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## **A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF JEWISH PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN THE CZECH LANDS**

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### ABSTRACT

The history of physical education of the Jewish minority in Czechoslovakia is an integral and significant part of the history of physical education in the Czech Lands. This paper deals with its formation, gradual development, and closure at the beginning of World War Two; and it is divided into several sections. The first focuses on the ideological basis of Jewish physical education and sport, and the specifics of the Czech Lands environment; and subsequent sections on the very formation and development of Jewish physical education in the Czech Lands up to 1918.

The focal point of this paper is the section on the origin and development of the Union Maccabi in the Czechoslovak Republic, its organizational structure, and international relations, including participation in international Maccabiah games and its violent termination. The paper also includes mention of the failed attempt to establish a Jewish umbrella organization of physical education and sport and the effort to restore Jewish physical education and sport in Czechoslovakia after World War Two.

**Keywords:** Jewish physical education and sports; zionism; Makabi; Bar Kochba; Hagi-bor; functionaries; activities

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### INTRODUCTION

The history of Jewish physical education and sport forms an integral and important part of the history of this phenomenon in the Czech Lands. This remains true even though this promisingly developing phenomenon, co-existing without problems together with the Czech physical and sports movement, was suddenly and irretrievably destroyed 70 years ago by the arrogant oppression of Hitler's Germany. Only a small fraction of the original inhabitants of the Jewish nationality survived the World War Two. Due to this fact, a post-war return to the pre-existing extent of Jewish physical education and sports was vitiated.

In a short post-war episode of good relations of the then Czechoslovakia with a newly rising Jewish state, the elaboration of the history of Jewish physical education and sports in the Czech Lands was not seen as a matter of important contemporary interest, and remained outside the main directions of mutual cooperation. After the sharp cooling of Czechoslovak-Israeli relations, which resulted entirely from the change of Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East, the elaboration of the history of Jewish physical education and sports became a tabooed theme in Czechoslovakia for a long period of time. Even immediately after the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution, this fragment of the history of Czech physical education and sports, which is very interesting from various points of view, remained at the edge of interest. The solution in the Czech Lands was limited to a few occasional contributions. This essay should at least partly contribute to the payment of the debt owed by Czech historiography of physical education and sports to the former citizens of Jewish nationality.

### **The ideological resources of the Jewish physical education and sports and the specification of the milieu in the Czech Lands**

The physical education and sports organizations and associations of the Jewish inhabitants in the most countries, where this phenomenon appeared, derived their activities from the ideological point of view from the program of Zionism. This world-wide Jewish political nationalist movement, which name originated from the name of the mountain Zion in Jerusalem, came into existence at the end of the 19th century. Its main long-term target was the foundation of the independent Jewish state in Palestine.

The Zionist movement in the nowadays sense of the word, started to be formed in the Czech Lands on the basis of the Herzl political Zionism from the eighties of the 19th century. In the difference from the Western Europe Jews, the Jews in the Czech Lands did not live in homogenous society, but as a “third nation in the country of nobody” between Czechs and Germans. Even Theodor Herzl was fully aware of the negative impacts of this situation. In his essay Prague Jews between nations, he criticized strong assimilation tendencies of the local Jews and recommended not to tend to become either Czechs or Germans, but recommended to openly declare their Jewish nationality. The organized Zionist movement in the Czech Lands started to develop more significantly after the Herzl's death in 1904.

During the period before the World War One, the Zionist movement in Czech Lands was mostly limited to the academic surroundings. In front of the Zionist movement stood the association Bar Kochba.<sup>1</sup> The young Zionists from Bar Kochba strengthened the impact on the cultural restoration of the Jewish nation. Those Jews tried to find again their Jewish cultural and national identities through the teachings of Hebrew, Jewish history and literature.

Within the Czech Lands basic difference existed between Zionism in the German border areas and in the Czech and Moravian inlands. It took longer period of time before the larger number of Jews started to join the Zionist organizations in the German

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<sup>1</sup> The name Bar Kochba was derived from the name of the leader of the upbringing of Jews against Romans under the emperor Hadrian in the 2nd century.

surroundings. This could be explained by the fact that in the mostly German milieu, the most middle class Jews considered it unsuitable to stay aside from their German neighbours and pointed on their different origin. In the Czech inland, the Jews from the Czech milieu started to come forward to Zionism quite soon. The Czech-German nationalist disputes could impact sometimes as a catalyst for those Jews, who until recently did not care much about their national consciousness or were persuaded about the possibility of their assimilation with either Czech or German entities. The foundation of Bar Kochba was dominated by the Jews from the Czech milieu and slowly the other Jews from the German milieu joined.

