trails or to build a small number of footholds that would enable the Czechoslovak Tourist Society to develop its recreation or training activities. Despite being the second largest tourist organisation in interwar Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Tourist Society membership was relatively small compared to the dominant Club of Czechoslovak Tourists. At the end of the 1930s, the theme echoing in the Czechoslovak tourism consisted in the formation of a unified tourist organisation; nonetheless, the Czechoslovak Tourist Society disagreed to its proposed structure and therefore insisted on its, at least temporary, independence.

Keywords: the Czechoslovak Tourist Society, interwar Czechoslovakia, tourism, trail marking, recreation, officials.

Introduction

Joint trips of members of Sokol units, organised as early as the 1860s, are considered the beginnings of Czech organised tourism. The first purely tourist association in the Czech land – “Radhošť Mountainous Association” [Pohorská jednota Radhošť] – was founded in 1884. The name is self-explanatory: activities of the Association took place mainly in the region of Beskydy. Its formation was soon followed by other tourist organisations, of which the Club of Czech Tourists [Klub českých turistů], founded in 1888, was the largest and most important. The Club was active before the First World War in almost the entire area of the Czech lands. Before the outbreak of the First World War, also the Tourist Union of Workers [Svazdělnických turistů] was formed as a tourist branch of the Workers' Academy and brought together tourists from among workers. Tourist activities thrived also in the region of Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, where the Winter Sports Association [Spolek pro zimní sporty] in Jihlava was active. Obviously,

tourist activities of these organisations were stifled by the First World War to a considerable extent.¹

After the First World War, the development of tourism in the newly established Czechoslovakia was renewed, and the new Club of Czechoslovak Tourists [Klub československých turistů – KČsT] gradually expanded its activities to the whole area. After the collapse of their association, those tourists in the region of Bohemian-Moravian Highlands who were concentrated around the chalet built in the immediate vicinity of the Čeřínek hill, resolved to form the Čeřínek Tourist Club [Turistický klub Čeřínek]. In addition, the Tourist Association of Moravian Karst [Turistická jednota Moravský Kras] was founded in Jedovnice. Needless to say, in both cases, the importance of these organisations was of a predominantly local character.

It was only in the mid-1920s that a new tourist organisation was formed in the territory of Czechoslovakia and gradually became the second most important tourist organisation in terms of membership, preceded only by the Czechoslovak Tourist Club. Its members, who named it the Czechoslovak Tourist Society [Československá obec turistická – ČsOT], generally did not rank among the wealthy strata of the nation, but still they managed to develop their organization into a distinctive and important association for Czechoslovak tourism in the interwar period.²

Formation of the ČsOT

The second largest tourist organisation active in interwar Czechoslovakia was formed relatively late, in Pilsen on 25 November 1925,³ when some tourists separated from the then Tourist Union of Workers. At the time of its foundation, the organisation was composed of around 700 members. Prague followed suit, when a movement similar to that in Pilsen was established there.

Newly formed groups first approached the KČsT to inquire whether it would be possible for them to establish a workers' division modelled along the lines of the academic division, but with lower membership fees. However, the KČsT re-

¹ J. Grexa, M. Strachová, *Dějiny sportu: Přehled světových a českých dějin tělesné výchovy a sportu*, Masarykova univerzita, Brno 2011, p. 152; J. Štumbauer, T. Tlustý, R. Malátová, *Vybrané kapitoly z historie tělesné výchovy, sportu a turistiky v českých zemích do roku 1918*, Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích, České Budějovice 2015, pp. 219–220.

² National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 9, XXI/29 – Informační služba ČOT, TURISTIKA V ČESKOSLOVENSKU: Vývoj turistiky v ČSR.

³ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, I/44 – Korespondence s poverenictvom vnitra, Obnovenie činnosti Čs. obce turistickej na Slovensku, dne 10. června 1947.

jected the request, a fact that later contributed to the officials' decision to form a new separate tourist organisation.⁴

In May 1926 the above two groups elected a joint central committee, which prepared the first Statutes and proceeded to create an independent association. Until the adoption of the Statutes in June 1928, the entire organisation worked as a free association under the patronage of the Sports Section attached to the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party. The function of the central body was held until 1928 by the Tourist Department of Prague II, also called a parent department.⁵ It was not until 28 November 1928 when a constituent general assembly was held in the rooms of the Avion Palace (now the Luxor Palace) by virtue of the Statutes approved by the Ministry of Interior. The general assembly elected Senator Václav Klofáč as its honorary mayor, and Josef Hodys as its mayor.⁶

The subsequent period of 1928–1930 could be named a consolidation period. As a certain milestone, the general assembly of the ČsOT was held on 16 November 1930. This event marked the beginning of the real development of the entire organisation. The aforesaid general assembly set out new organisational guidelines and imposed on the organisation's head office a number of tasks, including in particular the establishment of accounting in the divisions, production of unified reports from the divisions, etc.⁷

⁴ Prior to the official establishment of this organisation, its future members were active in the Tourist Union of Workers, formed in 1912 by MUDr. [M.D.] Schwarz. This unified tourist organisation split into three groups after the defeat of the working class in January 1920. The first group, made up by the most engaged members of the working class, merged with the Federation of Workers' Sports Unions [Federace dělnických tělocvičných jednot] (this was probably the organisation that was later called the "Tourist Union" in Prague). The second group, mainly influenced by the petty bourgeoisie, tried to arrange a merger with the KČsT. However, during the negotiations, it encountered resistance from some of its members and possibly also financial difficulties. The third group, under a strong influence of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party, continued to operate under the name Tourist Union of Workers of the Czechoslovak Republic [Svaz dělnických turistů Republiky československé]. The Union was active in the Czech Lands until 01 January 1939, when it merged with the KČsT. National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 2, VII/2 – Korespondence a zápisy s Ústřední radou české turistiky, O jednotu také v turistice.

⁵ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, I/14 – Korespondence s ministerstvem vnitra, K výměru čj. 27162 ai /28 k pol. řejstř. A 3800 1928, dne 3. listopadu 1928.

⁶ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, I/14 – Korespondence s ministerstvem vnitra, ČsOT Ministerstvu vnitra, dne 30. listopadu 1928.

⁷ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 9, XXI/30 – Zprávy o činnosti ČOT, Zpráva o činnosti Československé obce turistické za rok 1931.

Organisation, purpose and funding of activities of the ČsOT

The ČsOT pursued the purpose of cultivating all kinds of tourism, attending to its development, promoting tourism and spreading awareness of the Republic's territory. For these purposes, the ČsOT sought to

- a) develop contacts with tourist organisations at home as well as abroad,
- b) organise lectures to promote and develop tourism activities,
- c) issue magazines, specialised publications, postcards, maps and to encourage specialised studies in the area of tourism,
- d) build chalets and lodges, to create and mark trails, to maintain natural and historical monuments,
- e) organise walks, excursions, tours, theatre performances, concerts and entertaining events;
- f) establish ČsOT stations,
- g) provide training to reliable tourist, skiing, climbing and youth leaders,
- h) educate tourist youth,
- i) be actively engaged in all types of sports that might increase and maintain physical fitness,
- j) carry out innkeeper's activities, activities of travel agents, ferries or printing activities to the extent permitted by law.

The administration of the ČsOT was handled by the general congress, the central committee elected there, along with the presidium of the central committee (mayor, mayor deputies, treasurer, secretary, accountant, registrar and chief), general assemblies and boards of administrative organisations, general assemblies and boards of divisions, boards of the individual branches and stewards. The ČsOT was represented by its chairperson or vice-chairpersons before state authorities and in relation to third parties.

An ordinary general congress of the ČsOT was convened by the central committee on an annual basis. An extraordinary general congress would be convened only if considered important by the central committee or if its convocation was required by at least two-thirds of the divisions. Each congress of the ČsOT was composed by divisions' delegates, members of the central committee and the supervisory committee. As non-voting guests, individual members were allowed to attend the congresses. The congress was assigned with a task to elect the mayor, mayor deputies, other members of the central committee, supervisory committee and their alternates. The other tasks of the congress included the election of an honorary mayor and honorary members, resolutions on changes of and amendments to the Statutes, approval of the Regulations, consideration of reports on activities and management, determination of the amount of membership fees, registration fees, fees for issuance of membership

cards and badges, decisions on proposals put forward by the central committee, divisions or members.

