

SOKOL: BETWEEN MAKING NATION AND STATE

Tomaz Pavlin¹ and Zrinko Čustonja²

¹University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Sport, Ljubljana, Slovenia

²University of Zagreb, Faculty of Kinesiology, Zagreb, Croatia

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Abstract:

The Sokol gymnastic movement was an important part of civil societies of Slavic nations. The first Sokol society within Yugoslavian nations (Slovenes, Croats, Serbs) was founded in 1863 in Ljubljana and in a few decades, it spread throughout the Slovene, Croatian, and Serbian territories. In the Austro-Hungarian period before WWI, Sokol valued itself as a national, liberal and emancipation-seeking movement, based on the Tyrsch's gymnastics and national and pan-Slavic idea. In 1919, following the end of WWI and with the formation of the Yugoslav state, the national Sokol organisations merged in the centralised Yugoslav Sokol Union. The Yugoslavian state went through difficult political situations and confrontations in the first decade, which culminated in the summer of 1928 with shooting in the parliament in Belgrade. In attempting to solve the situation, King Aleksandar Karadjordjević proclaimed the so-called Sixth January Dictatorship (1929). Consequently, the government, with the approval of the King, adopted, on the 4th of December 1929, the law on establishing of a new all-state gymnastic organisation Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The new Sokol organisation, based on the Sokolism of the former Yugoslav Sokol (Sokol's gymnastics, principles, national-liberal and Slavic idea) was constituted at the beginning of 1930. It was supported by the King and government and the King's son, Prince Petar became the leader of the Sokol organisation. After the assassination of king Aleksandar (1934), in the filling-in period of Prince Pavle (1935-41) and government of the Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović (1935-39), Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia fell out of political grace in the western Roman-Catholic regions and it had to defend its position. Due to drasticall changes in international policy (German revisionist policy, the "Anschluss" in 1938 and the Czechoslovakian crisis in 1938/39), more militaristic practices were included in the Sokol's professional work to preserve a free and independent state. During tense diplomatic events in March 1941, when Yugoslavia entered the Nazi-Fascist camp, Sokol supported a military putsch and stepped into the front lines of demonstrations. In that mood, Sokol faced the Nazi-Fascist attack on Yugoslavia in April 1941 and the beginning of WWII in the Yugoslav territory.

Key words: Sokol movement, gymnastic movement, South Slavs (Slovenes, Croats, Serbs), Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Austro-Hungary

Introduction

The Sokol gymnastic movement was an important part of civil societies of Slovenes as well as other Slavic nations; this paper specifically focusses on the South Slav nations of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs. Among Slavs within the Habsburg Empire, the first gymnastic societies were organised at the beginning of the 1860s after the adoption of the constitutional laws in 1860 and 1861, which introduced constitutional and democratic life to the Empire. That allowed the establishment of civil, non-government associations in all areas of activities: from politics, culture and physical culture to business. It must be mentioned here that amateur gymnastics and sports had been practiced before the

afore-mentioned political changes; with the constitutional laws, gymnastic amateurs got an opportunity to establish their societies. Democratisation revitalised processes of nationalistic determination followed by the organisation of a civil society based on alliances. Thus, the civil society, including the gymnastic associations as well, also represented a fertile ground for the Slovene and other South Slavs' and, on the other hand, Austro-Germanic's growing nationalism and announced, in a predictive way, national struggles in the Empire.

In the paper we presented the development of Sokol in the national context first in Slovenia then followed by the organisation of Sokol in Croatia and Serbia. In the period after the Yugoslav state

formation in 1918, more precisely first the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and then Kingdom of Yugoslavia, we discuss the process of uniting national gymnastic societies and the question of their “fusion” into one Yugoslav society and later the question of establishing a new, all-state gymnastic organisation named Sokol of Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The paper instigates further research of the inter-Sokol relations after WWI and their activity in 1930s, when the Sokol movement in Yugoslavia had to rethink its rationale and decide on its further work and policy.

1. Sokol in Slovenia and within South Slavs before 1914

The first Slavic gymnastic society was founded in Prague in 1862, and shortly after that, it was named Sokol. In the epic poetry of the Middle Ages, *sokol* (“falcon” in English) symbolised a knightly hero in the southern Slavic culture; in the Romantic era of 19th century, this could be a hero or fighter for national emancipation.

