

## International Relations of Sokol Brno I Association between 1862 and 1914

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*This paper describes the history of the Sokol organisation in Brno, especially the international outreach of Sokol Brno I, and charts the beginning of the national emancipation movement and the organisation's growing ability to promote its own policies in the framework of wider European relations. The paper analyses the conditions for the development of foreign ties, the growing confidence of the Sokol movement and its ideas.*

Key words: *Gymnastic association Sokol Brno I; Moravia; the Sokol movement*

Czechs started their “own national foreign policy” during the revolutionary year of 1848. At that time, it extended to the region of central and eastern Europe. This ambition was curtailed by formidable obstacles presented by the impending unification of Germany in the West and the conservative Russian Empire in the East. The Czechs thus looked for greater security within a reborn Habsburg monarchy. When the Bohemian Sokol Community was founded in Prague on 24 March 1889, one of its first trips abroad led to France, where a Sokol delegation visited the 1889 World's Fair in Paris, without any particular aims. Three years later, a Sokol delegation left for Nancy with much greater confidence and expectations.<sup>1</sup> The Brno association did not participate, however, due to the different conditions for establishing Czech-language gymnastics associations in Bohemia and Moravia. The notes from the trip came to Brno much later through the widow of the Rector of Masaryk University.<sup>2</sup> Sokol was not the only sports organisation pursuing gymnastic and educational activities – other

<sup>1</sup> Kolář F. (1998). Sokolové – “průkopníci česko-francouzského přátelství”. In Waic M. *Sokol, jeho vznik, vývoj a význam*. Praha, pp. 5–9.

<sup>2</sup> Brno City Archives (AMB), collection R 77, inventory No. 1523, sign. Vp 5, Výprava Sokolstva do Francie 1889.

sports/gymnastic organisations in Bohemia and Moravia were also trying to build international ties.

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Literary historian Arne Novák defined three main pillars of the Sokol ideology as laid down by Tyrš: “romantic nationalism of the German Turnverein”,<sup>3</sup> decent and harmonious ideal of Greek kalokagathia” and “patriotic liberalism”. The German Turnverein (Turner) movement<sup>4</sup> was founded by Pastor Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (a putative descendant of Czech emigrés) and since it was widely considered to be a champion of democracy, it became the model for Sokol.<sup>5</sup>

Jindřich Fügner saw Turner exercises during some of the festivities organised in the early 1860s in Coburg, Berlin or Leipzig. The first German sports and tourist clubs, the fencing club in Hannover, Regatta in Hannover, the Austrian Alpenverein and the gymnastic magazine *Deutsche Turnzeitung* all served as inspiration to the Sokol movement. At the beginning, Miroslav Tyrš did not oppose mutual visits; he himself often participated in public gymnastic exercises of the Turnverein in Prague. Shortly after the establishment of Sokol Prague, he invited Turnverein representatives from Berlin and Leipzig to visit the Sokol gymnasium.<sup>6</sup>

Classical heritage became a natural part of Czech National Revival, whose new humanism adopted the Greek ideal of harmony of reason, emotion and will. This revival of Classical heritage also carried the seeds of future Czech civic society. Miroslav Tyrš built on this element by introducing the idea of building a mass movement to teach citizens to live in freedom. Indeed, this was, according to the revivalists, a necessary requirement for individuals to develop their best mental and physical potential for their own good and good of the whole community.<sup>7</sup>

In the same period when the Classical notion of kalokagathia, as expanded on by Miroslav Tyrš, laid the foundation of social life associated with the future of the Czech state, the first gymnastic associations began to appear as part of a pluralist systems of gymnastics and sports.<sup>8</sup> The founding of the Czech gymnastic association named Sokol in Prague (called Gymnastics Association of Prague before 1864) on 16 February 1862 thus marked the beginning of organised sports

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<sup>3</sup> The German nationalism, born from the resistance against the French occupation during the Napoleonic Wars, became a role model for the Czech National Revival.

<sup>4</sup> For this reason, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk originally criticised the movement as “a purely German idea transplanted to the Czech lands from Germany and embellished by Czech national eclecticism”.

