

Olympic Versus Sokol Movement

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary sport in all its many-sided forms and levels is in the first line determined by global dynamic development of consumerist society oriented to economic prosperity, top performance, personal success, social admiration and unique incomparable experience. The many-sided world of sport strongly reflects the prevailing ethos of global drift, as well the local cultural development of given society. An essayistic comparison of the Olympics as the reflection of top level of global sport on one side and the value-oriented ethos of Sokol movement of the other side, is a specific contribution to a better understanding of different value roots, sense and objectives of sports in our cultural context. In the contemporary time of postmodern society, the Olympic Games are the most unique and most watched two-week sporting event of the best athletes in an ever-expanding range of traditional and new sports in the world. In the context of the growing commercialization and scientification of sport, it is worthwhile to confront the ideological emphases and ethos of both the founders of the initiators of the modern Olympic Games, as well as the founders of the unique physical education Sokol movement. Miroslav Tyrš and his followers at the time (Kožíšek) rejected competitive sports. Competitive performance sports and participation in the Olympic Games were not in the spectrum of Sokol's interest. The Sokol values principles rejected the one-sidedness of the sports specialization with the pursuit of performances and victories. However, the later development of Sokol agreed with Coubertin's principle that Olympism is not a formal system, but a state of mind, a certain conception of life, a unique philosophy of life, a balance of physical fitness, will and spirit. Thus, in the development of Sokol and Olympism, there were culturally different emphasis on values, which today took the position of discussions about the meaning and mission of the top media-attractive elite sport, embodied primarily by the Olympic Games on one hand, and the movement for a higher mass of sport in the sense of the sports for all principle on the other hand.

Keywords: Olympics, the Sokol movement; performance; mass culture, Sport

INTRODUCTION

Sport in the context of contemporary society

The dynamics of the development of modern and especially postmodern information mass consumer society, starting from the revolutionary changes of the industrial stage of humanity, brings immense and previously unsuspected cultural changes in the history of not only our civilization, with many dramatic effects on the genesis of social and interpersonal relations, value group and individual preferences, the concept of authority and prestige, the possibilities and limits of social and economic progress, the changing understanding of the institution of elites and celebrities. The stormy sea of the performance society in which we currently and often unprepared find ourselves, then rather relativizes the difficulty to objectively measure performance by relativizing the paths to their achievement. On the path of often convoluted and incommensurable "career paths" of our world, mainly economic goals and sports performances adored by the mass consumer society are increasingly applied more and more visibly. At the level of high-performance sports, it brings the uniqueness of physical performance, the indisputability of record results, the unrepeatability of unique victories, and the peak of social recognition.

Admiration, which is usually caused by the unattainability of the performance, only suspected individual training devotion on the way to victory, the desire for material pleasures and social recognition and admiration. Admiration, which does not stem from the appreciation of practical social usefulness, but relates to a performance that is not only completely unique, beyond the "boundary of human possibilities", but which is essential, clear, measurable and indisputable in our world of relativization of values. That is, worthy of admiration, adoration. Sports adoration is incomparable to other areas of social life. Unlike the relativization of the "performances" of politicians, businessmen, and artists, this category is of a rather unstable interest or variable value perception of mass attention (Sekot, 2015).

The aim of the paper is to compare the relationship of the Sokol movement with the modern Olympic Games, based on the development and the current state, and at the same time to outline the relationship with the different levels of contemporary sport.

METHODS

This is a purely theoretical article. The methodological approach to solving the research problem is based on the study of relevant literature. Basic methods of analysis and synthesis were used when working with the text. Standard methods were used as working methods, mainly direct and indirect, partly also biographical.

RESULTS

Olympics – top level of performance elite sport

Sports is one of the most popular forms of play. By its nature, it represents a typical and symbolic manifestation of modern times (Pelc, 2018, p.44). Performance sport, attractive to spectators, thus

becomes an integral, irreplaceable part of the interest of individuals and social groups and enters the everyday image of the information society. Today thanks to the mass media, it is undoubtedly the most attractive form of mass culture. Its reach for the widest possible circle of consumers, the clear "readability" of its message, the simplicity or undemandingness of the assumptions of spectator "consumption", the imaginability of identification with the value potential of sports actors is obvious along with the ability to generate sports stars, icons or even heroes unimaginable elsewhere.