The first Slovene gymnastic society was officially organised in 1863, although there had been plans to do so in the summer of the previous year. In 1860s, tensions between Slovenes and Germans increased, escalated, and Germans decided to organise Turnverein, while Slovenes organised their society on the 1st October 1863 and named it Južni Sokol (South Falcon); they named it South in relation to the “brother” in the north, the Sokol from Prague. The founding assembly of Južni Sokol sent a letter to Sokol in Prague and made first contacts, which later became an important basis for the Sokol’s pan-Slavism (Murnik, 1951).

After the so-called Sokol excess, Južni Sokol was abolished in 1867. The “excess” was in fact a street brawl between some Sokol members and Germanic-oriented citizens, the members of Turnverein, Germanic gymnastic society in Ljubljana, which immediately took on a political and national dimension. In the police report, the members of Južni Sokol were incriminated as the culprits in the incident (Podpečnik, 2005). In 1868, former members of Južni Sokol organised a new society and named it Sokol in Ljubljana or simply Ljubljana Sokol, which became the central Slovenian gymnastic society. After 1880, Sokol societies spread among Slovenes, which was influenced by the appearance of the government of Count Eduard Taffe. His government recognised Carniola as Slovene province, and the conditions for national cultural and political work were much better. We can follow the growth of new Sokol societies within

Carniola and also other Slovene provinces and their overall consolidation. Societies came together in the Slovene Sokol Union, headquartered in Ljubljana; in 1907, they joined the International Gymnastics Federation (*Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique* – FIG) (Stepišnik, 1974).

Parallely, Viktor Murnik introduced Miroslav Tyrš’s sokolism and systematic work similar to the Czechs’, organised coaching courses and encouraged women gymnastics. This period was considered to be a renaissance. By joining FIG, Murnik was able to lead gymnasts to international competitions. In 1911 in Torino, they ended in the fourth place, but only a few points below the third-placed Italians (1. Czech, 2. French gymnasts). The appearance was considered to be a success. After coming home and having a banquet, Murnik stressed (in Zaletel, 1933, p. 209-210) that this success was not attained only for themselves but for the Slovene nation, which was often insulted by their neighbours (i.e., by Austro-Germans and Italians). For Sokol, that success had also a national dimension, and it showed that nation had a tremendous treasure of physical and moral strength. The nation has entrusted it (that treasure) to Sokol to watch it, to keep it, and to multiply it. The intention of Sokol was, in Murnik’s words, to unite the whole nation within the Sokol’s circle to devote themselves to physical activity as well as mental and moral qualities, specifically to the sense of duty, self-denial, discipline, persistence and stamina, self-sacrifice and enthusiasm. Murnik’s work was also reflected in the broader Slavic community at the All Sokol Festival (zlet¹) in Prague 1912, where a Slovene Stane Vidmar, in the match for the Slavic champion title, won the first place and in third place was Karel Fux (Gregorka, 1991). Shortly before World War I – in 1913 – 114 organisations with 6613 male and 1040 female members had already joined the Slovenian Sokol gymnastic society. A swift growth of the organisation resulted in the transformation of the society into smaller regional units, called “župe” (župa, the archaic Slavic word for a district). The seats of these regional units were located in the provincial centres. Towards the end of 1913 nine of these “župe” existed in Slovenia, with centres in the cities of Celje, Gorica, Idrija, Kranj, Ljubljana (two župas), Maribor, Novo Mesto, and Trst/Trieste (Pavlin, 2014).

At the same time, Sokol also confronted the process of re-Catholicisation and birth of inner national cultural struggle, which spread from the political arena to the social sphere and started to permeate every corner of daily life. The intention of the Church and clerics was to Catholicise Sokol and,

¹ Slet/festival; these were massive sporting events, reunions and the promotion of Sokol gymnastics or work – consisting of group free exercises, they included also gymnastic matches; the festivals were started by the Czech Sokols; in Slovenia, the first was held in 1888.

as this had become impossible, the Church, clerics, and the Catholic political camp decided to organise their own gymnastic organisation (Šafarič, 2014). They called it Orel (Eagle; a bird of prey larger than sokol/falcon). This brought a fierce Catholic-liberal struggle into the gymnastic arena, which the Sokol members could not avoid. The number of Catholic gymnastic organisations and members was increasing, until it peaked in 1913. At this time the Orel society included 168 organisations with 5228 members. In contrast with the Sokol organisation, the Orel society was much more successful in the rural regions and smaller towns, where gymnastics was compatible with the education work of the Slovenian Christian Social Association.