<sup>5</sup> Sak R. (2012). *Miroslav Tyrš: sokol, myslitel, výtvarný kritik*. Praha, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> Strachová M. (2013). *Sport a Český svaz tělesné výchovy po roce 1989*. Brno, p. 18.

in Bohemia. In the same general period, a Moravian gymnastic association was founded in Brno; however, due to administrative delays, its statute was only approved on 2 December 1862. It is of note that organised gymnastics in Brno started two months earlier than in Prague.<sup>9</sup>

The effort to establish gymnastics in Brno was spearheaded by Jan Helcelet, whose personal credo of “beauty, truth and freedom” overlapped with the Sokol ideas. As a physician, Helcelet paid equal attention to physical and mental health throughout his whole life. Nevertheless, he founded the association for different reasons. The two main objectives of the Brno association consisted in educating the Moravian teachers of physical education to support sports and gymnastics throughout the country and cultivating physical education as a means to maintain the individual's health and physical fitness. Hence, Jan Helcelet's notions of organised gymnastic association were not based on a single idea as was the case of Sokol Prague. The association in Brno did not have a unified idea behind it,<sup>10</sup> nevertheless, it did adhere to Greek kalokagathia and stood in opposition to Christian asceticism.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the Brno association was facing problems with inadequate premises and lack of equipment. From its founding to spring 1863, it used the premises of the Hergsell Gymnastics Institute; no exercises were organised in the summer.<sup>12</sup> The association shortly became active again in winter 1863–1864, but ceased its activities in the spring.

The ideological basis of the association was only built and specified later alongside the growing national movement. Sokol ideas were for the first time reflected in its name: in 1864, the Brno gymnastic association adopted the name Sokol from its counterpart in Prague. This was done with the aim of boosting the sense of solidarity among members of the Sokol movement in the Czech lands. However, the association's long term problems – hostility of Brno authorities, financial difficulties, lack of premises and scarce membership<sup>13</sup> – persisted and the association was forced to close down in January 1867.

<sup>9</sup> The first gymnastic exercises of Sokol Brno were held on 15 January 1862. The statute was approved only on 2 December 1862, which is why this date is considered to be the founding date of the association. Zapletal V. *Počátky Sokola brněnského 1862–1871*. In Zapletal V. – Kožík F. (1948). *Dějiny Sokola Brno I, 1862–1887*. Brno, pp. 18–22; Cf. Waic M. *Tělovýchova a sport*. p. 26; Červená R. *Počátky brněnského Sokola*. p. 217–257. For up-to-date history of the association see: Strachová M. (2020). *Dějiny Sokola Brno I*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

<sup>10</sup> This would be documented by leaving out Article 9 on the symbol of the Prague association, i.e. a falcon in flight. Zapletal V. *Počátky Sokola brněnského 1862–1871*. In Zapletal V. – Kožík F. (1948). *Dějiny Sokola Brno I*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Kabelík J. (1910). *Korespondence a zápisky Jana Helceleta*. Brno, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> For more details on the premises of the Brno association see Červená R. (2008). *Výbudování stadionu Sokola Brno I. Sokolské tělocvičny v letech 1862–1929*. BMD 21, p. 181–205.

<sup>13</sup> The already low demand for exercise was further weakened by the cholera outbreak brought to Brno during the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. The first cases of cholera appeared in

It was the political situation that led the Czechs to participate in national awareness events and movements.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the conditions in Brno were suitable thanks to the opening of Slovanské gymnázium (*Slavic Grammar School*) which brought Czech-speaking youth to the city. A new public assembly law had also been adopted.<sup>15</sup> Everything seemed to indicate that the time was right to re-establish the gymnastic association on newer, firmer ideological foundations. The leading figure of the re-established Sokol Brno was Ctibor Helcelet, the son of Jan Helcelet, who had been in touch with the growing idea of the Brno association from its inception. He also had experience obtained in the Prague association.<sup>16</sup> Ctibor Helcelet could not get to Brno earlier since he started his studies of law in Krakow, Poland, on 15 April 1866. After obtaining his degree from the Faculty of Law on 27 June 1867, he took up the position of court clerk in Těšín; however, he resigned his office after a year of service. He then joined the Alois Pražák's law office in Brno as a trainee attorney-at-law. At the same time, when Ctibor Helcelet came to Brno the Turners were preparing to open a new gymnasium near Špilberk.<sup>17</sup> Ctibor Helcelet later tried to apply the experience gained in Sokol Prague in Brno.