In this way, the mass media can mediate the most popular sporting events immediately, truly naturally and dramatically, mobilize sports fandom, present the irresistible performance of sports idols to the masses (Sekot, 2010).

To discuss our topic means to distinguish concept Olympic movement and Olympic (synonym for Olympic Games). Olympic movement is, with accordance of Olympic Charter to contribute to building peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised with accordance with Olympism and its values. Olympic Games or Olympics are the leading international sporting events featuring summer and winter sports competitions in which thousands of athletes from around the world participate in a variety of competitions. The Olympic Games are considered the world's foremost sports competition with more than 200 nations participating (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008, International Olympic Committee, 2020).

The Olympic Games have been, and undoubtedly will be, the ultimate, unique and most watched sporting event. A two-week sports competition of the best athletes in an ever-expanding range of traditional and newly emerging sports, attracting to the television screens the largest mass that this medium can mobilize as an audience.

Kinanthropology thus keeps returning and updating the need to at least trying to give an answer to the key question: Are the Olympics the pinnacle of the movement of an individual, a parade of following worthy models of success, prestige and admiration? Or are they rather a form of the audience's growing desire for extraordinary performances and "stories" that ordinary reality does not offer? (Lipiec, 1999). As in many social, cultural or economical phenomena or events, the nature and consequences of them are reflectig value roots of given culture: In the context of our consumerist society where the social admiration is on the peak of value levels, the top performance is to be stimulation for personal utmost activity in the field of top sport offering popularity, status and stardom behind and outside the limits of ordinary life standards.

Sokol versus sport

In our national context, it is undeniably the Sokol movement, which with its time-varying value message carries the permanent idea that movement, as an elementary manifestation of human nature, is increasingly clearly understood as an integral part of the versatile and valuable development of a healthy, active, vital and responsible individual Olympism, in its diversity of views on sport in the broadest sense, offers a unique view of the contemporary changes in the organizational form of the top manifestations of movement with all the colorful impacts on the value changes of modern times (Sekot, 2006, pp. 279–282).

In general, is elite sport more of a platform for mass audience interest or an effective and irresistible impulse for proactive leisure fitness sports? In other words, the sum of problems that,

by thinking through them, can be a source of acquiring new knowledge, but also an impetus for the regular cultivation of sports skills, the joy of regular exercise, and a responsible approach to health. They can also be the activation of positive life impulses and stimuli, which are particularly beneficial for its health and fitness benefits and also bring undeniable social positives: Life attitudes or daily rituals that should be a self-evident and integral part of every person. And even here, Sokol's value platform offers a unique perspective on sports and physical activities. At the same time, it is good to remember in particular the historical maturation of this unique physical education organization which, despite the adversity of the times, maintains a unique attitude towards the meaning of movement as an integral part of the life cycle of every individual. Sokol is an important, typically Czech phenomenon, which made a significant mark in the history of the Czech and Slovak nation and, in a certain sense, foreshadowed and marked its spiritual development. It is connected with the peak of the revival period, with the emancipation of Czech culture and the entire Czech element, with the struggle for the independence of the state. This civically extremely stimulating effort combined physical education, education and general cultural activities.

Literary historian Arne Novák defined three main pillars on which Miroslav Tyrš, the originator and founder of Sokol, supported the Sokol idea: the national romance of German gymnastics, the proportionate and harmonious ideal of Greek kalokagathia and patriotic liberalism. The template of Sokol thus became the Turner movement, which was considered to be the bearer of democracy (Sak, 2012, p. 64).