Contrary to the beginnings, the situation changed to a certain measure during the First Republic. The constantly larger number of Jews from the German border areas started to declare the Jewish nationality and at the same time they organized themselves in Jewish associations, what could be explained by the growing nationalism and anti-Semitism in the German border areas. Inlands, on the contrary, the new generation of former Zionists did not feel the urge to organize themselves in the Zionist associations and integrated naturally to the Czech entity.

On the other hand, at the end of the twenties and the thirties, it came to the new growth of the Zionist activities also in the Czech inland, where new youth organizations were founded and the printing of the Zionist magazines written in Czech was raised. A larger number of Czech speaking Zionists resulted from the fact that even at the Jewish national schools the Czech language had the priority as an official state language.

The Czech milieu was favourable to the Jewish activities and this fact was in discrepancy with the situation in the most neighbouring countries and it was proven by the existence of the independent Jewish sports associations in the frame of the Czechoslovak sports associations with the right to the national autonomy and proportional representation. It should be mentioned here that the Jewish Football Association in the Czechoslovak Republic was allowed to administrate inside and outside paperwork in Hebrew and arranged the first issuance of the Czech-Hebrew railway passes for the players organized in this association. It was for the first time in history that the Hebrew was recognized as an official language in Europe (Bureš & Plichta, 1931).

### **The origin and the development of the Jewish physical education and sports in the Czech Lands until 1918**

For the Czech physical education, the founders of the first private physical education institutes in the Czech Lands, Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Seegen, both Jewish nationals, were of great importance. Hirsch was the apprentice in the German Dessau where he was familiarized in detail with the German physical education – Turner education. Upon his return to Prague and since the foundation of the private orthopaedic institute, he became the promoter of the Jahn gymnastics and also of fragments of Swedish systems. Their students became later the founders of the association Sokol (Pick, 1971).

The period between sixties and seventies of the 19th century, the period of the political liberalism was at the peak in Austria. It was enabled by the December Charter. The Charter also involved the life of associations. The key laws for the activities of the associations were the laws on the right to associate and the right to gather (Křesťan, Blodigová, & Bubeník, 2001).

Both laws formed the part of the December Charter from 1867. The law on associations distinguished the types of associations, defined the conditions of the foundation of various associations, and contained the conditions, which should have been fulfilled by associations. If the association did not fill the conditions, could have been officially forbidden. In this sense of liberal political frame, the Jewish associations were founded on the territory of the Czech Lands Subsequently, the founded associations were cultural, neighbouring, scientific, musical and later also physical education and sports. The first Jewish physical education association on the Czech territory was Bar Kochba, founded by students of the Wiener University E. Fried, M. Jerusalem, L. Werner and E. Zweig in the town of Moravian Ostrava in 1893 (Bureš & Plichta, 1931). Some foreign sources declare that the year of foundation of the first Jewish physical education association in Moravian Ostrava was the year of 1899 (Pick, 1971). In 1899, the Jewish gymnastics association also appeared in Moravian Ostrava. The Jewish sports movement constantly proliferated and new associations were founded – in 1901, in the cities of Olomouc and Uherské Hradiště, in 1902 in Kolín and Opava and in 1903 in Prostějov.

Already in 1903, after the 6th Zionist congress in Basel, the Jewish Turner Association was founded, which was the predecessor of the latter founded Makabi. The highest functions were occupied by the representatives of the association Bar Kochba Berlin but the Jewish associations from the Czech Lands were highly represented.

In the second wave of foundation of associations, other towns followed – Privoz in 1905, Znojmo in 1906, Brno in 1907, Prague in 1908, Mikulov and Jihlava in 1910, Hagibor Prague in 1912, Břeclav, Miroslav and Hakoah Olomouc in 1913, Hodonín and Kroměříž in 1914.