However, the situation still was not easy for the Czech gymnastic association since the events of 1863–1867 made the German inhabitants of Brno more suspicious of outward manifestations of Czech patriotism.<sup>18</sup> Despite the difficulties, the gymnastic association was re-established in Brno on 23 September 1868 when its statute was approved and the association adopted the name Tělocvičná jednota Sokol v Brně – Sokol Gymnastic Association in Brno. Its first gymnasium was created in the basement of Florián Zedník's house. Only then, with the arrival of Ctibor Helcelet, the right conditions arose to enable the local Sokol organisation to push for its own independent policy.

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Komárov and the epidemic had spread around the whole city by 18 July. The total of 2,767 persons in Brno contracted the disease, of which 1,436 died.

<sup>14</sup> Malíř J. K počátkům národních sporů v Brně v letech 1863–1867: od rakouského patriotismu k nacionalismu. In Jordánková H. (2016). *Alis volat propriis*: sborník příspěvků k životnímu jubileu Ludmily Sulitkové. Brno, p. 475.

<sup>15</sup> Act No. 135/1867 of the Imperial Collection of Laws, on the right of assembly.

<sup>16</sup> He joined Sokol Prague already in November 1862. His activities were closely observed by his father Jan Helcelet. By the end of 1863, Ctibor Helcelet became a trainer of gymnastics and fencing. "We hereby certify that brother Ctibor Helcelet has taught gymnastics and fencing in the Sokol Prague association and in doing so has demonstrated extraordinary enthusiasm for and knowledge of all fields of gymnastics. For this reason, we sincerely recommend him to our brothers in Brno." Groh V. – Jandásek L. – Krejčí A. (1940). *Letters of Dr. Miroslav Tyrš to Ctibor Helcelet*. Praha, No. IV., p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> For more on Turnhalle, see Kroupa J. (2015). *Dějiny Brna* 7. Uměleckohistorické památky, historické jádro, Brno, pp. 640–641.

<sup>18</sup> Malíř J. K počátkům národních sporů. In Jordánková H. (2016). *Alis volat propriis*. p. 476.

The main shortcoming preventing the association from pursuing its own interests was the lack of an organisational framework of the Sokol associations. The first centralising attempts led to the organisation of regional assemblies already in 1884, which adopted the template created by the German Turners. In 1871, the Association of Sokol Administrative Districts was formed to unite all Moravian associations under one roof. Since 1872, the Moravian Association of Sokol Administrative Districts (*Sokolská župní jednota Moravská*) was not able to function due to persecution by the authorities.<sup>19</sup> An attempt to change the situation took place on 17 September 1879 when its representatives met in Brno (12 people representing 7 associations). Nevertheless, the association was forced to remain inactive for 6 more years. The political thaw of the 1880s allowed the representatives of three associations (in Brno, Prostějov and Vyškov) to reactivate regional activities on 25 May 1885.<sup>20</sup> However, a higher organisational component was still missing. In Bohemia, independent foreign outreach was enabled by the aforementioned formation of the Bohemian Sokol Community on 24 March 1889. The same thing only happened in Moravia at the general meeting of 4 October 1891 in Prostějov, where the decision was made to form the Moravian-Silesian Sokol Community (MSSC). The statute, however, had to be redrafted twice before the Austrian Imperial and Royal Ministry of the Interior accepted it by its decree No. 16 666 of 8 August 1892, thereby permitting the transformation of the Moravian Association of Sokol Administrative Districts in Brno. In 1892, it was thus possible to form the highest organisational component in Moravia; the mayor's residence in Brno became its seat. However, the newly adopted statute differed significantly from the statute of the Bohemian Sokol Community (BSC). The mission of MSSC was to cultivate gymnastics by fostering a closer union and mutual support among the individual associations. It is not surprising that the wording of the statute was not well received by the BSC which perceived it as a separatist project aimed at hindering the union of all Czech-language Sokol communities in the Czech lands.<sup>21</sup> In 1898, when BSC attempted to centralise all Sokol associations in the Czech lands under its administration, two opposite groups formed in Moravia. One favoured the merger, the other wanted to wait and see. These tendencies first clearly manifested in 1903 when the MSSC board voted to dissolve itself and merge with BSC, but the committee opposed the decision. The members of the committee

<sup>19</sup> The Lower Austrian administrative district was only allowed to hold its founding general meeting on 18 March 1873.