Health — strength — beauty! Defend the truth! Just a quick look at these slogans, no matter how period-tinged, but permanently targeting values, undoubtedly belong to the ideological equipment of the oldest Czech physical education organization, Sokol. Especially thanks to her, Czech physical education is known in the world for the uniqueness of mass performances. It was in this regard that the principle was used that physical exercises, due to their movement character, are the activities that are essentially closest to man. All the more so because they are comprehensible, currently applicable and modifiable and, moreover, strongly emotional. Miroslav Tyrš was also the author of his own gym system with the original Czech nomenclature, perfect for the time. Tyrš correctly understood that a nation can develop to the highest level of freedom and education, if all its members know how to take good care of their physical health, if they fill their insides with the wealth of the spirit and base their mutual relations and relations with other nations on morality.

From the point of view of mass physical education, the importance of Sokol since its foundation in 1862 lies mainly in its All-Sokol rallies. The first in 1882 was the culmination of Tyrš's organizational work. The gatherings, which took place after about six years, apart from the period when Sokol could not officially function, laid the foundations of the tradition of mass physical education performances, which brought large masses of people to active exercise and physical education activities (Strachová, 2020).

The phenomenon of sport as a competitive activity was perceived as incompatible with the ideological mission of physical education. In 1882, František Kožíšek wrote in the magazine Sokol: „Sport is only for one to excel over the other, so that the winner wins the bet, even at the expense of health." (Perútka, 1985, p. 113). As an uncompromising promoter of the gym movement, he also

criticizes sports clubs: „The members of these exercise, only the arms, or only the legs, to satisfy selfish ambition, won a bet or a shiny decoration. On the other hand, the members of the Sokol practice all-round, they are concerned with the all-round symmetrical development of the body in the ancient sense, and their stimuli are health and strength, a reality for civic life, for the service of the country...” (Perútka, 1985, pp. 113–114).

Sokol as the main representative of the Czech movement culture tradition and logically the most important partner and opponent of the penetrating "Anglo-Saxon" of sports until the end of 1939, he expressed his reservations about elite sports. At the same time, the founder of Sokol had a completely positive attitude towards sports (Pelc, 2018, p. 44).

Sokol's negative attitude towards sport (understood as synonymous with a commercially oriented desire for victory) was also manifested in his negative attitude towards participation in the Olympic Games.¹ The spirit of the times and the mission of Sokol is even characterized by a preference for trips over organized tourism. Already from this point of view, one can imagine what attitude such an opinion front would take towards today's forms of professional, commercially-media-used elite sport. However, one thing is certain: for the then understanding of movement activities, today's concept of sport would remain - understandably for a number of reasons - probably beyond the horizon of common imagination.

Sokol represented a distinctly democratic system of the time based on respect for the universal values of physical exercises with an emphasis on ethics, aesthetics, health and physical fitness. At the same time, Sokol's main goal was the effort to unify and raise the level of the Czech nation, including its military preparedness, patriotism and contemporary "all-Slavism". Physical exercises combined with educational and artistic activities as well as civic engagement were the means for this. Tyrš emphasized work for the nation, advocated progress, Slavic reciprocity and democracy. He drew on the ancient ideal of kalokaghatia, the harmony of beauty and goodness. In it, the results of physical education, cultivating a beautiful body (kalos), and the education of a good spirit (agathos), whose principle is virtue, justice and bravery, are mutually reconciled (Tyrš, 1969). As a such, Sokol accents for regular sportive activity, for civic activity in broad sense, for active attitude to life challenges, is steadily constantly cultivated with accordance of contemporary drift Sport for all movement, but as well as fruitful base for heading towards top Olympic sport.

This principle is an expression of the harmony between "inner" and "outer", which is considered by Greek pedagogy and aesthetics to be a condition of beauty directed towards order, harmony, balance and noble moderation. Sokol's gym system was also conceived in the spirit of such ideas. At the same time, he considers the element of competition to be an important stimulator of human activity and a prerequisite for progress, as a manifestation of an effort to match the better and possibly surpass them. However, in accordance with the ancient thought, he condemns competition associated with rivalry and intolerance. Moreover, one-sidedness is rejected, i.e. the principle from which grew Sokol's opposition to sports specialization and the pursuit of performances.