The Jewish sports associations in the Czech territory formed the area of Czech and the area of Moravia-Silesia. From the point of view of organization, all those associations belonged under the greater administration unit of the former Austria-Hungary, so called Western Austrian area. This comprised of 23 sports associations with 2500 gymnasts and athletes. The delegates from such a big region met for the first time in December 1912 in Vienna. The program dealt with ideological questions; however the main issue was the preparation of the sports and physical education part of the 11th Zionist congress, planned for 1913 in Vienna.

This general assembly took place from 6th to 8th of December. This congress was also accompanied by the sports and physical education performances. The Czech Lands were represented by the associations from Boskovice, Brno, Břeclav, Miroslav, Moravská Ostrava, Olomouc, Prague and Uherské Hradiště. Various important decisions were adopted at the congress but there were practically implemented as after the termination of the World War One. The most significant issue was the adoption of the common name Makabi.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Makabi means wrestler. The name is derived from Judas Makabiah, the fighter for freedom of Jews in the 2nd century before Christ. The ideological importance of the name of the movement and associations then means the active participation in the fight for freedom and joyful future of the Jewish nation. Makabi is supposed to be a centre of the regeneration movement of the Jewish nation and supposed to be a place of the education to reliability, devotion, manhood and perseverance. In this whole essay, the name of the association Makabi is written with one “k” as it was registered on the official application for the registration to the registrar of associations. Státní ústřední archiv Praha (SUA), fond ministerstva vnitra, sign. D 3111, k. 5073, Svaz Makabi 1924–1946 [Association Makabi 1924–1946].

Even in the eve of the war on the 21st of June 1914, the public physical education and sports performance of the Jewish associations of the Western Austrian region took place in Brno. During the war, most activities of the association life were suppressed.

Shortly before the beginning of the World War One, the most significant Jewish sports club in the Czech Lands was founded and it was the Jewish sports club Hagibor. This club originally formed a physical education and sports section of the political association Poale Cion, which was the movement of the socialist Zionists. In December 1914, when Hagibor was still a part of the association Poale Cion, their members organized the first social gathering in the hotel At Golden Angel in Celetna Street.

Hagibor achieved independence once during the war. Its first elected chairman was Dr. Rudolf Beck, Vice-chairman Oskar Kaminski. Both men kept Hagibor at life due to their personal dedication during the war, which a unique act.

### **The foundation and the development of the Association Makabi in the Czechoslovak Republic in the years 1918–1938**

The numerous activities were performed and developed by other Jewish physical education and sports associations. And on the basis of those fragments, the new association Makabi was founded in Czechoslovakia. It continuously became one of the strongest Makabi organizations in the world and one of the main Jewish associations in Czechoslovakia.

After the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic various associations called Makabi existed. The impulse came from the Prague Makabi to gather all those associations and this new gathering started to publish the bulletin “Makkabiblatte”. The leading representatives contacted other fourteen associations, existing in Czech and Moravia and Silesia. On 29th and 30th of March 1919, 44 delegates of the Jewish gymnast associations and sports clubs gathered in Brno for the 1st general congress of the Jewish physical education associations in the Czechoslovak Republic. The main credit for the organization of the new gathering belonged to Ing. Richard Pacovsky, who also gave ideological speech at the gathering. He also came up with a proposal to divide each organization into districts. The decision on district organizations was adopted at the following congress at Brno in June 1919. This congress was followed by the public gymnast performance and sports competitions. The representatives of 21 clubs decided here to create a provisional Czechoslovak organization Makabi. Unanimously voted leadership was formed by R. Pacovsky, A. Herzog, K. Mauthenerova, V. Mauthner and E. Singerova. The site of the organization was in Prague. The conference also created a Jewish Soccer Association.

Thanks to the activities of the new leadership, the organization was enlarged from 21 associations in 1919 to 31 associations in 1921, which registered 2000 members. The year 1921 was the important turning point in the history of the Czechoslovak and in fact the world movement Makabi. In July the first Czechoslovak district competitions were organized in Brno. The competitions were attended by 650 members and 27 associations. Two months later, at the occasion of the organization of the 12th Zionist congress in Karlovy Vary, the sports competitions were organized between September 1–14 and Czechoslovakia was strongly represented. In this period, the international conference of associations Makabi was held. The delegations from ten countries including Palestine were negotiating on the renewal of the gymnast associations and other sports associations

under the newly registered name “Makabi World Association”. As the chairman of this organization, Heinrich Kuhn from Berlin was appointed. The unification of the associations Makabi was not trouble free and comprised of many continuous steps.