<sup>20</sup> Kožík F. Do prvního pětadvacetiletí 1872–1887. In Zapletal V. – Kožík F. (1948). *Dějiny Sokola*, pp. 124–125, 185–186.

<sup>21</sup> AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 979, Mašek F. (1909). *Snahy o zřízení ústrojí českého sokolstva*. Praha, pp. 64–65.

believed in the importance of Brno as the centre of Sokol activities in Moravia.<sup>22</sup> The pressure on MSSC from BSC finally led to the resolution whereby MSSC recommended that the Moravian administrative districts join the BSC. However, it also issued a statement that reflected its scepticism about the process: “Nevertheless, we continue to believe that dissolving the current regional Sokol organisations and centralising Sokol administration is not in the interest of the Sokol movement and we reserve the right to promote our opinion in the framework of BSC.”<sup>23</sup> Regardless of this attitude, all Sokol administrative districts (called *župa(s)* in Czech) in Moravia became part of BSC as of 1904.<sup>24</sup> During the entire existence of the Brno association, foreign delegations continued to visit Moravia. In 1899, there were two such visits: one by the Lower Austrian administrative district to Lednice and the other visit by Bohemian associations headed for Třebíč and Macocha.<sup>25</sup>

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As in Prague, where the founders of Sokol were inspired by foreign examples and did not oppose mutual visits between competing, mainly German associations, Brno representatives, too, were taking note of positive role models regardless of their origin.<sup>26</sup> As it later turned out, the relationship with the German citizens of Brno would be rather difficult. Despite initial friendly contacts, both national communities were forming their own separate clubs and administrative districts. Over time, this process increased mutual animosities.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, in the whole period the interest in the abroad was high in Brno, which is documented also by the subscriptions to foreign periodicals and newspapers used for the education of the association's

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<sup>22</sup> “. . . the statute of the Bohemian Sokol Community does not reflect the needs of Sokols in Moravia. The statute betrays excessive centralism and absolutism; Brno should be the centre of the Sokol movement in Moravia” AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 979, Mašek F. (1909). *Snahy o zřízení ústrojí českého sokolstva*, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 979, Mašek F. (1909). *Snahy o zřízení ústrojí českého sokolstva*. p. 71.

<sup>24</sup> The Haná administrative district was an exception and only joined on 13 May 1906.

<sup>25</sup> AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 1357, sign. Pp 24/2, Výroční zprávy a jubilejní tiskoviny 1886–1905, Výroční zpráva za správní rok 1899.

<sup>26</sup> Ctibor Helcelet studied French in Porrentruy, Switzerland, at the request of his father, Jan Helcelet. “Once again, I am writing to you in Czech so that you do not forget the language . . . It is important to learn and know French, in writing and in speech – I hear it is worth 20,000 gold pieces; . . . do not neglect your German and the German style either.” Helcelet J. (1932). *Father's letters to his son*. Brno, pp. 21–25. Cf. Sak R. (2012). *Miroslav Tyrš: sokol, myslitel, výtvarný kritik*. Praha, p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Waic M. (2008). *Německé tělovýchovné a sportovní spolky v českých zemích a Československu*. Praha, p. 38.

members.<sup>28</sup> Members of the Brno association first officially met in uniforms with Prague Sokols at the christening ceremony of the flag of the “Moravan” Choir in Kroměříž in August 1865.<sup>29</sup> In May 1867, the attention shifted to abroad. At that point, Czech representatives embarked on their demonstrative journey to Moscow and members of the Brno association had high, unrealistic hopes for the trip. After the visit, the Governor of Moravia Adolf von Poche noted that Pan-Slavism had become widespread in the society.<sup>30</sup> The idea of Slavic unity was manifested not only with regard to Tsarist Russia, but increasingly also in relation to the South Slavic nations and their struggle for national liberation. The Brno association's ties are best documented by its public events – either in the form of various ceremonies and festivities or in the form of public gymnastic exercises. One such event took place from 2 to 4 July 1887 when the Brno association was celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment with the participation of delegations from the USA,<sup>31</sup> Bohemia and Vienna. The public gymnastic exercise to celebrate the occasion took place in Brejch's garden in Nová street.<sup>32</sup> The gymnastic skills of Jindřich Reegr from the Vienna association attracted most attention.<sup>33</sup> *Moravská orlice* (the Moravian Eagle, a newspaper) reported on the event and its importance.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The association had subscribed to, inter alia, *Turnzeitung* (Leipzig) since 1870. In 1871, it also subscribed to *Vlast* (Dresden) and *Neue Jahrbücher für Turnkunst*. In 1886 it took *Sokol americký*, *Le Gymnaste*, *Przewodnik gimnastyczny*, *Zeitschrift für das österreichische Turnwesen*, and *Jahrbuch der deutschen Turnkunst*. MZA, coll. G 106, card 224, *Výroční zprávy Brno I 1869–1947*; Janovský O. *O naší vzdělávací činnosti v minulém století. Zprávy Sokola Brno I. Měsíční zpravodaj Tělocvičné jednoty Sokol Brno I. 9, 1932, Vol. 8, p. 178–179.*