The central committee consisted of the mayor, 3 vice-mayors, 10 to 16 committee members and 5 to 8 alternates. From among their number, the secretary, treasurer, accountant, trail marker, librarian and other officials, if necessary, were elected at the constituent meeting. The central committee also addressed all matters of the association, the management of which was not entrusted to the general congress directly. Those matters included, in particular, admission and expulsion of members, establishment or dissolution of administrative organisations, installation of special professional bodies or sections (those of leaders, skiers, a technical body, etc.), management of the ČsOT property, supervision over the property of the individual administrative organisations and divisions, issuance of various regulations to supplement or interpret the Statutes or acceptance of guarantees for liabilities undertaken by the divisions. The central committee met as necessary, but at least once in three months.⁸

The ČsOT divided its membership, admitted by the general committee or a members' meeting upon a proposal of its committee, into founding, honorary, contributing or active members and junior members. A person who had once and for all deposited a cash amount determined by the general congress became a founding member. An honorary member was a person who was bestowed that title by the general congress or general assembly. A natural person who paid the registration fee and a fixed membership fee could become a contributing member. In turn, an individual who was admitted by the central committee or a members' meeting of the given division and fulfilled the conditions laid down by the general congress became an active member. The ČsOT classified boys and girls below 18 years of age as junior members. Each member was entitled to participate in all events organised by the ČsOT (but the voting right pertained only to active, founding and honorary members), to avail of all benefits arising from the membership, to subscribe to the Society's magazine and to wear its badge (see Figure 1).

To facilitate the performance of the above-mentioned objectives, the ČsOT formed, as necessary, divisions, administrative organisations and steward's points, whose Statutes or Rules of Procedures were approved by the general congress. With the view of improving the collaboration between the divisions and the central committee, leadership councils and sections were installed, with their own Rules of Procedure approved by the ČsOT central committee.

Needless to say, the backbone of the ČsOT organisation network was the local steward. Decisions to delegate this title was made by the ČsOT presidium.

⁸ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 8, XIX/1 – Korespondence s jinými odbory ČOT, jednotlivci a.j., Stanovy ČsOT schválené výnosem ministerstva vnitřní záležitostí ze dne 25. dubna 1940, č.j. 59.293/1939-6.

Decision-making in this area was vested in the administrative organisation committee in those localities where the ČsOT administrative organisations were active. The steward's role was to find other members in their circle in order to form a local committee, to identify other stewards in the vicinity, to submit required reports to the ČsOT head office, to provide information to tourists and to assist local authorised officials in promoting their region. However, stewards were allowed to act before the local authorities with a binding effect only if they were specifically authorised to do so by the ČsOT or administrative organisation presidia.



Figure 1. ČsOT badge (source: National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická)

If a steward managed to recruit at least 10 members in a given location, a local ČsOT group (also known as a steward's point) could be formed. A local group constituted a free association, but without its own Statutes, and it therefore could not act independently before the state authorities. A local group pursued the task of carrying out ordinary tourist activities, while making effort to increase the number of members to ensure a change of its status to an independent committee of the ČsOT. In addition, a local group could elect its main officers who, for instance, represented it in contact with administrative organisations or the head office.

Once the number of members of a local group exceeded the threshold of 20, this was considered as a certain guarantee that the local group is capable of an "independent life". Subsequently, the head office (or a local administrative organisation, if any) transformed such a local group into an independent section, i.e. a separate legal person capable of acting and operating independently.

Where it was impossible to create a division or a steward's point in a particular place, the ČsOT intended to appoint at least a person in that particular place to give visitors to the region information about tourist attractions. The ideal to be achieved was to develop a network of ČsOT stations in regions, to be based in restaurants.⁹

⁹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 3, XI/21 – Oběžníkyústředí ČOT, Organizačnípokyn č.2/45 – Pokyny k činnostimístníchodborů /skupin/ České obce turistické, červenec 1945.

As part of independent local divisions, “ČsOT enterprise groups” could also be established, with activities carried out in line with their own programme; nevertheless, these groups were represented before the state authorities by the local division committee.