The great importance for the development of the movement Makabi had the sports competitions at the occasion of the thirteenth Zionist congress at Karlovy Vary from 6th to 8th August 1923. This world conference helped not only to the survival, but also to the consolidation of the world sports movement in 18 countries.

The processing of the continuous reunification was implied in Czechoslovakia as well. The new leadership was voted in March 1924. Dr. Robert Heller from Chomutov became a chairman, Viktor Mauthner from Prague a highest commander, Richard Pacovsky was the technical delegate of the movement. The new leadership concentrated on the creation of the firm and unified movement. The following circumstances supported this effort.

The representatives of the Moravian districts gathered in Brno on the 7th of September 1924 and created a new Moravian organization Makabi. Afterwards, the organization “Association Makabi” was established in the Czechoslovak Republic, with the site in Prague.<sup>3</sup> The excerpts from the articles of the Association Makabi:

- § 1. The association is called Association Makabi in the Czechoslovak Republic, in German language – Tschechischer Makabikreis, in Hebrew – Histadrut lehitamlut u lesport bečechoslovakiea. This association is not political. The members of the association are Jewish physical education and sports associations, which adopted the regulations of the following paragraphs. The association resides in Prague.
- § 2. The purpose of the association is to strengthen the physical prowess of the Jewish population and to enhance the moral level so that they can keep lively the Jewish nation and its homeland.<sup>4</sup>

Starting from 1924, the movement in Czechoslovakia grew tremendously. It was composed of 32 sports clubs with 2500 members. The number raised constantly during the following years. The growing organization required the creation of the following districts according to a Moravian example (Pick, 1971):

- Czech district – Prague (Hačibor, Makabi), Chomutov, Karlovy Vary, Liberec, Most, Pardubice, Plzeň, Teplice-Šanov, Ústí nad Labem
- Brno district – Brno (Makabi, Bar Kochba), Boskovice, Břeclav, Jihlava, Mikulov, Podivín, Pohořelice, Znojmo
- Moravská Ostrava district – Moravská Ostrava, Bohumín, Hrušov, Nový Jičín, Olomouc, Vítkovice
- Uherské Hradiště district – Uherské Hradiště, Hodonín, Kroměříž, Kyjov, Prostějov, Strážnice, Uherský Brod
- Slovak district

The movement Maccabi was spread to the smaller towns as well. The main example was for them the organization Sokol. As per the Sokol example and their main specialists,

<sup>3</sup> Státní ústřední archiv Praha (SUA), fond ministerstva vnitra, sign. D 3111, k. 5073, Svaz Makabi 1924–1946 [Association Makabi 1924–1946].

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Augustin Očenášek and Frantisek Trnka, the training hours were introduced, where trainers for various district clubs were trained. In a short period of time, they started to organize the district and regional public performances.

The activities of the Jewish sports clubs were oriented not only to the gymnastics and the basic physical education. In the frame of several years, their activity was enlarged constantly and started to accommodate other sports branches as well. It was especially light athletics, soccer, swimming, ice hockey and other winter sports. For each of these branches, which are stated here, there existed a special officer at the association Makabi. Each sports branch had its firm place in the leadership of the Jewish sports organization.

The new leadership was elected at the regional conference in Brno in 1926. The leading function of the chairman of the movement, which he presided until the end of the First Republic, was appointed Artur Herzog from Prague. He was the leading person which shielded all the regional groups and sports clubs Makabi, as well as from the organizational point of view. As the commander of the association, Max Gelbkopf was appointed. Gelbkopf was originally from Brno. In 1927, his compatriot Otto Hirsch replaced him.

The growing movement meant also the growth of financial expenses, but also further possibilities. Makabi was in the situation when it could introduce new sports branches and to a certain extent without any fear from losing its existence.

The minister of the public health and physical education of that time, Dr. Ludwig Czech, who was also a Jewish national, helped to secure means within the frame of his resources.

The further enlargement of the importance of the Czechoslovak association Makabi occurred after the World Conference Makabi in Vienna in 1927, where he was authorized to lead temporarily the world movement and Dr. Karl Sonnenfeld from Brno was elected to the position of the vice-president of the world organization. This organization associated at that time twenty states. The following conference of the world association, which terminated the so-called transition period, was held in Brno on 27th of May 1928. Dr. Herman Lelewer from Berlin was elected a president and to the role of the vice-president was repeatedly elected Dr. Karel Sonnenfeld.