<sup>29</sup> AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 1119, *Sborník sokolský*, ed. Tyrš M. – Čermák F. (1968). Praha, pp. 140–141.

<sup>30</sup> For more details, see Malíř J. *K počátkům národních sporů v Brně v letech 1863–1867: od rakouského patriotismu k nacionalismu*. In Jordánková H. (2016). *Alis volat propriis*: pp. 465–477.

<sup>31</sup> Josef Vladimír Dostál, director of Tyrš gymnastic association in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Rudolf Hurt of Chicago; Štěpán Kostlán of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Rose of San Francisco, California; Karel Stuhlík of Chicago. Kožík F. *Do prvního pětadvaceti let 1872–1887*. in: Zapletal V. – Kožík F. (1948). *Dějiny Sokola Brno I.* p. 183. The USA was among the first countries where Czech Sokol clubs successfully established themselves. For more details, see Ruffini M. – Sivulka J. (2005). *Die historische Entwicklung der Sokolbewegung in Böhmen und Mähren im 19. und in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts in Bezug auf das deutsche Turnen. Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde durch den Promotionsausschuss Dr. phil. der Universität Bremen*. Bremen, pp. 121–122.

<sup>32</sup> Moravian Land Archives (MZA), coll. G 106, card 224, *Výroční zprávy Brno I. 1869–1947*, Zezula J. *Život Sokola Brno I. v tělocvičnách*. In *Vlastní silou!* (1929). Brno, pp. 29–31.

<sup>33</sup> MZA, coll. G 106, card 224, *Výroční zprávy Brno I. 1869–1947*, Novotný J. *Naše oslavy. Zprávy Sokola Brno I. Měsíční zpravodaj Tělocvičné jednoty Sokol Brno I. 9, 1932, Vol. 8, pp. 166–167.*

<sup>34</sup> *Jubilejní slavnost Sokola brněnského, Moravská orlice*, Vol. 25, No. 150, 05. 07. 1887, p. 2.

Another proof of external relations consists in the public appearances of members of the Brno association abroad, or appearances of foreign delegations in Brno.<sup>35</sup> Shortly after its founding, in summer 1893, MSSC decided to organise a gathering of Sokols in Brno, the *slet*. The Brno association was exclusively responsible for organising the event. However, the *slet* did not take place due to the official ban and it is thus impossible to determine which foreign delegations would have attended. It is possible that the association had got the inspiration to organise the *slet* from abroad, since already in 1892 the Brno association was represented on a *slet* in Lviv, then a Polish city, by a team made up of: Gotthard Bič, Jan Dvořák, Jaroslav Elgart, Václav Stočes and Anton Walter; the representation was headed by Antonín Hyánek.<sup>36</sup> Said *slet* took place on 5 June 1892 under the auspices of Sokol Lviv in the Kiliňského park (now Stryjski park).<sup>37</sup>

The early setback did not mean that the association resigned on the idea to organise its own Sokol *slet*. Therefore, after the first setback, the Brno association attempted to organise its first Sokol *slet* on 1 July 1894); the extensive preparations included provisions for the participants, including from abroad. For this reason, the Brno association contacted other affiliated associations in Bohemia, Slovenia, Poland and Lower Austria. At the last moment, when the *slet* organisation was in full swing, the event was banned by the Imperial and Royal Police Directorate in Brno. The complaint against the procedure filed by the association was completely ignored.<sup>38</sup> The association did not resign on public appearances and used the opportunity to at least appear at the event organised by the Lower Austrian administrative district in Vienna.