In addition to “ordinary” tourist divisions, the ČsOT founded special interest divisions at local divisions, administrative organisations or the head office, e.g. amateur photographic, skiing, cycling, climbing, boating, philatelic divisions. Members of those divisions, however, had to pay their own membership fees, and, according to agreements between the ČsOT with the relevant professional associations, they also had rights as members of specialised sports clubs.¹⁰

The ČsOT derived funds for its activities mainly from registration fees, fees for badges, membership fees, proceeds from publications, magazines, lectures, donations or subsidies. Amounts of membership fees, determined by the general congress, did not change much (see Table 1).

Table 1. Amounts of the ČsOT membership fees in the period of the First Republic

	Youth under 18	Adults over 18
Membership contribution	CSK 4	CSK 12
Compulsory accident insurance	CSK 4	CSK 4
Membership card	CSK 1	CSK 1
Badge	CSK 15	CSK 15

Source: National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 3, XI/21 – Oběžníky ústředí ČOT, Pokyny k zakládání místních odborů, místních a závodních skupina důvěrnických míst ČOT.

Other funds for its activities were obtained by the ČsOT in a form of donations provided by the State Lottery Directorate or subsidies of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment or the Ministry of Internal Trade. The Ministry of Transport gradually enabled the ČsOT members to obtain discounts for trains or cableways to Ještěd and from Janské Lázně to Černá hora. Members were also given discounted prices e.g. for entrance to all caves or to the Teplice Rocks. In stages, a list of the ČsOT lodging houses and tourist stations was prepared. The ČsOT members also enjoyed discounted prices in selected inns. The Society informed its members of the existence and amounts of discounts in its magazine.¹¹

¹⁰ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 3, XI/21 – Oběžníky ústředí ČOT, Pokyny k zakládání místních odborů, místních a závodních skupina důvěrnických míst ČOT.

¹¹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, III/3 – Zápisy ze schůziústředního výboru ČOT, Předlohy pro schůziústředního výboru Čs. obce turistické dne 7. října 1947.

Activities of the ČSOT from the early 1930s to the end of the First Republic

The dawn of the 1930s saw, *inter alia*, a significant expansion of the Society's membership base (see Table 2), which already had implemented its objectives and a clear organisational structure. Edvard Beneš began to serve as its mayor.¹² In 1931, the members were organised in as many as 32 divisions. The ČsOT flourished most in the regions of Brno and České Budějovice, where the ČsOT activities were promoted.¹³ Apart from this, the ČsOT was involved in trail marking, organisation of leadership courses, lectures, trips and tours. Due to its growing membership and expanding activities in its individual divisions, a request was presented at the general assembly in 1930 to set up an office where one typist would help tackle the ever-growing paperwork. However, since the ČsOT also struggled with financial difficulties at that time, the post of the typist was not filled until the autumn of 1932.¹⁴

Table 2. Development of the ČsOT membership base

Year	Number of members
1925	700
1930	6,000
1931	7,500
1932	6,200
1933	14,000
1934	6,400
1935	3,800
1936	6,500

Source: National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 5, XVI/12 – Korespondence s úřadyaj. o cizídiční činnosti, Československá obec turistická, Ústředíče ské lidové turistiky. National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 9, XXI/30, – Zprávy o činnosti ČOT.

Similar to the KČsT, the ČsOT began to mark unknown places, e.g. in the region of Pilsen, since the latter found a place there where the KČsT had not been

¹² Edvard Beneš remained in this position until he was elected as President of the Republic in 1935. National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 5, XVI/2 – Korespondence s redakcemi aj. o tiskových zprávách ČOT, Turistické zpravodajství České obce turistické (ČOT), Praha II., Václavské nám., dne 14. září 1945.

¹³ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 9, XXI/30 – Zprávy o činnosti ČOT, Československá obec turistická – Ústředí české lidové turistiky.

¹⁴ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 5, VII/1 – Korespondence a statistiky ústředí ČOT, Ministerstvu zdravotnictví a tělesné výchovy, dne 21. října 1935.

active in this respect. The beginnings of marking in this region can be traced back to the year 1932. This and the following year, the ČsOT marked about 100km of hiking trails, without any financial aid from the State. Marks used by the ČsOT were different from the strip marking used by the KČsT, since the ČsOT marks also showed the direction in which the tourist was advised to proceed. The organisation itself believed that such marking was more modern and suitable.¹⁵ Beside a number of marked trails, the number of courses organised by the ČsOT was on the increase. These included e.g. courses for map reading, outdoor orientation or Samaritan courses.