The Sokol societies also developed among other southern Slavs. By the start of World War I, the Sokol movement in Croatia encompassed about 180 societies, united in the Croatian Sokol Union with 15,000-20,000 members; the first society was organised in Zagreb in 1874 and the Croatian Sokol Union was founded in 1904. As emphasised by Zrinko Čustonja (2014), in this period, Sokol was the most widespread and popular gymnastic and social movement in Croatia. In addition to gymnastics, the motives and goals of the Sokol societies were also national-political and ideological, specifically the struggle against Germanisation and Hungarianisation, strengthening and preserving of the national awareness as well as efforts seeking for a better statutory position of Croatia and other Slavic countries within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

There was a somewhat different situation among the Serbs, as they were divided into autonomous Kingdom and Austro-Hungary. Vinko Zaletel stated (1933) that Serbian Sokol societies in Austro-Hungary were fanatic and irredentist national societies with a singular direction: freedom or death. In 1910, at the all-Sokol festival in Belgrade, Serbian Sokols from Serbia and Austro-Hungary joined in a common union. Two years later at all-Sokol festival in Prague, Czechs as mediators, forced a debate about the cooperation between the Serbian and Croatian Sokols; Slovenes were also invited to debate. After the Prague debate, the South Slavs expressed their intention to unite at the all-Sokol festival in Ljubljana in 1913. However, the festival was abandoned and postponed to the following year. Before the festival, the South Slav Sokol representatives met in June 1914 in Zagreb and discussed further steps of uniting, but the assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo and start of WWI stopped the Sokol uniting activities. Even more, in the Austrian part of the Empire, according to the growing Slav-German struggle in the Empire (similar was in the Hungarian part) and international war polarisation, Sokol became suspicious to the Austro-German authorities and was under surveillance (Stepišnik, 1974).

Before WWI, gymnastics as a modern system of physical activity and Sokol gained importance among the Slovene people. Sokol incorporated gymnastics and gymnastic education in the national idea and struggle for emancipation, Slavism and, finally, south Slavism, which coincided with political demands for the unification of Slovene lands into a politically autonomous unit of Slovenia, first within the Austro-Hungarian framework and later autonomously in the South Slav (Yugoslav) state.

2. Forming of the Yugoslav state and the Yugoslav Sokol Union

2.1. "One nation, one state, one Sokol"

The end of WWI signified an ultimate national emancipation of South Slavs who had been under ruling of Austro-Hungary. On the 29th October 1918 it was announced the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, which on the 1st December joined with the Kingdom of Serbia into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes; in 1929, it was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The Slovene Sokol members strongly supported the foundation of the Yugoslav state. In January 1919, the official Sokol gazette published an article by Engelbert Gangl, later to be a Sokol president, a teacher, poet and writer, who stressed that the formation of the new state also signified the formation "of the new, Yugoslav lifestyle, political as well as cultural", which meant a break with the traditional Austro-Germanic frame. This represented "a new challenge for the Sokol movement", he stressed, and at the same time this was the realisation of the Sokol's South Slavic idea. The new state brought the end to the struggle for national emancipation, which was replaced by the "enthusiasm" for the new state and the new Yugoslav Sokol movement. However, the emancipation was also the cause of some grief, he stressed, as one third of Slovene Sokol members remained outside of the Yugoslav state. Western Slovenes in Trst, Gorica, and region Primorje/Littoral were annexed to the Kingdom of Italy according to the London agreement of 1915 between the Alliance and the Kingdom of Italy. The Sokol movement was revived there in 1919; however, it was dealt a hard blow on the 13th July 1920 when the Trieste National Home (the cultural centre of the Slovenes in Trst), with the Sokol gymnastic hall, was burned by fascists; other halls, as the head of Sokol societies, were also damaged. The Italian authorities wanted to exterminate the network of Slovenian and Slavic organisations. The first measures were decrees prohibiting Sokol's activities. After this, Slovenes started to found youth sport societies to compensate for the lost Sokol; these lasted until 1928 when they were finally prohibited and abolished by the Mussolini's decree (Pahor, 2014).

