

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA,
FACULTY OF SPORT

HERALD OF NEW, HEALTHIER MODE OF LIFE (ACADEMIZATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND FORMATION OF THE FACULTY OF SPORT IN SLOVENIA)

TOMAŽ PAVLIN, MILAN ŽVAN

ABSTRACT

In the period between the two World Wars, physical education became an important educational sphere in Yugoslavia and Slovenia. At the same time, the process of giving the educational sphere a Slovene character has to be emphasized, which was ensued by the establishment of a new Southern Slav state. In this process, physical education was professionally influenced by Sokol gym and Sokol education. At the same time, the Sokol started the process of the formation of a state regulated short-cycle college of physical education. Behind the action were demands for professional teachers and coaches. The process culminated after the Second World War with the establishment of the Institute of Physical Education in Ljubljana (1953). The Institute adopted Sokol gym as a basic physical activity but it was soon reorganized and renamed 3-year Short-cycle College of Physical Education and finally in 1960, 4-year College of Physical Culture, which was the beginning of the present Faculty of Sport.

This paper discusses the historical progression of physical education to academic science on the basis of the development of the Faculty of Sport and on the basis of available historical primary sources and professional texts.

Keywords: physical education; Sokol; gym; gym courses; short-cycle college; faculty; Slovenia

INTRODUCTION

In practice, the question of the profession and staff arose when physical exercises and gym/gymnastics and later physical education was introduced as a regular subject to the school curriculum in the Austrian part of Austria-Hungary (1869) and when gymnastic societies (first in Slovenia Južni Sokol / South Sokol, 1863) and sports activities in clubs became more and more popular in the second half of the 19th century. The problem was solved by organizing professional and specialist courses, which resulted in setting up short-cycle college study programmes and college study programmes of physical

education. This article describes the process of the establishment of the College of Physical Culture, a predecessor of the present Faculty of Sport of the University of Ljubljana, and the professional contribution of the Sokol movement in the period between both World Wars.

METHODS

The article is historiographic and a historical method of the analysis of primary and secondary sources and interpretation are used.

DISCUSSION

The discussion will focus on three complete chronological periods which are established in historiography and which marked a political and cultural development and consequently also the development of physical culture. These are the Austrian period ending in 1914, the period of old Yugoslavia between 1918 and 1941 and the period of new Yugoslavia after 1945.

Physical activity as school and club activity

In the Austrian period, physical activity was introduced as a compulsory school subject and at national level, a civil society gym movement was organized. In 1869, a school act was passed regulating primary schools and introducing a new curriculum with gym (2 lessons), what later extended also into secondary schools – first into natural science secondary schools and teacher training secondary schools (1870) and finally into grammar schools, where gym was optional at first and became obligatory in the 1909/10 school year. Gym lessons aimed at hygiene and education, enhancing health, strengthening the body, mental fitness as well as building up strength, will and endurance. Legal measures raised a question of a new profession: gym teacher (*Turnlehrer*). According to the decree of the Ministry of Education (1870), the candidates who wanted to get qualifications in gym or physical education had to pass an exam in front of the commission appointed for this purpose. In 1871, the first professional two-year course was organized in Vienna followed by a theoretical and practical exam. A similar commission and later educational course at university was also established in Graz, in Styria. At the same time, Graz was the academic educational centre nearest to the present-day territory of Slovenia¹. Many Slovenes from different parts of present-day Slovenia enrolled on the courses. Ulaga and Bergant mention there were 49 candidates in the period between 1875 and 1914; among those who finished the course in Vienna is also Franc Brunet, who taught gym in Ljubljana and published an influential reference book in Slovene entitled *Telovadba v petrazrednih in manj kot petrazrednih ljudskih šolah* (Gym in elementary schools with

¹ The National university was established in Ljubljana after the First World War.

five classes and with fewer than five classes, in 1900; reprint in 1907) (Okoliš, 2009; Stepišnik, 1974; Ulaga & Bergant-Knez, 1992).