When the association was celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1902, it combined it with a public appearance of the Rastislav administrative district. Aside from greetings from Bohemia and Poland, the guests also included Salvator Albancsi, director of Zadar *pedagogium*, with his wife. The public event was supposed to at least partially substitute for the as-of-then unrealised Sokol *slet* in Brno.<sup>39</sup> The close ties to Poland continued and representatives of Brno were not missing from the 4<sup>th</sup> Polish *slet* in 1903. According to sources, the Brno association sent five

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<sup>35</sup> Numerous publications document the interest in South Slavic countries, Poland and Lower Austria. AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 1356, Výroční zprávy a jubilejní tiskoviny 1869–1884.

<sup>36</sup> AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 1357, sign. Pp 24/2, Výroční zprávy a jubilejní tiskoviny 1886–1905, Výroční zpráva za správní rok 1892.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., inv. No. 1343, Památník IV. sletu Sokolstva Polského ve Lvově r. 1903, Lviv 1904, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., inv. No. 1357, sign. Pp 24/2, Výroční zprávy a jubilejní tiskoviny 1886–1905, Výroční zpráva za správní rok 1894.

<sup>39</sup> Slet sokolský župy Rastislavovy v Brně na paměť 40letého jubilea Sokola Brněnského. *Moravská orlice*, Vol. 40, Issue 178, 5 August 1902, p. 2. The officials noted in the annual report: “We would wish nothing more than for Brno, like the royal city of Prague, to also host a Sokol *slet*.” Ibid., Výroční zpráva za správní rok 1902, p. 11.



athletes to Lviv for the *slet*. However, the same source indicates that the association did not remember the *slet* fondly, despite the fact that František Pouchlý came up second in the category of individuals and the Polish organisers welcomed the team warmly.<sup>40</sup> The association felt harmed by the loss of the third place in the category of teams, which resulted from annulling points awarded to Jan Kříž. The letter sent in 1903 by the MSSC to the Polish Association where it requested remedy or explanation was left unanswered.

At the beginning of 1904, an elite team was selected to represent the association at the *slet* in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The team consisted of Jan Foltýn, František Kříž, Jan Kříž, Jan Mojžíš, František Pouchlý and Josef Zezula, with And. Černocký as substitute, and trained almost daily. The last of said members was also appointed as deputy chief. Since the trip was rather expensive, the administrative committee decided to pay for it. The selected team ended up third among 23 competing teams.<sup>41</sup>

Two years later, in 1906, Sokol Brno I did not actively participate in the *slet* held in Zagreb, Croatia. Nevertheless, the administrative district was represented by Peregrin, Fiša, Josef Fleischer and Karel Hlavica. The association noted its absence caused by the change of the date of the *slet* and a lack of gymnasts who were serving in the military at the time.<sup>42</sup> The already united Czech Sokol Community took part in a parade held on 2 September where members appeared together with their Croatian colleagues.<sup>43</sup> The Brno association returned to Zagreb in 1911 when the Union of Slavs met at the *slet*. Sokol Brno I was represented by Peregrin Fiša.<sup>44</sup> Aside from this event, representatives of the association met with the delegation of the CSC which visited Olomouc and Uherské Hradiště from 3–5 June.<sup>45</sup> In addition, on 22 February 1911, Josef Seidl participated on behalf of the Brno association at a qualification race in Prague held for the purpose of assembling a team for an international competition in Turin. After returning from Turin, he helped with the training of more complicated

<sup>40</sup> Entuzjastycznie przyjmowani przez polskie społeczeństwo, z którym zespalają ich oddawna węzły ściślej przyjaźni narodowej i sokolej. [...] Lwów znał i pamiętał Czechów jeszcze z pierwszego Złotu w r. 1892. Fama o nich przetrwała aż do Złotu IV., to też każdy pragnął szczerze widzieć Czechów, ćwiczących na przyrządach. For the course of the *slet*, see AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 1343, *Památník IV. sletu Sokolstva Polského ve Lvově r. 1903*. Lwów, 1904, pp. 50, 85, 116–117.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., inv. No. 1357, sign. Pp 24/2, Výroční zprávy a jubilejní tiskoviny 1886–1905, Výroční zpráva za správní rok 1904, pp. 6–7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., Výroční zpráva za správní rok 1906, pp. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., inv. No. 1349, První hrvatski svesokolski slet v Zagrebu 1906.