In the Yugoslav state, the representatives of the Slovene, Croatian, and Serbian Sokols met in Zagreb at the end of January 1919. They returned to the end of the pre-war meeting and decided to establish a united and powerful Yugoslav organisation and dissolve their national organisations or unions. In their declaration, they emphasised that the nation of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was united and unique. Similarly, Sokol societies were and would be the national societies. As the nation was one, so the Sokol society had to be one. The Slavism was also stressed, which was a part of Mankind. The ideals of Mankind were uniform. The Slavic Sokol movement and the Sokol movements of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had tended, tended and would tend to fulfil those ideal conceptions (Načelni in ..., 1919).

The founding assembly of the Yugoslav Sokol Union was held on the 29th June 1919. The principle of uniting was "one nation, one state, one Sokol". The principle corresponded to the state-political idea of the unification of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in a single centralist state, as well as to the aspiration for the formation of a single Yugoslav nation, which would consist of the Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian tribes. During the unification assembly it was emphasised that the Yugoslav state was the historical destiny of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs and that the state "is a result of their pre-war efforts and activities" (Iz Zveze ..., 1919, p. 215) because the intention of uniting had been shaped in the decades before World War I. Therefore, the state was also the Sokols' child, and Sokols dedicated their destiny to that of the state. In practice that meant, as already mentioned, that the national Slovene, Croatian and Serbian unions would dissolve themselves, and join the new Yugoslav one. This was a delicate political issue, especially in the regions of Croatia and in Zagreb since the former Croatian and Serbian societies in Croatia had to unite into a new Yugoslav one. First, they named the Union according to the state example, the Sokol Union of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes; however, in 1920, at the general assembly in Maribor, the name was changed to the Yugoslav Sokol Union (YSU). The YSU was headquartered in Ljubljana; during the first decade, Slovenes took over the running of the organisation and professional work since the former Slovene Sokol organisation had been professionally well developed. Consequently, Slovene gymnasts played an important role in the consolidation of the YSU and in professional identification on the basis of the Tyrš's Sokol gymnastics.

At the end of November 1920, the YSU met with the Czechoslovak Sokol Union in Ljubljana to establish the Union of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Sokol as a forerunner of the Slavic Sokol Union. In a solemn declaration, the tendency was stressed

towards the creation of a new and complete type of a Slav who would strive to achieve human completeness and the tendency towards closer contacts among Slavs was also expressed. Both the Yugoslav and the Czechoslovak Sokol aimed to serve their nations on the basis of the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. One of the central points of Sokol's work was a physical re-birth of a nation and the education of young people, which is why both Sokol organisations demanded that the states should pay attention to these issues and offered help to them (Vidovdanska, 1921).

The YSU, as the advocate and bearer of Yugoslavism, patriotic nationalism, and democracy, had been politically tied in the liberal unitary camp. However, the national Yugoslav Sokol unity rather quickly weakened, first in Croatia, where a larger group of members gathered around the umbrella society in Zagreb. They demanded the re-organisation of YSU on the basis of confederation and restoration of former national Sokol unions. As the assembly of YSU in Osijek in 1921 refused their proposal, after only two years of unity and South Slavic "enthusiasm" (as stated above by Engelbert Gangl), the Croatian "dissidents" withdrew from YSU and in 1922 re-organised the Croatian Sokol Union (Dečak, 1922). The YSU's 1921 assembly resolution emphasised the centralised unity of the YSU association and that the unity also represented the evolution into Yugoslavism, which required time. They even more explicitly declared themselves as the bearers and defenders of Yugoslavism. Their vision, or we could say their utopia, expected, in the spirit of progress, democracy and social equity, the formation of a specific Yugoslav type of culture "as a means for developing a Slavic culture on the pathway to mankind". They recognised difficult conditions of living in the country after the war, so in this hard time, they appointed themselves the role of a guide taking the slogan "Kdor Sokol ta Jugoslovan/Who is a Sokol is also a Yugoslav" (Vidovdanska, 1921).

