

## **ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CZECH AND CZECHOSLOVAK OLYMPIC COMMITTEE**

*by František Kolár and Jirí Kössl*

The Czech Republic has rich Olympic traditions. With the aid of Dr. Jirí Guth [1861-1943; since 1920 Guth-Jarkovský], it was one of the co-founders of the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Movement.

At the time when Pierre de Coubertin originated the idea of reviving the Olympics, Czech physical training and sport were already of high international standards, mainly due to the activities of the Czech Sokol Physical Training Organizations. This led Coubertin to attempt to persuade the Czechs to join him in his Olympic resurrection, especially the representatives of the Sokol Movement. In 1891, he met Dr. Guth, in whom he saw a kindred soul who represented the Czech physical education movement, and he invited him to the 1894 Congress in Paris. At the Congress itself, in Dr. Guth's absence, Coubertin proposed that Guth should become a member of the newly established International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Dr. Guth admitted that he did not understand at that time exactly what was meant by that<sup>1</sup>. He became fully aware of the meaning of the idea at the First Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. Immediately after his return, he started negotiations with representatives of Sokol and other Czech sports organizations in accordance with a protocol from the first session of the IOC from 12 April 1896. His activities are documented by the *Österreichischer Professoren und Lehrer-Kalender 1895/1896* and correspondence with Pierre de Coubertin<sup>2</sup>. The correspondence that has come down to us shows that Dr. Guth did not meet with understanding from the Sokol officials and that Czech sport at that time was still weak in its organization. He failed to establish a Czech Olympic Committee in 1896, even though he maintained that he did in his Olympic Memoirs and other articles<sup>3</sup>.

The Czech Olympic Committee (COV) was not founded at that time but a base was laid for the creation of the Czech Amateur Athletic Union, which later, for a time, directed all of Czech sport, except for rowing and cycling. Dr. Guth was the one who became the chairman of the Union. A year later he was replaced by another outstanding sports official, Josef Rössler-Orovský [1869- 1933].

Only with the impending Olympic Games in Paris, an appeal by Rössler-Orovský appeared in the daily *Národní* on 30 April 1899 inviting participation in a nationwide sporting event on 1 May 1899, which was to decide the Czech participants in the 1900 Olympic Games. Dr. Guth informed Coubertin about the meeting in a letter on 4 May 1899, “. . . it is my privilege to inform you that the Czech Committee for the 1900 Paris Olympic Games is just being formed.” COV was founded at another meeting on 18 May 1899<sup>4</sup>.

However, the Czech Sokol in its bulletin on 10 Jun 1899 announced that it would not take part in the 1900 Olympics. Some confusion in Paris occurred and finally Coubertin's promised visit to Prague for June 1899, on which Dr. Guth placed great hopes, did not take place. On 23 October 1899 Dr. Guth wrote a desperate letter to Coubertin, asking for his

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<sup>1</sup>Guth-Jarkovský 1929, p. 34

<sup>2</sup>Listed under the name of owner or addressee in the Archives of National Literature in Praha [LA PNP], estate of Guth-Jarkovský and the IOC Archives, Lausanne.

<sup>3</sup>See Guth-Jarkovský 1929, p. 43 and Guth-Jarkovský 1938, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>*Pražský ilustrovaný kurýr*, 21 May 1899.

recommendations, as they had no information, propositions, or program. The committee was awaiting word with nothing to do. Finally on 15 December 1899, Coubertin wrote to Dr. Guth that he “could give him good news about the state of preparations.”

A new meeting of representatives of Czech sports organizations was held on 18 January 1900. The Czech Olympic Committee was disbanded there and, after some small changes, organized anew<sup>5</sup>. Finally, on 27 January 1900, Dr. Guth informed Coubertin that the Czech Committee “started to do some serious work.” At a meeting on 7 March 1900, the COV decided that “it would not be dissolved [after the Olympics],” but on the contrary would set itself up as a permanent institution which was to take care of Olympic affairs at that time as well as in the future<sup>6</sup>. Thus was formed one of the first permanent National Olympic Committees.