As early as the middle of the 19th century, amateur physical activity or gymnastics was spread throughout the bourgeoisie. On the territory of present-day Slovenia², two gym societies, i.e., the German Turnverein and the Slovene Južni Sokol, were established in 1862 and 1863 respectively. In the period before the First World War, a mass national and liberal Sokol movement was set up. In Slovene society, the Sokol clubs brought about a new profession, which was spread and developed with the help of publications and courses for instructors. The first professional work *Nauk o telovadbi* (Science of gym) was published as early as 1867 and 1869, but for Sokol professional development, courses for instructors organized by Viktor Murnik after 1896 were of outmost importance. They were based on Tyrš's Sokol system, which became the basis of work in clubs and professional work as well as the basis of contacts with Sokol movements in other countries. Tyrš's system was also adopted by Croats and Serbs and was presented in Montenegro in the late 1910s. As a sign of re-Catholization, the catholic Orel movement was established at the end of the 19th century. Orel, however, was also professionally based on Sokol's profession (Pavlin, 2008).

Sokol character in physical education

At the end of the First World War, Southern Slavs established the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929 on, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), which introduced two physical education lessons in schools. Schools on the territory of present-day Slovenia took on a Slovene character, which was of great importance from the national and cultural point of view (Dolenc, 1996). In the process of giving physical education in schools a Slovene as well as a Yugoslav character, the Sokol movement played the most important professional role. In the middle of 1919, Slovene, Croatian and Serbian Sokols merged into a uniform Yugoslav Sokol organization. The founding general meeting discussed the connection with the school system and laid down a principle called "Sokol and schools" emphasizing the fact that the Sokol and school should be connected reciprocally. As they stressed, the Sokol movement had had a nation-forming task for over 50 years and in the new state, it should therefore penetrate all national schools, secondary moderns, secondary schools and other schools with its spirit and take over physical education in schools. The Sokol movement should play a leading professional role in resolving issues concerning physical education as well as within the framework of the authority structures from the lowest to the highest ones at ministry or government level. The Sokol declaration was taken into account since in January 1920, the government ordered that school gym should be carried out in accordance with the Sokol system. By coming into schools and by introducing Sokol gym and national education, Sokols were – in the catholic part of the country³ – confronted with the traditional educator, i.e., the Catholic Church, and its intention to use the principles of the catholic Orel in this part of education. This led to an

² The lands within Austria with a predominantly Slovene population were: Carniola, southern Carinthia, southern Styria, Görz region, Trieste region with the Karst and northern Istria (or also the Littoral).

³ Slovenia, Croatia and part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

eruption of the cultural fight between the Sokol and Orel movements which had a political liberal and catholic background (Dolenc, 1996; Pavlin, 2009).

The Sokols also took care of the professional basis and their 1921 general meeting made an appeal to the Ministry of Education for organizing courses for gym teachers and for employing gym teachers trained according to Sokol principles in all teacher secondary training schools in the country. They also made an appeal to the authorities for special supervisors for physical education. They also proposed that a department of physical education should be established in at least one faculty of arts – in cooperation with the faculty of medicine; lecturers should be established Sokol experts. The Ministry of Health should award grants to young doctors skilled at physical exercises who could specialize as physiologists and develop the physiology of physical education. However, the demands were too radical for new authorities and in practice, the education of staff was based on Sokol professional courses (in Ljubljana, a one-month training course for Sokol instructors was organized as early as autumn 1919; it consisted of 10 lessons every day covering theoretical and practical aspects) which were also recognized in schools as appropriate for teaching physical education. At the end of November 1920, Yugoslav Sokols met with the Czechoslovak Sokols in Ljubljana to establish the Association of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Sokol Movement. In the declaration, they stressed that one of the central points of Sokol work was a physical rebirth of a nation and education of young generations, that is why both Sokol organizations demanded that the states should pay attention to these issues and they would help them. They also stressed the fact that among the goals of this Association are the commitment to reforming schools and army according to Sokol principles, an obligatory law on physical education of all citizens and the establishment of a college of physical education either in Czechoslovakia or in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Actually, a six-month Sokol school was organized in Prague in the late 1920s where also Yugoslav Sokols were trained. This training, however, was carried out primarily in a civil society manner. On the basis of Sokols' initiatives, the Yugoslav state got involved in solving the problems regarding professionalism in physical education in the late 1920s. In June 1927, it introduced a one-year course in physical education for physical education teachers in secondary schools. At the same time, Sokols emphasized that physical education teachers and professionals in the field of civil physical education should study for two years either at university or teacher training short-cycle college until a suitable short-cycle college of physical education was established (Pavlin, 2009).