The ideological base of Sokol movement, with its democratic accents, was incompatible with totalitarian communist ideology, which is why Sokol was gradually liquidated at the turn of the forties and fifties. Its organizational renewal in the 1990s also meant a revival of emphasis on

1 The first three Olympic Games passed without the interest of Sokol.

one's own national traditions and values. However, this, in the context of the growing influence of globalization and its internationalized values, also means for Sokol himself the necessity to improve the versatility of physical education activities in a general social climate focused more on specialization, performance and victory.

At present, it is in the confrontation with the rather "idealess" elite sport that we become more and more acutely aware of the pros and cons of Sokol in general. His emphasis on a healthy way of life, the cultivation of a sense of belonging and the development of a harmonious personality, the introduction of mass sports and financial availability for all can be positively evaluated. Conversely, the negatives are in lack of trainers and attractiveness for young generation growing up in consumerist and sedentary society.

Sokol versus Olympics

The relationship of Sokol to Olympism and its organizational aspects is based on Tyrš's writing "Olympic throw", which reflects on the meaning of physical exercises and their individual and social application. At the same time, the best way to compare "Olympism" and "Sokol" is to compare the ideological emphases of Tyrš and Coubertin. In addition, one-sidedness is rejected, i.e. the principle from which Sokol's opposition to sports specialization and the pursuit of achievements grew. Coubertine, on the contrary, combined Olympism with education for international belonging (Tyrš, 1969, 117–149). Tyrš, with his fascination with ancient Greece and the Greek ideal of man, understood the Olympic Games as the greatest holiday in the celebration of humanity in history. From Plato he draws the idea that the state is strong and secure when all its members are strong and secure: A healthy, strong and educated nation is a condition for a strong and successful state. Hence the emphasis on all-round physical fitness and a restrained attitude towards performance sports. The idea of olympism appealed strongly to Sokol, but they did not aspire to the Olympic Games as a display of peak individual performances. Sokol's activity was not focused on performance and victory, but on human perfection in the sense of *kalokagathia* (Tyrš, 1969). The fascination with the ancient Greek Olympic Games was connected with Tyrš's fascination with the landscape in which they were held. Tyrš's Sokol, foreshadowing Sokol's further intellectual development, is socially and culturally oriented towards a specific society, without Coubertin's later international emphases. At the same time, Sokol's later development agreed with Coubertin's principle that Olympism is not a formal system, but rather a state of mind, a certain concept of life, a unique life philosophy, a balance of physical fitness, will and spirit.

In general, we can summarize that while Tyrš devoted his intellectual and organizational potential to a purposefully specific society, Coubertin's significant contribution — to restore the Olympic Games on an international scale — is the basis of the idea of modern Olympism.

Next to the focus on the Olympic Games, there is the Sokol idea of Olympism as an everyday process. Hence the diversity of emphasis in the field of education. For Coubertin, education was understood as a reflection of sports activities aimed at participating in the Olympic Games. In contrast, Tyrš built a clear educational system based on an understanding of physical culture in the broadest sense of the word i.e. physical education, educational and cultural activities. In terms of value, however, these emphases have a universal character (Dovalil, 2004). At the time being, in

the context of complicated war situation in Europe, Phylisophical heritage of Tyrš is still topical and inspirative: The founder of the Sokol understood that „ the question of freedom is, above all, the question of education, the question of the education of body and spirit t the question of the cultivation of the (Czech) nation. This idea is equally desirable today. It will always be the case that only a society of “good” people (personas) allows the way to progress, democracy and freedom“ (Bábela, Oborný, 2018, p. 325)

Olympism is generally defined as a philosophy of life, the ideas of which are instilled especially in the youth and are usually reduced to the principles of fair play. Sokol orients these principles to the national population through a systematic educational system. Olympism works with the concept of sport and, given the meaning and meaning of the Olympic Games, emphasizes — unlike Sokol - performance. On the other hand, Sokol works with the term physical exercise, "physical exercise", as an important element of culture aimed at educating a well-rounded person. Here it should be remembered that Sokol emphasizes not the one-time importance of the competitive Olympic Games, but Olympism as a peaceful idea of the union of physical fitness, will and spirit. At the same time, Sokol is not in opposition to sport, but looks with concern at some of its negative phenomena related to top elite professionalism focused unilaterally and purposefully on performance, victory and reward.