The Czech Olympic Committee sent five athletes and two officials to the 1900 Olympics in Paris, with one second place earned by the athletes (František Janda-Suk in the discus throw). However, even in 1900, the participation by Czechs showed that the Austro-Hungarians would object to independent Czech Olympic participation; the Czech lands were part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The struggle for Olympic independence was the main activity of the COV in that period.

Until 1905, there were two representatives on the IOC from Austro-Hungary - Dr. Jiri Guth, a Czech, and Dr. Ferenc Kemény, a Hungarian. There were initially no Austrians. In 1905 the Austrian Prince Alexander Solms Braunfels was elected a member of the IOC. His election further complicated the situation with Dr. Guth and the COV, because Solms Braunfels, from his election, opposed Guth’s presence on the IOC. The first grave dispute occurred in 1906 at the Intercalated Olympic Games in Athens. However, the COV was able to maintain its independence. The situation came to a head in 1908 with independent Czech participation at the London Olympics. Solms Braunfels protested, threatened and several times actually resigned from the IOC. In a letter of 12 December 1908, he wrote to Coubertin: ‘Bohemia is a mere Austrian province . . . no Austrian official will want to take part in a session with a representative of Bohemia and be his equal in the committee . . .’ Coubertin responded with a letter of 29 December 1908 in which he unequivocally supported Dr. Guth and in accordance with the spirit of his theory of sports geography, he added, “Your comparison is wrong because if there was in your country another such ‘province’ which trained such number of gymnasts, we would love to have its representative among us. We have to take into consideration the athletic autonomy of a country . . . we did not consider it a state but a centre of sports.” At the end he accepted Solms Braunfels resignation.

However, it was impossible to ignore the Austrian protests. Therefore, at the IOC session in Budapest in 1911 Prince Otto Windischgrätz, the husband of the granddaughter of Emperor Franz Joseph I<sup>st</sup>, was elected to the committee. At that session there was an attempt to liquidate or at least limit the Olympic independence of the Czechs and Hungarians<sup>7</sup>. Coubertin would not allow that. The Austrian tactics backfired when they combined their attack on the Czechs with one upon the Hungarians.

Otto Windischgrätz learned from his first defeat and from the resignation of Solms Braunfels. He did not attack Dr. Guth directly but rather Czech Olympic independence by putting forward his demands gradually and increasing the pressure on the IOC with time.

In a letter to Coubertin written on 9 August 1911, Windischgrätz wrote clearly, “I believe that I am acting correctly when I propose the expulsion of a country without expelling a person.” At the same time he demanded that two more representatives be selected on behalf

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<sup>5</sup>*Cyklistika*, 26 January 1900.

<sup>6</sup>*Pražský illustrovaný kurýř*, 11 March 1900.

<sup>7</sup>*Prager Tagblatt*, 7 May 1911.

of Austria. Abundant documentation in Czech archives and the IOC Archives shows that a fierce struggle ensued. Finally Dr. Guth had to agree that he was to be listed in the IOC behind the Austrian representatives with the abbreviation COT (Comité Olympique Tchèque). This was approved both by Windischgrätz as well as the Austrian ministers of foreign affairs and the interior.

On 29 June 1912 a meeting was held at the interior ministry in Vienna attended by the interior minister Hainold, Dr. Guth, Windischgrätz, and Coloredo-Mansfeld and Dr. Otto Herschmann on behalf of the Austrian Olympic Committee. After a long discussion, an agreement was reached as to how the Czech sportsmen were to take part in the 1912 Olympic Games. Their independence was limited: the athletes were identified on a list as Autriche-Tchéque; after the name of Dr. Guth there was Autriche-Tchéque-COT; and in the event of a Czech victory, a small flag of the country was to be hoisted alongside the Austrian flag<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless the meeting was a success. The Austrian government and the Austrian members of the IOC had talks with Dr. Guth not only as a member of the IOC but also as the chairman of the unofficial COV. At that time Dr. Guth succeeded in putting through another matter. Through his acquaintances among the Czech nobility he won for the COV the right from the Emperor (of Austro-Hungary) to use the Czech emblem which in fact amounted to the highest official acknowledgment.