Regrettably, the period between 1933 and 1935 brought with it, for the ČsOT, a notable decline in the membership base, despite, e.g. membership discounts for trains, the organisation of cheap trips and tours¹⁶ or the construction of a ČsOT chalet in Hroby. The said decline was rooted in the severe economic crises.¹⁷ In 1934, the ČsOT membership base was again centred in 25 divisions only. In an attempt to reverse the decline in the membership base, the Society's presidium tried to make the organisation more attractive. By way of example, the presidium strove to arrange for the use of discounts or shelters of other organisations, such as the Radhošť Mountainous Association, which agreed to the cooperation offered.¹⁸

In the second half of the 1930s, the ČsOT head office also started to publish its own monthly magazine "Czechoslovak Tourist". The publication of the magazine was officially announced in October 1935, and the magazine began to be published the following year.¹⁹ Moreover, the ČsOT division in Pilsen informed of its activities through another magazine. The magazine was named "Tourist in the Czech West" and was published six times a year.²⁰

¹⁵ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 9, XXI/22 – Značkování orientace, Značení turistických cest Čsl. obcí turistickou, dne 8. února 1934.

¹⁶ For example, in 1934, the ČsOT organised 575 trips, of which 177 were half-day trips, 318 full-day trips, 80 multi-day trips and 30 were in form of tours taken by membership cars to the mountains. At that time, the ČsOT leased ca. 5hectares of land, where, *inter alia*, 10 playing fields for ball games and 50 weekend houses were located. In addition to tourism and ball games, members were also active skiers. This activity was encouraged by skiing courses and trips to the mountains. National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 5, VII/1 – Korespondence a statistiky ústředí ČOT, Ministerstvu zdravotnictví a tělesné výchovy, dne 21. října 1935.

¹⁷ "Zprávy Čsl. Červeného kříže" 1934, vol.14, no. 4, p. 60; National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Archival tool.

¹⁸ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 2, VIII/3 – Korespondence s Pohorskou jednotou „Radhošť“, Slevy v chatách Pohorské jednoty Radhošť, pro členy organizované v Č.O.T., dne 24. 7. 1934.

¹⁹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 5, XVI/1 – Korespondence s úřady, podniky, jednotlivci aj. o vlastním tisku ČOT, Policejní ředitelství v Praze Spolku „Československá obec turistická“, dne 5. listopadu 1935.

²⁰ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 4, XIV/3 – Subvence ČOT, Udělení subvence na organizační činnost pro rok 1938.

In 1936, Ludvík Chlupatý was appointed mayor of the ČsOT and led the organisation until 1939.²¹ During this period, the Society saw a general rise of its organisation, which began to follow the example of the KČsT, and started to engage in various sports disciplines, such as skiing, sledging and cycling. Various courses began to be organised in the above disciplines. The most successful skiing courses took place in the region of Pilsen, where the local division explored the beautiful area of Šumava. The number of trips increased there slowly but surely. Apart from that, the ČsOT embarked on erecting recreation camps. Until 1938, as many as four camps were constructed at a cost of CSK 200,000.²² At that time, the Pilsen division also marked 220km of various hiking trails in the area of Český les.

A specific feature of that tourist organisation was the engagement in various “defence” sports, such as walking races²³ or races of three-member patrols. Furthermore, the leadership board of the ČsOT prepared the so-called “tourist meetings”. Those meetings were organised twice or thrice a year as a special form of promotional activities. The purpose of those meetings was, among other things, to inform members of tourism tasks in relation to defence and recreation.²⁴

The upswing of activities of the ČsOT in that period was also reflected in the new Statutes, which were approved, subject to various comments, by the Ministry of Interior in 1937. Pursuant to the Statutes, the ČsOT was managed by the general assembly. The general assembly elected the central committee, composed of the mayor, with a three-year tenure, and three vice-mayors. The vice-mayors were elected for the same term, under the condition that two of them had to live in Greater Prague.²⁵ The central committee also consisted of nine members of the committee and three accounting supervisors. The role of the advisory body to the committee was served by the central leadership board,

²¹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, I/10 – Korespondence s ministerstvem sociální péče, ČsOT Ministerstvu sociální péče a ochrany, dne 17. 4. 1947.