The Sokol movement showed its performance and representative ambitions only in the period of the nationally emancipated independent Czechoslovak Republic. Sokol gymnasts in particular won medals at the Olympic Games. The first Czechoslovak Olympic champion – Bedřich Šupčík², Ladislav Vácha, Emanuel Löffler³, Jan Gajdoš, Alois Hudec⁴, Vlasta Děkanová, Zdeněk Růžička, Věra Růžičková etc.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in the development of Sokol and Olympism, there were culturally different value emphases. which today have matured into the position of discussions about the meaning and mission of top media-attractive elite sports, embodied primarily by the Olympic Games on the one hand, and the movement for higher mass sports in the sense of the principle of "sport for all" on the other. It is a topic that is constantly updated by the dynamics of the development of a performance-based society, and thus in a wider context it also concerns the future development of the relationship between recreational and performance sports. However, it cannot be overlooked that it is a complex of topics strongly distant from the world of values of the founders of the Sokol movement.

To discuss properly topic of relation of Sokol movement to contemporary Olympics means to outline its pure relation to different levels of contemporary sport we have respect the fact of *various impacts* of given different sports on different experiences and consequences (power and performance sports versus pleasure and participation recreational sports) including the importance value of sportive activity in everyday leisure. As it is evident the phenomenon of sport has been strongly transformed during past two or three decades: The process of commercialization and

2 Bedřich Šupčík – Paris – Games VIII. Olympics 1924.

3 Löffler – together with Jan Gajdoš, he was one of the biggest constants of interwar Czechoslovak gymnastics.

4 Jan Gajdoš, Alois Hudec – gold medal in the rings of the Games of the XI Olympiad in 1936 in Berlin.

medialization of elite professional sports. In such perspective we could find relevant levels of sport: Power and performance models of sports are highly organized and competitive and emphasize strength, speed, and power, competitive success, setting records, selection systems, hierarchical authority structures, antagonism.

The pleasure and participation model of sports is characterized with the primary emphasis in on the connection between people enjoyment, good health, pleasure and well-being differences in physical skills, interpersonal support. Alternative sports encompass an infinite array of physical activities done individually or with groups. Their popularity is based, in part, on children's reactions against the highly structured character of adult-controlled, organized sports. With respect to discussed nature of Sokol we could conclude this movement and organization is rooted in sport values of pleasure and participation and alternative sports.

From the perspective of the orientation associated with many spectator sports today including Olympic sports have shifted from aesthetic to the heroic. Aesthetic orientation emphasis on beauty and pleasure of movement, mastery of technical skills, willingness to explore limits, commitment to staying active and involved as a participant. Heroic orientation emphasis on danger and excitement of movement, style or mastery of dramatic expression, willingness to go beyond limits a commitment to victory and success of the team or sponsor. As a dominant form of sport, it emphasizes strength, speed, dominating the opponent, pushing the limits of human possibilities, victories, records, titles. Admirable hard sports training, willingness to pain, sacrifice, emphasis on breaking records are undoubtedly an essential part of it (Coakley, 2001). At the same time, this level is gradually moving away from the Sokol value, which sees the human body in sport not as a goal, but as a means of sporting activity. In this context, we can summarize that the development of Olympism is more and more oriented precisely to the exclusivity of the commercial and political goals of the Olympic Games, which are characterized today in the context of top sport by a permanent spectator appeal (will e-sports become part of the Olympic Games?). They are also characterized by globalization controlled by developed powerful countries and organizations, interest in the commercialization of alternative sports, the tendency to expand the spectrum of so-called Olympic sports, global management and coordination of regional, international and world sports competitions (Payne, 2006).

At the same time, countries such as Norway, Finland, Iceland, Germany, Australia and Canada will continue to be model countries for the harmonization of sport for all and top sport. It is Sokol, even in this context, that does not lose sight of the increasingly urgent challenges of focusing on the support of sports activities and leisure sports, considering the specific conditions of place, time and specific situation. As an integral part of an active life and all-round development of an individual (Dovalil et al, 2005, p. 45-60).

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