Further talks were held at the Olympics in Stockholm. At the Austro-Hungarian Embassy Dr. Guth and Rössler-Orovský secured the right to walk behind the Austrian team during the opening ceremonies of the Games, in a separate unit, even though under the title Autriche-Tchéque, and to carry alongside the Austrian flag a separate Czech flag of the same size.

At the end of 1912 Windischgrätz attacked again. In a letter to Coubertin on 30 December 1912, he wrote bluntly that it was necessary in Paris "to do away with the matter once [and] for all. This insufferable question has to be settled within the IOC before the next Olympics," Windischgrätz pressed both Dr. Guth as well as Coubertin. Dr. Guth and the COV answered by working out the Regulations of the COV and the so-called Comprehensive Czech Sports and Political Programme. This happened in 1913 and clearly specified the internal and external relations of Czech sport to other Austrian and foreign sports organizations. Czech sport was to have been practically independent of politics and of the organization of Austro-Hungarian sport<sup>10</sup>.

In 1913, representatives of Austrian sports organizations met with officials of the 1916 Berlin Olympic Games. The organizers compiled a list of 35 nationalities which were to be allowed to take part in the Olympics and the Czechs were not among them. Dr. Guth wrote immediately to Coubertin and the German member of the IOC, Baron Venningen. Coubertin answered that he would not allow any changes on the list prepared by the Olympic Congress and Venningen announced that he too knew nothing of the proposal but if voting was to take place, he promised to vote in favor of the Czechs<sup>11</sup>.

Despite Coubertin's support, the German organizers of the 1916 Olympic games together with the Austrians managed to pass a resolution at the Sixth Olympic Congress in Paris in 1914, according to which the Czechs were not recognized as an independent Olympic nation<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup>The archives of the Museum of Physical Training and Sport in Praha, Protocols COV 1911-1912, 10 June 1912.

<sup>9</sup>AMTVS Praha, Protocols COV 1911-1912, proceedings.

<sup>10</sup>Guth-Jarkovský 1929 p. 177 f.

<sup>11</sup>Central State Archives [SUA], Praha, fund of the CSOV, protocols COV II, 9 December 1913.

<sup>12</sup>SUA Praha, fund CSOV, protocols of COV II, 26 June 1914.

Czech sport rejected the results of the congress. Most of the sports organizations stood up for the COV and Drs. Guth and Rössler-Orovský. Also the Sokol officials came up with their support.

The Czech Olympic Committee had won a firm position in Czech sport. Its leading officials became representatives of the Czech Sports Council which was founded in 1908 and the two organizations became practically assimilated. The COV and Drs. Guth and Rössler-Orovský often acted as arbitrators in disputes between Czech sports organizations. Its position had been boosted by the fact that, thanks to Olympic independence, a number of Czech sports federations could join the international federations (e.g., the LIHG in 1908 and FIE in 1913).

In the years 1909-1911 the Czech Olympic Committee organized the Czech Olympic Games (following Coubertin's protest, they were renamed as the International Games of the COV). These Games were successful as sporting events but not financially. The regular international contacts and participation in the Olympic Games positively influenced the development of Czech sport. New sports and disciplines were being introduced; new clubs and national unions were emerging. The independent performance at the Olympic Games was a demonstration of political endeavours of the Czech nation, as well as of its cultural and political sovereignty and maturity. Thus, Czech Sport, the Czech Olympic Movement, and the Sokol Movement all helped boost the national consciousness of young sportsmen.

At the same time, the political dependence of Czech lands limited the possibilities and extent of the Czech contribution to the development of the International Olympic Movement. Olympic participation was in itself a success. The main Czech contribution was likely that independent Czech (and Finnish) participation -advanced the efforts of politically dependent nations in the eyes of the International Olympic Committee. This promoted the democratic tendencies of the IOC and the entire Olympic Movement. Nothing was changed by the fact that at the 6th Olympic Congress in 1914 the state principle of participation in the Olympics (which is now being boosted again) finally won out over the national ideal.<sup>13</sup>

During World War I the COV was barely able to survive. In 1916 its further existence was proclaimed undesirable and on 1 October 1916, Dr. Guth was forced to state at the Prague political headquarters that "the committee voluntarily discontinues all its activities" and he himself gave up "voluntarily his membership in the International Olympic Committee."<sup>14</sup> Guth-Jarkovský informed the Czech people of this coerced decision in the daily newspapers but did not inform Lausanne.