A couple months later, on 5th and 6th of August, the public competitions took place. They were organized in Brno. At this occasion, for the first time, a visit to a newly founded centre of the young members of Makabi in Blansko, approximately ten kilometres north of Brno, was organized. A largely numbered representation of the Czechoslovak Makabi participated in October of the same year at the competitions to honour the thirteenth anniversary of Berliner Jewish sports club Berlin Bar Kochba. At the end of twenties and thirties, the sport took its leading role over the physical exercises. This was the reason why the officers of Makabi, especially in bigger towns, tried to establish own sports fields not only for the physical exercises and light athletics but also for tennis, soccer, volleyball, basketball and other sports. They were successful especially in the cities of Brno, Prostějov, Moravská Ostrava and Uherské Hradiště. The main effort of those organizations was to create conditions for the education of sports and competitive swimming. Regional and district rallies as well as the sports meetings were not only important sports activities but also welcomed social activities.

Second Czechoslovak regional gymnastics and athletics races took place in Moravian Ostrava in 1929. The Czechoslovak sportsmen appreciated the participation of foreign delegations. There performed the representatives from Belgium, France, Germany, Lithuania, Palestine, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. Approximately 2000 sportsmen participated in races, one third of them was formed by the gymnasts. The performances and competitions took place in front of the audience of about 6000 people.

Parallel with this event, the World Conference Makabi took place in Moravian Ostrava. As the previous conferences, also this one contributed to the further improvement of the situation inside the movement. Makabi had a broad basis especially among Jewish youth. The strongest position had the movement in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Germany. Here the Jewish sportsmen achieved the high performance and participated in the representation of the state. For the further development, both organizational as well as financial, the leadership of the world union was transferred to Berlin. In the forefront was Dr. Hermann Lelewer. The educational aspect was enforced and the movement started to implement the Palestinian concept. Such a far reaching decision was done in Moravská Ostrava as well. This decision was promoted by the Palestinian delegate Josef Yekutieli, who presented his idea to organize the first world Maccabiah.

The participation in the international Makabiah belonged without a doubt to the most important activities of the Czechoslovak Makabi. The first one took place in spring 1932 in Palestine and at this, from the point of view of the Jewish sports history important historical event, over 25,000 Jews participated and they came from the whole world. Among them 500 active sportsmen from 16 countries. We should also add other 2000 sportsmen from the host country. The games should have shown to a certain extent, which level was acquired by the sportsmen from the Palestinian clubs Makabi and if they were able to compete with the foreign competition. Czechoslovakia sent a team of 120 athletes and gymnasts.

The Czech team travelled quite dramatically at the overcrowded Greek boat Attiki from Italian Trieste across Athens to Tel Aviv. The way from Trieste to Greece was a very unpleasant experience due to the stormy sea, sea diseases of participants and too bad food. The organization of the Makabiah did very well and the participants received warm acceptance. Tel Aviv, which had at that time 50,000 inhabitants, was totally under the auspice of the Makabiah. There was enthusiastic atmosphere on the streets. The sports festival was very well organized thanks to the experienced foreign referees and energetic Palestinian organizers. Only a primitively equipped swimming pool harmed excellently prepared swimmers from Czechoslovakia and Austria. The Czechoslovak team was very successful and in the final evaluation gained the 4th place from 13 participating countries, even though it did not have participants in seven sports branches. The absolute success was brought by swimmers and tennis players (Herzog, 1966). The sportsmen returned back to Czechoslovakia after ten days.

The majority of the most important meetings of the world union to the preparation and organization of the first Makabiah in 1932 and especially the second Makabiah in 1935 were organized together with German Makabi circle in the former Czechoslovakia. Only several meetings took place secretly in Berlin.

Due to the enormous success of the summer games and due to fairly big support of the leadership of the world organization Makabi, the winter games took place. They were



organized in February 1933. The host country became Poland, namely the Tatra resort Zakopane. The games took place in despite of the strengthening pressure from the Hitler Germany. Shortly after, the principal members of the leadership of the world organization Makabi moved to London. Dr. Lelewer chaired the organization as he moved to London from Berlin.