Short-cycle College

On 6 January 1929, King Alexander established a dictatorship and dissolved the parliament and national and ideological political parties in order to calm a tense political situation in the country. The Yugoslav Sokols met with King Alexander in March 1929 and prepared a memorandum with a law draft dealing with school youth physical education and a law draft concerning a physical education military school, which would mean that Sokol physical education extended to include the military. They emphasized the general need for physical education and claimed that history taught us that great cultures prospered as long as physical education was a component part of general education. If a country wants to popularize physical education among all strata of the nation, it must

take care primarily of professionalism and suitable infrastructure in schools and in the army as well as of material and moral support of the Sokol movement, which promotes physical education in the civil sphere. The memorandum included a plan for a three-year study programme comprising six semesters and 108 theoretical and practical lessons. The curriculum included 22 theoretical and practical subjects⁴ (Memorandum, 1929). At the beginning of the 1930s, the Sokol movement, which made an appeal for a school for professional staff, was supported by the Association of Sports Associations and by sports organizations in general (Stepišnik, 1964). While civil organizations kept demanding and emphasizing the need to establish physical education studies, the latter already existed in many other countries. Consequently, also some Slovenes went abroad. Drago Ulaga⁵, for example, graduated from the Berlin College of Physical Education in 1930, the same holds true of Janko Kavčič (who graduated in 1934), whereas Branko Polič graduated from the Warsaw Central Institute of Physical Education in 1934. As a result of numerous initiatives, pressures and finally sports achievements at the Olympics and world championships (i.e., gymnast Leon Štukelj and other Sokols) and probably also as a result of the Slavic examples in Czechoslovakia and Poland, the Ministry of Physical Education of the Nation finally responded and in 1938, the Short-cycle College of Physical Education was established in Belgrade. After the internal political reorganization of the Yugoslav state in 1939/40, a similar school was established in Zagreb. The activities were also performed in Slovenia. Drago Ulaga, a graduate of the Berlin College of Physical Education, prepared plans for the study within the Ljubljana Faculty of Arts shortly before the Second World War but the budget debate and the opposition of the Ministry of Finance as well as the attack on Yugoslavia in April 1941 and the Second World War caused the initiative to founder (Ulaga & Bergant, 1992).

Post-war restoration

After the liberation and establishment of new communist Yugoslavia and pro-Soviet physical culture, there were aspirations in Slovenia as early as October 1945 to establish an academy or an institute where physical education could be studied in combination with another course of study. Jelica Vazzaz was among the main initiators of physical education studies; she was a pre-war Sokol and a student of the Short-cycle College in Belgrade, and after the war, she was assistant for physical education at the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Slovenia. The demand for staff was great (in 1946, the physical culture association estimated that around 10,000 professional workers

⁴ Practical gym, games, light athletics and sport, fencing, gym systematics and theory, methodology of physical exercises, history and literature of physical exercises, aesthetics of physical exercises, general pedagogy, physics, biology, anatomy and histology with practical classes, anatomy of the appearance of a human being, general physiology with practical classes, general and special physiology of physical exercises, general hygiene, school hygiene and hygiene of physical exercises, physical development and hygiene in pre-school period, anthropometry, orthopaedics, massage and medical exercises, first aid with practical exercises, the building and equipment of gyms and gym facilities.

⁵ Drago Ulaga (1906–2000) was a successful gymnast, member of the catholic Orel association, which awarded him a scholarship to study at the end of the 1920s. After graduating in the 1930s, when the Orel already disbanded, Ulaga first acted as a coach in the Ilirija sports club, then he was a teacher outside Ljubljana and from the mid-1930s on, he worked at the Ministry of Physical Education of the Nation in Belgrade. Before the Second World War, he returned to Ljubljana.

were needed for a mass activity). As Edvard Kardelj, one of the leading members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, said in a discussion with athletes in 1947, physical culture should obtain a new character after the liberation within the framework of general transformation of the homeland in the course of a democratic revolution. Kardelj also emphasized that liberation fight and revolution were characterized by care for human beings and care for well-being of an individual and nation as well as care for a general rise in physical culture, since there is no quality life without strengthening of the body, health and physical strength of a human being. Correspondingly, physical culture is national and humane and strengthens the human body and mind, thus helping an individual to become a perfect human being (1st congress of the Physical Culture Association of Yugoslavia, 1947). In accordance with this, it was emphasized in Slovenia as early as 1946 that it is necessary to establish a short-cycle college of physical education within the framework of the University of Ljubljana as soon as possible. This institution should educate physical education teachers for primary and secondary schools and for short-cycle colleges as well as experts for organizations of physical culture and professional education (1st meeting of the Physical Culture Association of Slovenia, 1946).