The unity and activity of YSU was presented in 1922 at its first all-Sokol festival in Ljubljana. The festival was well attended, also numerous by the "brothers and sisters Czechoslovaks", but without the separatists from the Croatian Sokol Union. The Croatian Sokol Union also could not join FIG nor the Slavic Union or Yugoslav Olympic Committee as they were blocked by YSU according to the new international sport principle of one state – one organisation. The International Match or (today's) World Championship of FIG was included within the festival. The festival was well organised, and it was a presentation and promotion of YSU and the new young state, especially as a home gymnast Peter Šumi shared first place in the all-round with Czechoslovak Prochaska (Spomenica, 1923).

2.2. YSU 1922-1929

The YSU's activities were not limited only to gymnastics; we must also mention the combination of doing gymnastics with cultural activities. "Sokolnica" or the Sokol gymnastic hall was also a national and cultural hall (especially in smaller towns), and it had a broad social significance. Music, drama, and puppeteers' groups all functioned within the Sokol society, and Sokol events included cultural activities. In the central and south Yugoslavia, "Sokolnica" also functioned as an educational centre, especially if the settlement did not have a school. It helped reduce illiteracy and practical lectures on modern farming were also organised (in 1931, 60% of the Yugoslav population were illiterate, mainly in the central and south Yugoslavia).

The official division of Sokol's work into the gymnastic, or technical section, and educational one was verified at the general assembly in Zagreb in 1924. In the question of activity, there was a slight difference between Slovenes and Serbs, as critically described by the Serb Vladimir Bjelajčić, while the Croats by his words were somehow in the middle but closer to the Slovenian direction. As it was indicated by Bjelajčić, the Slovene's direction was based on the Tyrš's gymnastics combined with nationalism and its *spiritus agens* was Viktor Murnik, while the Serbian's was more oriented to educational or cultural activities combined with nationalism (Bjelajčić, 1929).

The YSU's important concentration in the new state was on education and, within it, on the intention to renew and "Sokolise" physical education. At its founding assembly, YSU laid down a principle "Sokol and school", emphasising the fact that Sokol and schools should be connected reciprocally. They stressed the Sokol movement had had a nation-forming task for over 50 years and, in the new state, it should, therefore, enter all types of schools taking the responsibility for Physical Education (PE) in schools (in the school practice term Physical Education prevailed). Sokol teachers should also be physical education teachers and vice versa. The YSU declaration was taken into account, since, in January 1920, the Yugoslav government ordered that school gymnastic should be carried out in accordance with the Sokol gymnastic system. YSU also took care of the professional basis and their 1921 assembly made an appeal to the Ministry of Education for organising courses for gymnastic teachers and for employing gymnastic or PE teachers trained according to the Sokol gymnastics and principles. They also made an appeal to the authorities for special supervisors for PE. They also proposed that a department of PE should be established at one of the faculties; however, the demands were too radical (also expensive) for new authorities

and in practice, the education of staff was based on YSU professional courses (Pavlin, 2009).

By entering schools and by introducing Sokol gymnastics and national education, Sokol was in the Roman Catholic part of the country (Slovenia, Croatia and part of Bosnia and Herzegovina) confronted with the traditional educator, i.e., the Catholic Church, and its intention to use the Catholic Orel in this part of education. This led to an outbreak of the cultural battle between the Sokol and Orel movements. At the end of January 1921, after the government order that school gymnastics should be carried out in accordance with the Sokol gymnastics, representatives of the Catholic Slovene People's Party and priests from the Ljubljana diocese met to discuss resistance to the Sokol-based education. They issued a written protest and required that the order to introduce the Sokol movement into schools would be cancelled. Different Catholic societies made written protests addressed to the government in Belgrade; the Slovene bishop Jeglič initiated action at the bishops' conference level and in February 1922, Slovene and Croatian bishops made a personal protest in Belgrade and demanded that controversial decrees be revoked (Dolenc, 1996).

In the view of international gymnastic membership in FIG, the YSU continued the pre-war Slovenian and Croatian membership. In 1924, YSU also started to compete at the Olympic Games. As stated by Boris Gregorka (1991), a Sokol member and Olympian, the decade between the two world wars was, in the competitive sense, "the golden age". After succeeding in obtaining membership in FIG and joining the Olympic movement, the Yugoslav Sokol members competed at all major gymnastic matches, with the exception of Olympic Games in Los Angeles 1932 and World Championship (WCh) in Budapest 1934. The reasons for missing the Olympics was high travel expenses and also the all-Sokol festival was held in Prague in the same year and the head of Sokol decided to take part with a large delegation. The boycott of WCh in Budapest was due to political reasons as Hungary diplomatically attacked Yugoslavia at a meeting of League of Nations.