The second Maccabiah took place in Palestine from 2nd to 7th April 1935. Even though happenings in Europe headed toward the onset of Nazism, which very sensitively marked the Jewish community not only in Europe, it was achieved that this important sports social event took place. The games were attended by sportsmen from 27 countries. There were 2100 athletes and gymnasts from abroad and 2400 sportsmen from Palestine.

There were not only the gymnastic and athletic competitions on the program. For the first time, the members of the sports club Hatzair from abroad participated. The Palestinian members of this club were 2600 in total. Everyone participated in this great event. The construction of the Olympic village was supported by their member fees and also members from Czechoslovak Makabi.

The world congress of Makabi took place in Brno in August 1935. The events of our Western neighbours overcame the German borders. The world union Makabi was now lead by the chairman Selig Brodetsky from London. In this for Europe very bad time, the world Makabi had over 300,000 members. In Czechoslovakia, 82 clubs with 10,300 members existed.

The second winter Makabiah took place in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, in February 1936. The sports results achieved there brought recognition not only in the Jewish sports circles.

The third and the last regional congress of the Czechoslovak association Makabi took place from the 4th to 6th July 1937 in Slovak town Žilina. It was traditionally accompanied by the public physical exercise performances and various sports competitions. Around 2000 sportsmen from the Czechoslovak Makabi participated in this event. The leadership of the association remained in the hands of Artur Herzog, who presided from 1926. His nearest contributors were Leo Bleyer and then in sequence Richard Pacovsky, Viktor Mauthner and Otto Hirsch.

The anti-Semitic politics of the NSDAP party in Germany lead to the strengthening of the social and cultural lives, but also to the solidarity of the Jewish community in Czechoslovakia. On the basis of the decision of the association Makabi, it was decided to adopt non-participation of the Jewish sportsmen from Czechoslovakia at the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. The Czechoslovak Olympic committee took this decision into consideration and declared that they would not force any Jewish sportsmen to participate. This meant a significant weakening of the Czechoslovak Olympic representation. There were masters of Czechoslovakia and record men in many sports branches among Jewish sportsmen. It affected light athletics, but especially swimming, water polo and water jumps.

In the frame of the association Makabi, a section of youth Makabi-Hacair worked and it was founded in 1926 (Pick, 1971). This movement, composed of approximately 2500 members, took care about the systematically and complex education of youth, not only from the physical point of view, but also ideological. It concentrated on knowledge and independent expression of mind. This ideal of connection of physical prowess and knowledge was not common at many clubs. The members of Makabi-Hacair wanted to actively participate in the construction of Palestine. A part of members moved to Palestine and founded Kibbutz Ra'anana. This act created a chain between the movement and Palestine. The acceptance to this movement was conditioned by the completion of an

examination, which was composed by the way of the spiritual examination as well as the examination from the physical prowess – athletics, swimming, gymnastics, bicycle riding on time and also skiing (Bureš & Plichta, 1931). Especially at gymnastics and athletics, the limits were quite demanding. It was mandatory for men to examine at the bar, uneven bars and horse, then floor exercise, to jump minimum 125 cm high, 450 cm long, to throw weight minimum 7 m, run 100 m under 14 sec and swim 300 m in running or 100 m in standing waters, Women had the same disciplines, but the content of gymnastics was different, limits for jumps and ball throw lower and run and swimming shorter. The firm part was so-called cultural examination about the basis of Makabi, about the history of Jewish Turner movement, about the world association Makabi, about the history and organization of Zionism, Keren-Hajesod, Keren-Kajemeth, Ocar-Makabi, about the history of Palestine, about Judaism and its economic and social charter, about holidays of Jewish nation, about everyday hygiene and about sports, about organization of the respective Makabi circle, Hatikwah and about Jewish leadership (Bureš & Plichta, 1931). The brass badge for the age category 18–34 years, silver badge for category 35–41 years and golden badge for age category over 41 years.

The activity of Makabi was followed on the regular basis by the Jewish press, printed in the then Czechoslovakia, especially in periodicals *Selbstwehr* and Jewish news. The association Makabi in the Czechoslovak Republic was from 1929 a member of the all sports committee of the Czechoslovak Republic and was represented at all meetings by its delegates.