The situation changed completely with the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918. All state and legal barriers were eliminated. The Czech Olympic Committee restored its activities in full on 30 October 1918 and at a meeting on 17 December 1918, it became an officially recognized organization<sup>15</sup>. On 13 June 1919 the founding meeting of the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee (CSOV) was held. For a long time, it was a "Czechoslovak" Committee in name only, as the Slovaks were practically not represented. This was because Slovakia remained as part of Hungary (as Upper Hungary) until 1918 and because of strict "Hungarization" it was impossible for Slovak sports organizations to function. Slovaks could take part in sporting events only within the framework of German or Hungarian clubs and at the Olympics they could compete only representing Hungary. They would become members of the CSOV only gradually as Slovak sporting organizations were gradually made independent. It should be noted that until 1947 Slovak groups really did not

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<sup>13</sup>The national ideal is again being boosted in the 1990's and not only in connection with the events in Eastern Europe.

<sup>14</sup>Guth-Jarkovský [1929], p. 256 f.

<sup>15</sup>SUA, Prague fund, CSOV, protocols from CSOV meetings.

participate much in the CSOV. Although they competed on Czechoslovak Olympic Teams, they did so only in small numbers.

With the foundation of Czechoslovakia, the National Olympic Committee became more important but so did the position of Dr. Jirí Guth-Jarkovský. He was Chairman of the CSOV until 1929 and became Secretary-General of the IOC. After the formation of the IOC Executive Committee in 1921, he also became a member of that as well. Until 1925 he worked in close cooperation with Pierre de Coubertin and took part in the managing and organizational activities of the IOC and worked on the final version of the Olympic Charter.

In 1923, Coubertin himself proposed the holding of the 8th Olympic Congress and a session of the IOC in Prague. The Olympic Congress in Prague, at which Coubertin resigned from his position as IOC President, was not only an expression of his regard and friendship towards Dr. Guth-Jarkovský, but, as he stressed many times, towards the Czech nation, its culture and its sport<sup>16</sup>

The Organizing Committee of the Olympic Congress in Prague was headed by Dr. Guth-Jarkovský. It was formed on 6 November 1924 and ended its work on 16 January 1926 when a liquidation meeting was held. From its remaining finances an Olympic Fund of the CSOV was set up which was to have contributed towards the preparation of the Olympic Games in Czechoslovakia and support the Olympic Movement. The fund essentially became extinct on December 1951 when the CSOV ended its operation as an association.

The Czechoslovak participation at the negotiations of both sessions of the Olympic Congress was large but left no marked impression<sup>17</sup>, with a few exceptions - notably Rössler-Orovský's proposal for giving the previously organized First International Winter Sport Week in Chamonix in 1924 the status of the First Olympic Winter Games<sup>18</sup>.

The Prague Congress and its overall successful organization simultaneously boosted the position of the CSOV and increased interest of top Czech sport officials in sharing the management of the CSOV. A power struggle developed between the CSOV and the Czechoslovak Sports Movement (CSSO) concerning the preparations and organization of Czechoslovak Olympic Teams.<sup>19</sup> The disputes led to the approval of new guidelines in 1926. During this struggle several suggestions for the further organization of sport in Czechoslovakia were put forward, including the idea of the foundation of the so-called National Physical Training Council which was to be similar to a French institution<sup>20</sup>. The disputes were temporarily won by the CSOV when it was backed by the representatives of some Czechoslovak sports unions, especially the football association. This led to the dissolution of the CSSO at a meeting on 22 Decembre 1927.

During 1927 a new Czechoslovak sports organization, the Czechoslovak All-Sports Committee (CSVV), was formed under the guidance of the Czechoslovak Football Association. When its structure was consolidated in 1928 it again demanded an increased share in the work of the CSOV. At that time, Guth-Jarkovský, aging and tired of the endless bickering, resigned. At first this resignation was rejected.