The very first international introduction of Yugoslav gymnasts was in 1922 when YSU had its first all-Sokol festival and, within it, hosted FIG's WCh. Among individuals, as we stated above, Peter Šumi shared first place, while Leon Štukelj and Josip Primožič dominated at the Olympics. In the 1930s, a new generation was coming, but it was facing a lack of major matches and lost the international contact. They appeared again on the scene at the Olympics in Berlin 1936, but the golden age declined, and only Leon Štukelj, at his last Olympic appearance, received a silver on the rings. In Berlin, the Yugoslav female Sokol members competed for

the first time. The last competition before WWII was FIG's WCh in Prague in 1938. As international political situation was tense at that time, the participation was poor. The Yugoslav Sokol members were third in the men's competition; among individuals, Josip Primožič was third on the horizontal bars. In female competition, the Yugoslav team was second among four national teams (Štukelj, 1989).

3. Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (SKY)

3.1. Establishing of SKY

A special period of Sokol's story is the period of SKY. In its first decade, the Yugoslav state was politically very turbulent state with numerous substitutions of governments and finally with a shooting incident in the parliament in Belgrade in the summer of 1928, when two Croatian representatives died. Therefore, King Aleksandar attempted to alleviate these traumatic circumstances, which had paralysed public life, and declared the dictatorship on the 6th January 1929. He abolished parliament, ostensibly to preserve "national and state unity". With the Law on the protection of the state, political parties were prohibited and dissolved, while the existence of political or related societies, gymnastic as well, was linked to special administrative permits. The January 6 decree was echoed in the Sokol official gazette *Sokolski glasnik*. In its approval of the King's action, the author stressed that the King's act itself was not a solution and that the Sokol members were convinced that "only morality and education can save the nation". Political autonomy was just a means to actual national life but could easily be lost "if we as a nation cease to live morally". The educational work based on physical activity and morality was the task of the Sokol movement, which in such a manner took part in "building up" the Yugoslav state (Editorial, 1929).

Soon after the King's dictatorship introduction, the fate of gymnastic organisations appeared on the agenda of the government sessions. In March 1929, King Aleksandar received a delegation of YSU. He was interested in the activity of the YSU and in obstacles that were disturbing their work "for the King, nation, and homeland" (Žutić, 1991, p. 43). At a special conference in January in Ljubljana, YSU discussed its status and work in the first decade of the Yugoslav state. The intention was to critically assess the activity from organisational, technical, ideological and educational aspects, to review causes that had positively or negatively influenced the development of the work of Sokol, and to outline guidelines for future work. They established, very self-critically, that the Sokol movement only partially managed to become the central point of national and cultural movement in the country. The

idea of Yugoslavism, that is, national and state unity, was more or less bound to the Sokol movement only, while beyond it, it developed in the opposite direction. They were not quite satisfied with knowledge and work of trainers; a poor cooperation of trainers and educators was observed; they were confronted with developing sport and scouting organisations and a declining female membership and a lack of skilled female members. Regarding the inclusion of the Sokol movement in state structures, it was stressed that the relation between the army and the Sokol organisations was otherwise friendly and in the spirit of support, but cooperation depended on individuals, while military education did not include, or did it insufficiently, the Sokol system of education. Also unsatisfactory was cooperation between the Sokol organisations and schools, despite the decrees of the Ministry of Education and the fact that in the process of giving PE in schools a Yugoslav character, the Sokol movement played the most important professional role. In contrast, in schools, they frequently encountered negative attitudes not only towards the Sokol movement but also to PE in general. Somewhat better was the situation in the countryside where the Sokol movement developed but was conditioned by specific circumstances in the state (Savezna, 1929).