The Czechoslovak legislation dealing with the associations, came from the regulations of the Austrian regional law adopted in 1867, was valid until January 1939. The German law was immediately implied on the territory of the Czechoslovak border regions, which were given up in October 1938 according to the Munich treaty. The majority of Jews, who did not manage to escape from the annexed border regions, were subsequently deported to Nazi concentration camps starting from November 1938. In the remaining Czech-Slovakia, there were at the end of 1938 and especially after the 15th of March 1939, when the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia was forcefully introduced, issued a serious of non-democratic regulations, which very strongly changed and hardened the regional activities, especially at the Jewish associations. The fundamental impact on the inhibition of the life of the Jewish associations had especially the order of the German protector on the Jewish property from the 21st June 1939. All the Jewish property came to arrization according to this order and was entrusted to the newly created Centre for Jewish Immigration. The public regional activities of Jews due to this fact were frozen from autumn 1939, even though some associations managed to secretly organize activities until May 1940. Later on, it was impossible to elude the issued discrimination regulations and orders.

Nevertheless, a part of Jews continued in the sports and physical education activities outside the Jewish associations and visited especially several Prague Czech sports clubs and Sokol. Unfortunately, these activities did not avoid prying of the Czech activists who publicly offended this and proclaimed that some clubs act “inadmissibly” and liberally towards their Jewish fellow citizens. In autumn of 1941, the Prague Paper reported that Jews were involved in sports activities at the playground of the club Slavoj Žižkov.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> Pražský list, 14. 11. 1941, s. 7. [Prague Paper, 14. 11. 1941, p. 7.]

liquidation of Sokol sports club, which was in motion at that time, was also reasoned by the fact that it was under the raising Jewish influence in some of their branches. Sokol officially expelled Jews from their rows long time before that, but it was only a formal act and it was not respected in reality.<sup>6</sup>

The legal cessation of the Jewish associations in the Protectorate was surprisingly long-term issue. This is proven also by the almost two-year lasting official liquidation of the association Makabi. The association applied in December 1939 at the ministry of interior for the official confirmation of the legal continuation of their association. It came to a prolonged negotiations and as lately as on the 29th August 1941, the police directory in Prague sent a letter to the ministry of interior: “We inform that the above named association was erased on the basis of the note from the Zentrale für Jüdische Auswanderung, Prag (Centre for Jewish Immigration, Prague) from the 13th of May 1941, from the regional registrar as expired.”<sup>7</sup>

The activity of the Jewish associations was renewed as late as after the liberation of Czechoslovakia on the basis of the edict of the President of the Republic, who cancelled the orders from the period of restrictions. President Benes renewed the cancelled regional law and activities and entrusted the Jewish religious community in Prague with the renewal of Jewish associations. Their representatives were in many cases forced to declare the disappearance of the association due to the drastic loss of membership during the war years. The renewal of association took place on the 11th December 1945, when the association Makabi wrote to the directory of the national security responsible for the region Prague II that in the sense of the edict of the President of the Republic from the 25th September 1945 they decided to continue in their activity immediately and it came to it on 15th December. Ing. Drucker, Ing. Weiss and E. Diamant had merit in the renewal of the association. The post-war activity of the association Makabi did not last long as it ceased to exist due to the directive reunification of the physical education and sports organizations and was deleted from the regional registrar on 15th of June 1950.

### **The Jewish physical and sports association in the Czechoslovak Republic**

This organization was supposed to be a chain between the national and physically oriented movement Makabi and the Jewish sports represented especially by the Jewish soccer association. The Jewish soccer referees and the Jewish sports clubs successfully developed the activity in Prague (Hagibor<sup>8</sup>, Hakoah<sup>9</sup> and other big towns as well. It was

<sup>6</sup> Národní střed, 28. 10. 1941, s. 5. [National centre, 28. 10. 1941, p. 5.]

<sup>7</sup> Státní ústřední archiv Praha (SUA), fond ministerstva vnitra, sign. D 3111, k. 5073, Svaz Makabi 1924–1946 [Association Makabi 1924–1946].

<sup>8</sup> Hagibor Prague was enlarged gradually to the most important Jewish sports association in the period of the first republic in Czechoslovakia. The club was composed of single, relatively independent sports sections. The football section, then during the World War One the light athletic section, after the war the hockey section (field and ice), the swimming and tennis sections. Hagibor also offered other sports like rowing, chess, and winter sports and also women's sports. The swimming and light athletic sections became the most important sections during the time. Especially in those sports sections, the sportsmen of Hagibor achieved the excellent results. The site of the club was at Celetná street No. 22. The club colors were blue-white. Státní ústřední archiv Praha (SUA), fond zemského úřadu – spolkový katastr, sign. 2 A/5762, k. 535 – Židovský sportovní klub Hagibor 1922 [SUA, Jewish sports club Hagibor 1922].