<sup>44</sup> AMB, coll. R 77, inv. No. 1390, Slet Sokolstva v Zagrebu 1911, pp. 79–82.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., inv. No. 1358, Upomínkový list na zájezd České obce sokolské na Moravu 1911.

figures using the horizontal bar, still rings, parallel bars and the vaulting horse.<sup>46</sup> Representatives of Sokol Brno also met with foreign guests at Sokol *slets* in Prague.<sup>47</sup> Friendly relations with the Austrian Sokol are documented by visits and mutual transfers of members or the fact that some members of the Brno association lived in Vienna. The extraordinarily warm relations manifested again in 1913 during the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vienna association.<sup>48</sup>

The ill-fated *slet* of the Czech Sokol Community held in Brno on 27 to 28 June 1914<sup>49</sup> under the auspices of the municipal councils of Královo Pole, Husovice and the municipal assemblies of Židenice and Žabovřesky on the premises of the former military training ground in Královo pole stands out due to its historical importance. The *slet* was interrupted by a tragedy – the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, in Sarajevo in Bosnia. The event marked a violent end to the promising and developing ties with Serbia. The dramatic events that followed the *slet* were long remembered by the participants.<sup>50</sup> The subsequent participation of Sokols in the newly formed Czechoslovak Legion during World War I captures the definition of war as a continuation of politics by other, non-peaceful means.<sup>51</sup>

Generally speaking, up until the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, Sokol *slets* and trips abroad contributed to the promotion of Sokol ideas and of Slavic nations within the Habsburg empire themselves, especially the Moravians. Czechoslovakia's independence did not change the situation, but enabled further

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., inv. No. 1358, sign. Pp 24/2, Výroční zprávy a jubilejní tiskoviny 1906–1912, Výroční zpráva za správní rok 1911.

<sup>47</sup> At the Sokol slets in Prague, Sokol Brno I officials could meet their foreign colleagues six times before the outbreak of World War I: in 1882, 1891, 1895, 1901, 1907 and 1912. Kozáková Z. (1994). *Sokolské slety: 1882–1948*. Praha; Cf. *Všesokolské slety*, Praha 1938.

<sup>48</sup> "... in the name of our association, I thank you for the remarks at the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary sent by your chief; we also thank the gymnasts and the two brothers (Kříž and Jos. Secell) who we could welcome here. Their brotherly love shall be fondly remembered by us all..." AMB, fund R 77, Inv. No. 709, File 109, Printed Documents related to Sokol 1914, Vienna Letter XV, no date. Of the notable transfers, there were e.g. František Hlaváček of the Vienna association who came to Brno in 1904. MB, fund R 77, Inv. No. 1357, sign. Pp 24/2, Annual Reports and Anniversary Prints 1886–1905, Annual Report for 1904.

<sup>49</sup> The date was set to 28 and 29 June 1914, see Čejka J. Sokolský slet v Brně roku 1914. In *Forum Brunense*, Brno 1994, p. 140; Ibid., Brněnský sokolský slet roku 1914. In *První světová válka a česká společnost*. Brno, 1994, p. 62.

<sup>50</sup> Vzpomínka srbského sokola na brněnský slet, *Lidové noviny*, Vol. 42, Issue 313, 23 June 1934, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Der Krieg ist eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln. Clausewitz Carl von (2004). *Vom Kriege*, Erfstadt.

recognition of these international ties by granting national distinctions and honours to leading representatives of foreign delegations.<sup>52</sup>

In the same period, the competing Orel (*Eagle*) sports organisation (whose relations with Sokol ran the gamut from ideological opposition to a certain degree of respectful tolerance) also recognised the importance of international ties. Similarly to the Sokol association, the Orel branch in Brno also focused on building links with South Slavic nations. It is thus of little surprise that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Moravian Orel *slet* in Kroměříž, which took place on 11 August 1912, also welcomed delegations of Slovenian and Croatian Orel associations. The ties the Brno Sokol association had in the United States largely due to Czech expatriates (mostly economic migrants) were mirrored by Catholic Czech-Americans as well. For this reason, the Orel *slet* was also attended by representatives of the Catholic Sokol from the US. The next year, Orel – encouraged by its previous successes – organised a large trip to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. It should be noted that representatives of the Brno Sokol association often travelled to the same destinations.<sup>53</sup>