In that period, the politics and the state were preoccupied with solving problems connected with physical education staff and studies according to the state centralist approach, the consequence being the establishment of a central state institution in Belgrade which was founded on the site of the pre-war Short-cycle College. Thus, in 1946, the State Institute of Physical Culture was established in Belgrade and one-year professional courses were organized; later on, secondary schools of physical culture were established in different republics⁶. In Slovenia, the Institute of Physical Culture organized a one-year theoretical and practical course in the 1946/47 school year which was supposed to provide a new “figure of a physical culture teacher, figure of an instructor who should also excel in practical knowledge”, since “mastering practice sufficiently ... creates conditions for higher-level professional studies”. Consequently, a future broadly educated physical culture teacher will not be “a mere expert but also a herald of a new, healthy way of life” as well as an educator (Ulaga, 1947). After that secondary schools of physical culture were organized (1947/48) following the centralist physical culture guidelines, and the grammar school graduates pursued studies in Belgrade. One of the reasons for subjecting to the state centralist model of physical education studies was the fear that there would not be enough graduates of grammar schools and other graduates to enrol on several short-cycle colleges of physical education, since the needs in other academic areas were much higher. On the other hand, the secondary school system and the school system in general were undergoing restoration as well as political and ideological changes in the decade following the Second World War (Okoliš, 2009; Treatise of the College of Physical Education). Despite this, we can agree with Stepišnik that “the first physical culture school was born in Slovenia” with the establishment of secondary schools of physical culture. Although this school was not a short-cycle college, it was a “foundation for the future”, since the teaching staff consisted of teachers employed on a permanent basis. In 1950, the school came under administrative control of the Ministry of Education (Stepišnik, 1964, p. 9).

⁶ As opposed to old centralist Yugoslavia, new Yugoslavia was a union of republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia.

Organization of the College

The 1950s represented a new turning point, since these were the post-Cominform years and the years of establishing an autonomous socialist political model typical of Yugoslavia and years of radical reorganization in the area of state schools which also included the question of education of teaching staff. The proposals for the education level of teachers teaching in new uniform eight-year primary schools and four-year secondary schools including grammar schools ranged from a two-year to four-year teacher-training college. The Slovene proposal supported the point of view that future teachers should pursue a four-year course of study, but the introduction of two-degree studies resulted in the title of a teacher and professor (Gabrič, 1992). At the same time, the professional staff still needed the physical culture area and the staff educated within the system of courses. In the 1950s, the problems connected with the physical education staff coincided with school reformism and state and political decentralization. As a result, the physical education study model characterized by the state centralism was abandoned and transformed to the level of the republics. At the beginning of the 1950s, the committee for physical education of the Council for Education and Culture of the People's Republic of Slovenia analysed the situation in the field of physical education and found out that there was a shortage of physical education teachers. That is why it proposed the establishment of an independent college of physical education where physical education could be studied in combination with another course of study. In February 1953, the plan was presented at the University of Ljubljana and an agreement was reached with the University. Then the Council for Education and Culture decided to establish the Institute of Physical Education in Ljubljana in November 1953 as a transitional stage. The Institute carried out a three-year course of study ending with a short-cycle college degree. In the middle of March 1956, the Institute was renamed Short-cycle College of Physical Education. The Institute and later the Short-cycle College accepted candidates who finished grammar school or passed a school-leaving exam at a secondary technical school. The candidates also had to pass the entrance examination and go for a medical check-up. Although the school was officially a short-cycle college, the studies lasted for 6 semesters and the curriculum consisted of the subjects from four subject areas: social sciences and humanities, medicine, physical education and methodology as well as practice. As far as the professional orientation is concerned, the Institute and the Short-cycle College supplemented the theory of physical exercises with the systematization according to the physiological effect of exercises, with the emphasis of exercises that originated from man's and social needs and not from the interests of organizations, thus widening the social usefulness of activities as opposed to that of the Sokol and nation. Interestingly, the heritage criticism did not mention the Sokol movement but emphasized that the Short-cycle College fought against the heritage of German formalism (Spiess's formalism) as well as "for the fact that the primary aim is training for work rather than artistry – and the normal place for taking exercises is nature rather than an indoor place: a playground in the open air, a meadow, forest, water, snow". The criterion for judging new findings was "their scientific correctness and usefulness for man and society" (a new branch of science, a predecessor of kinesiology, was developed at the Institute of Sports Medicine, which was established at the same time). The method of work with the school youth focussed on "concrete aims of physical education:

biological and medical, learning, educational and recreational aims". The research work in the field of methodology of physical exercise, however, showed that "in particular age groups ... it is necessary to develop human creative powers" through various motor tasks instead of stylized exercises (Report 1958/59, p. 10).

Between 1953 and 1958, 152 full-time and 37 part-time students enrolled on the study and the enrolment figures were not satisfactory. The education gained and the occupation of a physical education teacher were not stimulating regarding the length of the study, since the same title was obtained by the graduates of the short-cycle teacher training college following a two-year study, while the students studying at the faculties whose study was only one year longer obtained the title of a professor. For the candidates, an increasingly disturbing fact was that the three-year short-cycle college did not develop into a four-year college as planned and as students expected on the basis of promises (Report 1958/59). Consequently, the Committee for Physical Culture at the Executive Council of the People's Republic of Slovenia discussed staff problems at the end of June 1958 and approved the proposal to establish a college. In 1959, a special expert group prepared a draft law. In spring 1960, this draft was authorized by politicians and experts (from the Partizan⁷ movement and sports associations) and submitted to the parliament for consideration. At its session on 24 June 1960, the parliament approved the establishment of the specialist College of Physical Culture (CPC) with a two-degree programme for the education of physical education teachers and professors as well as staff needed in physical culture organizations. The organizational and study basis for this course of study was the existing Short-cycle College with its teaching staff (Stepišnik, 1964).

In autumn 1960/61, the first generation enrolled on the CPC. The CPC curriculum was based on the pedagogical and scientific logic of its predecessors and on four subject and expert groups that developed into the departments⁸ (CPC Statute).

In 1975, the CPC became member of the University of Ljubljana and in 1982 on the basis of a quality pedagogic and scientific development, it instigated a procedure for the transition into a faculty and its resulting renaming, i.e., Faculty of Physical Culture. In March 1982, the University Council of the University of Ljubljana permitted the

⁷ The Partizan movement was actually a successor to the Sokol movement. When the physical culture model was abandoned after the Comintern in 1948, the gymnasts again organized themselves independently and at the general meeting in November 1951, they proposed the old name Sokol. The proposal was rejected, the reason being that in central and southern Yugoslavia, the majority of the Sokol members either joined the Chetnik movement or the Yugoslav royal army or supported fight against partisans following the Nazi and Fascist occupation in 1941. On the contrary, in Slovenia, the Sokol movement was the founding group of the Liberation Front. To avoid the post-war confrontation, the name Partizan (i.e., partisan) was proposed, since the Second World War and the partisan liberation of Yugoslavia made the partisan "a symbol of heroism, self-sacrifice, altruism, comradeship and love of one's country and freedom, so that the name of a mass gymnastic organization will imply the greatest possible honour and pride, since it is this organization together with the Veterans Association that should continue with the bright educational traditions ... of the national liberation fight among its members."

⁸ The curriculum consisted of "social sciences" with the subjects the basics of social sciences, history of physical culture, organization of physical culture, general and youth psychology, sports and work psychology, pedagogy, foreign language, building of sports facilities, "biological sciences" with anatomy, physiology, injuries and first aid, biology, hygiene, massage and preventive gymnastics, subjects dealing with theory and methodology of physical education (theory of physical education, methodology with teaching practice, biomechanics of physical exercises, recreation) and practical part containing athletics, sports games, martial arts, elemental games, swimming, gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, dances and gym routines, skiing, mountaineering, rowing.

development into a faculty on the basis of the assessment of the past development and reputation in Yugoslavia as well as in Europe (CPC, 1982). In 1990, the Faculty was renamed the Faculty of Sport.

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Tomaz Pavlin
tomaz.pavlin@fsp.uni-lj.si