<sup>9</sup> The constituting meeting of the Jewish sports club Hakoah Prague took place on August 29, 1926. This club was aimed especially to the association ball games, Egon Muller was elected the chairman, the CEO Josef

founded officially on 17th September 1921.<sup>10</sup> The most significant representatives were the chairman Dr. Evzen Stern and two vice-chairmen Artur Herzog and Evzen Justic. The last one was at the same time the chairman of the Jewish football association. The excerpts from the articles of the Jewish physical education and sports community in the Czechoslovak Republic say:

- § 1. The association is named in Hebrew *Aguda lehitamlut u lesport becechoslovakea*, in Czech the Jewish physical education and sports community in the Czechoslovak Republic and in German *Jüdische Turn- und Sportgemeinde in der Tschechoslowakische Republik*. The site is in Prague.
- § 2. The purpose of the community is the reunification of all Jewish sports and physical education associations, promotion of the constant physical education of the Jewish people and the encouragement of the national self-confidence.

The Jewish physical education and sports community never started to fulfil its proposed role of the organization to arch over the Jewish physical education and sports in Czechoslovakia and after several years, negotiations on its dismissal took place. The decision on dismissal was adopted by the general assembly, which took place in Brno on the 29th of August 1927. Further, its vice-chairman Arthur Herzog announced to the police directory in Prague that the association was voluntarily dismissed on the 8th of November 1927. According to the attached minutes, the dismissal of the community was approved unanimously. A message on the dismissal of the community was published in the Official List on the 24 November 1927. Later, this decision was impeached by several members, as the general assembly was not attended by three quarters of members according to articles. After the further negotiations, the community stopped to exist in fact and officially in 1928. This clearly shows that the original high-spirited plans on the creation of the official chain among national oriented physical education movements and rather non-political Jewish sports did not come to fulfilment and both branches of the Jewish physical education and sports in Czechoslovakia were connected only informally.

## CONCLUSION

Although the full and free development of Jewish physical education in our country presents only a relatively short period, it makes an integral part of the history of this important social phenomenon. In general it is possible to say, that the Czech environment was extremely friendly to Jewish activities, which became apparent especially in contrast to the situation in most neighbouring countries. The first Jewish gym club in the Czech

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Steiner, cashier Hynek Manler and the head of the football section Josef Haudniczky. The provincial political administration recommended to the police directory on September 25, 1926, to register the association Hakoah Prague to its association registrar. According to the approved charter, it's was the association non-political, was not allowed to organize political activities or participated in the political activities. The sign of the association was the five-pointed David star of the golden color. Státní ústřední archiv Praha (SUA), fond zemského úřadu – spolkový katastr, sign. 2 A/467, k. 721 – Sportovní klub Hakoah 1926 [Sports club Hakoah 1926].

<sup>10</sup> Státní ústřední archiv Praha (SUA), fond ministerstva vnitra, sign. 6/59/20, k. 1040 – Židovská tělocvičná a sportovní obec 1921–1928 [Jewish physical education and sports community 1921–1928].

Lands was founded as early as in 1893. More clubs began to be created and 20 clubs were set up to the World War One. Even more favourable situation for formation and activity of the Jewish gym clubs came after the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Immediately after its formation a provisional organization and in 1924 definitive one was founded – Maccabi Association in Czechoslovakia. It became one of the important parts of World Maccabi organization. Among the most significant activities of the Czechoslovak Maccabi belonged unquestionably participation in international Makabiah games, where the Czechoslovak delegations were many times successful.

The situation for Jewish associations in Czechoslovakia changed radically in October 1938, and especially after 15th March, 1939 when they began to be restricted in their activities and discriminated against in every way. Their official termination took place in 1941, when their factual activity did not exist anyway.

An attempt to restore Jewish associations came about after 1945, but in most cases closure of a club was stated because of radical decrease of membership during the war years. The directive unification of physical education and sports organizations after 1948 marked the definitive end to the existence of Jewish physical education in Czechoslovakia.

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