²² Since the membership fees of the ČsOT were not high, the ČsOT sought to obtain financial support for its activities also from state authorities. For instance, the Society applied to the Provincial Office in Prague, Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment or the Metropolitan Authority of the Capital City of Prague.

²³ For instance, on 28 October 1933, the ČsOT division in České Budějovice organised a walking competition České Budějovice – Včelná and back, which was open to all competitors irrespective of their club affiliation and to other persons not organised in any clubs. “Hlas lidu” 1933, vol. 28, no. 20, p. 3.

²⁴ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Archival tool.

²⁵ “Greater Prague” was formed on 01 January 1922 by virtue of Act No. 114/1920 Coll. of Regulations and Acts, by annexing 37 villages and settlements to Prague. Following its formation, Greater Prague was inhabited by 676,000 citizens, who lived in the area of 17,164 hectares (171.64 km²).

which carried out technical work, prepared trips or published brochures. However, for various work, helpers from among the other members were called and then formed special boards (e.g. trail marking, philatelic, national history boards, etc.), which submitted proposals to the committee, whose role was to decide on such proposals. In addition to a regular mayor, honorary mayors were elected by the central committee.²⁶ The committee also convened the annual general assembly, which made resolutions e.g. on amendments to the Statutes, expulsion of members or the entire branches. Delegates were sent to the general assembly according to the following procedure: Each division with fewer than 100 members sent one delegate, or two in the case the number of members exceed 100. The number of members was determined according to the membership fees paid.²⁷

The ČsOT might have dealt with another amendment to the Statutes not long afterwards, since at the end of 1938, a proposal from KČsT for the Society to join the Club was presented to the ČsOT. The two organisations originally agreed that they would jointly prepare new Statutes for a “new tourist organisation”. However, no agreement was reached in 1938, as the ČsOT eventually refused the merger, arguing that the KČsT only offered the ČsOT to join the Club, where its membership would be able to create its own divisions at most. The establishment of those divisions was moreover conditional on a large number of members.²⁸ Contrariwise, the ČsOT pursued the formation of a new federative organisation, for which the associations united within it were to draw up brand new Statutes. Accordingly, even at the beginning of the subsequent period, during which a wide range of physical education, sports and tourist associations were gradually forced to restrict or discontinue their activities, the ČsOT remained independent.

Conclusion

Several tourist organisations were active in the Czech Lands before the Second World War. Needless to say, those organisations differed in many ways and pursued various goals. At that time, even an answer to the question whether tourism was a movement with a predominately recreational or sports focus²⁹

²⁶ Until 1935 Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was an honorary mayor of the ČsOT, while Edvard Beneš held that position from 1935 to 1938.

²⁷ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Archival tool.

²⁸ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 9, XX/16 – Spolupráce ČOT ve slučování s jinými turist. organizacemi, klub čs. turistů, dne 15. prosince 1938.

²⁹ It was quite obvious, though, that tourism and sports were linked closely. Tourists reached their destination in various ways, which were always connected with physical exercise. Hence,

could not be agreed by Czechoslovak tourist organisations.³⁰ As a matter of fact, there existed no precise definition of the term “tourism” and its real mission. Tourism could be addressed from different perspectives and its meaning could be inferred from such definitions. Importantly, it is quite possible that there is more than one side to the truth. The main activities of Czechoslovak tourist organisations were supplemented by other activities, more or less related to tourism *per se*. This is the most probable reason why efforts to merge these associations into a unified tourist organisation were fruitless.³¹

The ČsOT was composed mostly of workers or “minor employees”, i.e. rather of members of the middle and lower classes of the nation. The objective set by the ČsOT was centred around the efforts to preserve the health of the working people, whose physical and mental fitness was, as the ČsOT believed, an essential prerequisite for the economic prosperity of the state and defence abilities of the nation. The ČsOT tried to distinguish between tourism as a sports discipline and tourism as an economic factor. The Society was mainly concerned with the practical development of all kinds of tourism and the promotion of facilities that served tourism. Importantly, the Society did not disregard the natural history and educational aspects of tourism. The Society tried to achieve its objectives through the organisation of walks, trips, recreational and national his-

tourism could be divided into, e.g. walking, cycling, skiing, water tourism, etc. The ČsOT was well aware of this, believing that tourism was also of an unquestionable importance for the nation's ability to defend itself. In this respect, the ČsOT emphasized especially skiing tourism, climbing the mountains, overcoming natural obstacles, walking endurance or orientation in the terrain. National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, III/1 – Pamětní spisy a návrhy ČOT, Prof. Otto Bureš Dr. Zdeňku Nejedlému, dne 4. 12. 1945.