According to the situation, the government prepared during the year a plan "by which physical education in schools and among the nation was to be organised uniformly, in the spirit and by the principles of the Sokol gymnastics, and to bring the Sokol movement in close connection with the action of the state", reported the liberal newspaper *Jutro* on the 1st December 1929, the state Day of Unity. The top leaders of YSU had almost certainly been involved in the making of the plan or, at least, were informed about it. Thus, at the beginning of December 1929, the law on the foundation of the new state gymnastic organisation Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was adopted. Article 12 was essential for further activity of the then gymnastic organisations, which determined that previous "societies for physical and moral education: Yugoslav Sokol (i.e., YSU), the Croatian Sokol, Orel and the Serb Sokol, if in three days after the beginning of validity of the law, they would not unite or join the SKY... would be abolished" (Zbornik SKJ, 1939). The law also brought a personal connection with the court because Aleksandar's heir to the throne, Prince Petar, became the official leader of Sokol. The law brought also the government's control over the new organisation as its leaders had to be appointed by a relevant ministry; in 1932, the Ministry for the Nation's Physical Education was established. The principle of the democratic selection of leadership only applied to the societies but was also limited here, as leaders had to be recognised by superior levels. Some changes came after 1935, when leaders

were democratically elected at the general assembly of SKY and the Ministry for Physical Education only confirmed them. The law also introduced regular public financing of PE in direction state – head of SKY, administrative districts – sub-unions or “župe” and municipalities – societies (Pavlin, 2002).

President Gangel of the YSU immediately hailed the law, recalling the YSU Memorandum (based on the analyses of January meeting in Ljubljana) on regulating PE in the state, and said that the YSU movement was “ready to contribute to their abilities in entirely achieving the great and generous goal of physical and moral education of the whole nation” (Voditelji, 1929). While the YSU joined the new Sokol, the Catholic gymnasts in Orel refused to join, whilst the Croatian Sokol Union resolved to leave the decision of joining SKY to the members, while the Union was dissolved.

The seat of SKY was transferred to Belgrade, the capital of the Yugoslavian state, which was renamed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. The Czechoslovakian allies were attentively observing what was happening with the YSU. Immediately after the adoption of the Law on SKY, the Czechoslovak Sokol Union asked the Yugoslav ambassador in Prague for exhaustive information upon which they could be sure “that in the new Yugoslav Sokol organisation there is nothing fascist, or anything that the Sokol movement could not accept in regard to its democratic and liberal principles” (Češka javnost, 1929). In Prague, after a detailed report, greetings and approval replaced scepticism and Czechoslovak Sokol strongly supported SKY’s incorporation in FIG and Slavic Sokol Union (organised in 1926).

3.2. SKY in the 1930s

The law on SKY was soon followed by different decrees regarding the obligation of serving the military or getting jobs and similar for the SKY members; as a result, in the first part of the 1930s SKY registered a membership growth. At the same time, they did not have adequate personnel or facilities for such a growth, which negatively affected the work and morale of Sokol members. Many newcomers joined only because of the benefits. After the assassination of King Aleksandar in 1934, and Milan Stojadinović as the Prime Minister coming into power in 1935 with cleric Anton Korošec as the Minister of the Interior, hard times for Sokol begun. The government gave permission to Catholic gymnastic societies to organise. Once again a cultural struggle in the western part of the state arose, accompanied by physical attacks on Sokol halls and individuals. In his state foreign policy Milan Stojadinović drew closer to Germany and Italy; with its declared position of Slavism, SKY became an opposition organisation.

As the social and political circumstances dramatically changed, SKY had to defend its position. Many members left SKY. In Slovenia, the younger generation, especially in the main societies in Ljubljana, demanded a refining of Sokol membership. They answered to attacks of Clerical Camp and also demanded a depoliticisation of SKY and moral reform to create a new, responsible, and nationally active Sokol member. This process led to internal conflict in the influential society Sokol I in Ljubljana, which resulted in the exclusion of a large group of society members, who then formed an illegal Sokol executive board, which spread its network and made contacts with communists in 1940 (Pavlin, 2014).

After the inner state administrative reorganisation by the law on Banovina Hrvatska (1939) and introduction of a small step to federalism, SKY kept the centralistic inner organisation and stressed the spiritual dimension of Yugoslavism. The work focused on the national-defence concept, which was especially important during the times of strained international political events in the years before the start of WWII. Some military exercises and mobilisations were also included among the gymnastic activities as the preparation to defend “the national freedom and state”, which was indicated in different resolutions published in the gazette *Sokolski glasnik* in the years before WWII. The Sokol members carefully followed the international events, “Anschluss” or Hitler’s annexation of Austria (1938), Hitler’s attacks on Czechoslovakia (1938/39) and later on Poland (1939), or the beginning of WWII. They expected that, soon, Yugoslavia’s turn would come.