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The Andrassy Note sent by the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister to President Wilson on 28 October 1918 was perceived by the public as an instrument of surrender of Austria-Hungary. The Moravian public learnt of the situation only on the next day, 29 October 1918. People started gathering in the streets of the Moravian capital, where most patriots assembled at Rudolfská (now Česká) street near the Lidové noviny newspaper offices. The declaration of independence of the Czechoslovak Republic meant a radical change in circumstances, not only for the Sokol movement. Encouraged by its success, Sokol gained self-confidence and presented itself as not just Czech, but a Slavic movement as well. Contacts with South Slavic countries were strengthened by long-term co-operation and engagement. Very successful representation (it is of note that the first Czechoslovak gold medal was won by member of Sokol Brno I)<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> E.g. the Order of the White Lion was awarded to: Lazar Car, chairman of the Yugoslav Sokol organisation (1926, Yugoslavia); delegates at the 8<sup>th</sup> Sokol *slet* in Prague in 1926: Miroslav Ambrožić (1927, Yugoslavia) and Alfred Louis Berthemey (1927, France); Charles Cazalet, president of the French Gymnastic Union (1927, France); delegates at the Prague Sokol *slet* of 1932: Ivan Bajželj (1933, Yugoslavia) and Władysław Belina-Prażmowski (1933, Poland) – see the State Decorations Holders Lists maintained by the Office of the President of the Czech Republic at <<https://www.prazskyhradarchiv.cz/cs/archivkpr/statni-vyznamenani/seznamy-nositelu-statnich-vyznamenani>>, retrieved on: 2019-06-17.

<sup>53</sup> Papež J. K pochopení smyslu Orla slouží jeho dějiny. In *Orel*, Issue 18, 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Bedřich Šupčík, winner of a gold medal in rope climbing at the 1924 Summer Olympics in Paris.

at various international competitions show the direction of the Brno association's policy.

Over the course of the independent Czechoslovak Republic era, the international ties of the Brno association aligned with Sokol's nationwide trends.

### Conclusion

Despite its different background, the Brno association never ceased attempting to diligently build ties with similar associations abroad. Despite early professional interest in the German minority and its activities in Brno, the relations cooled until the two groups completely split and animosities arose between them as a result of Sokol's growing confidence and concerns on the part of the German citizens of Brno.

Sokol's circumstances were made difficult early on by the hostility of Brno authorities, mostly controlled by the Germans. Sokol thus started embracing Pan-Slavic ideas which compelled it to seek ties with the South Slavic nations. These bonds were strengthened by mutual visits and public appearances. In addition, the Brno association also maintained ties with related associations in Bohemia, Poland, Austria and the USA. Since the 1890s, the association's foreign outreach was managed as part of the Moravian-Silesian Sokol Community. The early hostility on the part of public authorities prevented the merger of the Bohemian Sokol Community with its counterpart in Moravia. After the political thaw and changes in the organisation, however, the Moravian leaders realised the benefits of independence and wanted to maintain it in the following period. The unification of the Moravian associations with the Bohemian Sokol Community only took place at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From then on, they followed its policy, which was not limited exclusively to Eastern and Southern Europe.

Brno always enjoyed good relations with Vienna. From the point of view of the associations in the Margraviate of Moravia, Bohemia itself was also perceived to lie "abroad". This was related to multiple study visits by Bohemian Sokols in Moravia and the fact that they were influenced by new ideas and procedures. Since the founding of MSSC, the Brno association had tried to organise its own Sokol *slet* as the main event of this kind in Moravia and an opportunity to strengthen ties with foreign colleagues. This goal was only achieved shortly before the outbreak of World War I. The shooting in Sarajevo marked not only the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, but also an early end of the Sokol *slet* in Brno and, for a long time, an interruption of all foreign ties of Sokol Brno. This was part of the reason why Brno Sokols decided to continue politics by other means and started signing up for the nascent Czechoslovak Legion. The situation after the war changed radically, not only for Sokol.