³⁰ The concept of tourism considered, the Club of Czechoslovak Tourists emphasized its economic value and importance for the State. Accordingly, the Club opined that tourism should fall under the sphere of interest of the Ministry of Internal Trade. On the contrary, the Radhošť Mountainous Association perceived tourism as a sports and recreational movement, to which a considerable natural history importance was added. The Tourist Association of Moravian Karst put emphasis on the economic importance of tourism, a fact logical from the Association's perspective, since the impetus for its establishment was the promotion of the Moravian Karst and the prosperity of its immediate vicinity. The Čeřínek Tourist Club was formed in Jihlava at the time when the town was strongly Germanised. It had a patriotic and national character. Since its establishment, the ČsOT understood tourism as a sports movement serving the role of physical and mental recreation of workers, deepening their interest in exploring their motherland. The ČsOT fostered cooperation with sports organisations and supported the classification of tourism as a basic and general sports discipline, locating it in an interest sphere of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment. National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, III/1 – Pamětní spisy a návrhy ČOT, ČsOT Předsednictvu vlády Republiky československé, dne 23. prosince 1945.

³¹ National archives in Prague, Fund Československá obec turistická, Box 1, III/1 – Pamětní spisy a návrhy ČOT, Prof. Otto Bureš, Starosta České Obce Turistické, Má česká turistika význam rekreační, tělovýchovný nebo obchodní?.

tory tours, the establishment of recreational resorts and engagement in various sports. A number of agreements with sports unions enabled the ČsTO members to participate in official sports competitions.

The ČsOT always strove to prepare tourist trips as such in detail in advance. Generally, a trip was associated with e.g. a commentary on the sights to be visited. In addition, its tourist activities enjoyed a certain social importance since the organisation brought together members of different social classes. The Society's practical programmes included various games, physical exercise and sports (athletics, rowing, ball games, etc.). As for its complementary activities, its members were engaged in tourist trail marking,³² which began in 1929, or in creating tourist trails.

Equally important was the creation of certain footholds. In remote locations (e.g. in the mountains), tourist shelters or chalets were constructed. However, the network of these shelters or chalets began to be built mainly by the Club of Czech Tourists, later followed by e.g. private entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the ČsOT argued that tourist organisations should settle for the development of a few centres to enable them to improve their recreation or training activities. Moreover, the ČsOT recommended that the operations be limited to promotional and advisory activities. The ČsOT intended to leave the actual construction of tourist chalets to private or state enterprises.

Unlike the KČsT and Radhošť Mountainous Association, the ČsOT did not seek to construct facilities that would promote tourism, but its objectives rather consisted in efforts to enable the less well-off classes of the nation to participate in cheap group tours, visits to the natural beauties of Czechoslovakia, or recreational stays in spas, while paying minimum contributions. The ČsOT therefore primarily promoted hiking.³³

The year 1938 saw the beginning of intensive negotiations on the merger of Czechoslovak tourism into a unified organisation. Still, those attempts encountered disagreements, which led to reluctant responses by most Czechoslovak tourist organisations, including the ČsOT. Probably, "Tourist Union" [Turistická jednota] in Prague was the only tourist association to discontinue its activities at that time. The Union was merged into the Proletarian Sports Federation [Federace proletářskětělovýchovy] and was then dissolved together with that organisation in 1938. The other tourist associations of interwar Czechoslovakia, however, continued to operate as independent organisations, at least for the time being.

³² The ČsOT did not find sympathy for trail marking with the KČsT, which complained loudly of the new mark appearing on hiking trails, and also the fact that the trails newly marked by the ČsOT would very often cross those of the KČsT.

³³ P. Bureš, J. Plichta, *Sport a tělesná kultura v Čsl. republice a cizině*, Almanach sportu, Prague 1931, pp. 343–353.

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