Under the German pressure, the Yugoslav government had to adopt anti-Jewish and anti-Freemasonry laws after 1939 and thus opposed the Sokol movement, as it was known that Freemasons were members of SKY (Žutić, 1991). After the Yugoslav government acceded the pact with Germany in March 1941, Sokol supported the putsch in Yugoslavia on the 27th March 1941 and was at the forefront of many celebrations and processions organised in a support to the inauguration of the Sokol leader Petar II Karadjordjević as the King of Yugoslavia, a new government, army and independent state (Pavlin, 2014).

The punishment for the putsch was a Nazi-Fascist attack and blitzkrieg, that is the start of WWII in the Yugoslav territory. The war was a great setback for the Sokol movement. Following the occupation of Slovenia and its division between Germany, Italy and Hungary in April 1941, all the Sokol organisations were disbanded, and their property was confiscated: the German invaders also persecuted and deported a number of nationally-minded Sokol members. The majority of the Sokol members were among the founders of the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation (LF) with “parti-

sans” as a military part of the front; other founders were the Communist Party of Slovenia, the Christian Socialists, and the group of cultural workers. LF was founded in April 1941. The Sokol group was the most numerous group in the LF, and its members first got important positions. They belonged to a section of the Sokol membership that had stood up against the politicisation of Sokol in the latter half of the 1930s and in the end of 1940 made contacts with communists.

The other part of the Sokol movement organised itself in the framework of an upper-middle-class circle committed to the monarchy and the government in exile in London and started acting against the LF resistance organisation. In 1941, they established the Sokol Military Council and Sokol Legion. They rejected joining LF, partly because of the leading role of communists in it and because of its opposition to the early armed resistance to the occupying forces that, in their opinion, would have caused too many human casualties. The Sokol Legion was established only in Ljubljana and to a minor extent in its surroundings, and later also in the Primorska region. Members of the Sokol Legion responded to the mobilisation calls and joined the Chetnik detachments in their biggest numbers in the summer of 1943 (Deželak, 2014).

With the end of the war in 1945 and the communist political takeover, former physical education was transformed into the pro-Soviet “physculture” (physical culture – fizičeskaja kultura). In this transformation, there was no place for the national and liberal Sokol, a cofounder of LF. After the reorganisation of physical culture post the 1948 Cominform confrontation between Stalin and Tito and communist parties, an independent gymnastic organisation was established again. At the meeting of its executive board in 1951, the name Sokol was suggested, but it was refused because of the fear of possible restoration of Sokol’s splitting-up during WWII. The new organisation was named “Partizan” after the fighter for liberation in WWII and, similar as

SKY, would or should unite all pre-war gymnasts into one organisation.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the Sokol movement was an important factor and partner in national political-cultural spheres and the struggler for national emancipation as well as of freethinking, which had to promote the patriotic national idea among all classes of citizens. On the other hand, it was an important educational factor, especially with the formation of the Yugoslav state after WWI, when it was included in the system of school physical education (PE). Sokol gymnastics became the basis of PE and also the bearer of international sport achievements whether were those the Olympics or World Championships. The Olympic medals of Yugoslav sport in that time were all Sokol’s, with Leon Štukelj winning the most.

After the South Slav Sokol unions had been united into YSU on the centralistic principle “one nation, one state, one Sokol”, they supported the Yugoslav centralistic state and Yugoslav nationalism. Since Yugoslav nationalism was simultaneously the policy of liberal centralism, YSU and SKY, with supporting it, came into collision with positions of some political parties as well as of the confessional forces in Yugoslavia, specifically the Catholic Church and the Catholic political camp. In the latter half of the 1930s, the Sokol movement also differed in opinion from the foreign policies of Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović who was drawing Yugoslavia closer to the politics of Hitler and Mussolini and, therefore, drawing the state apart from the coalition of Little Entente between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia based on the Slavism. Finally, in 1941, after the Nazi-Fascist occupation, Sokol members once again faced a struggle for freedom, this time not the national-emancipation one, but a survival one – for national liberation.

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Correspondence to:

Assist. Prof. Tomaž Pavlin, Ph.D.

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Sport

Gortanova 22, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Phone: +386 31 575 335

E-mail: tomaz.pavlin@fsp.uni-lj.si