At a meeting of the CSOV on 4 March 1929, the opposition again came forth with a demand for change in the guidelines of the CSOV. The proposal was rejected. Dr. Guth-Jarkovský was again, despite his protest, re-elected as chairman. Finally, on 18 March 1929, a new meeting was held, for which the opposition (CSVV) was well-prepared and was able to push through all its demands: mainly new guidelines and strong representatives of people

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<sup>16</sup>See correspondance IOC Archives, Lausanne, LA PNP Prague - Strahov, estate of Guth-Jarkovský.

<sup>17</sup>Kössl [1971], p. 129 f.

<sup>18</sup>Olympic Bulletin [1925], pp. 132-134.

<sup>19</sup>The CSSO was a free association of Czechoslovak sports unions which was founded in 1918.

<sup>20</sup>SUA Prague, CSOV fund.

from the sports unions. Dr. Josef Gruss [1884-1968] (a member of the IOC from 1946-1965) was elected President and Dr. František Widimský [1887-1974] Secretary-General. The new committee even considered the unification of the CSOV and the CSVV, but soon abandoned the idea<sup>21</sup>.

Under the chairmanship of Dr. Guth (through 1929), the CSOV had no objections to the activities and structure of the IOC. It respected fully the leading position of the IOC. However, after 1929, the new leadership of the CSOV assumed a stance which was critical of the IOC. They spoke out for democratic election of IOC members, a change of some regulations and especially more collaboration of the Olympic Movement and the National Olympic Committees.

Nevertheless CSOV quickly abandoned this critical attitude. Their expectations of being able to change the Olympic Movement were struck a strong blow by the world-wide economic crisis of 1929. State subsidies of sports were totally abolished, at least temporarily. The CSOV was forced to look for new sources of finance and began to participate in the state lottery. The Czechoslovak people also helped out with donations. During these difficult times, the old and new generations of the CSOV reconciled somewhat.

In the year 1933 a new CSOV statute brought a stronger role for the CSOV in Olympic Preparations. The hitherto prevailing "dilettantism and academism" of the leadership was gradually replaced by the creation of technical commissions with professional management. Sports preparation for the Olympic Games was left totally in the hands of the sports federation. Eventually the CSOV and CSVV founded an institution of so-called Olympic supervisors - paid professionals who oversaw the preparation of athletes and the work of the federations. Based on the evidence provided by these supervisors, the CSOV then made decisions concerning selections to the Czechoslovak Olympic Teams.

CSOV played an important role in the solution of problems with minority sports organizations and their participation in the Olympic Games. CSOV, in concordance with the CSVV, required that the minority federations, especially the Sudeten Germans, recognized the priority of the Czechoslovak sports federations, the CSOV, and the CSVV. The negotiations were complex and lasted from 1924 until 1936. In that year of preparation for the Berlin and Garmisch Olympics to be held in Germany, the German Reich sports federations themselves renounced direct contacts with Sudeten German sports federations. This basically forced the Sudeten German sports federations to align themselves with the CSOV and CSVV, if they wished their athletes to have a chance to compete in the 1936 Olympic Games and Olympic Winter Games<sup>22</sup>.

The preparations for the 1936 Olympics by Czechoslovak athletes were complicated by Hitler's rise to power. In Czechoslovakia, which was vitally affected by the political events in Germany, there was a strong movement against the holding of the 1936 Olympic Games in Nazi Germany<sup>23</sup>. The leadership of the CSOV found themselves in a difficult position because they agreed with the objections against participation and with the political reasons behind them, but they did not favor a boycott because they realized it would not solve anything. With the support of state bodies and President Edvard Beneš personally, (who attended the festivities connected with the run across Czechoslovak territory with the Olympic torch relay in Sezimovo Usti) the CSOV finally managed to ensure Czechoslovak participation in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, although to a lesser extent than originally planned.

The worsening international and internal situation in the years 1937-1938 had a direct impact on the life of Czechoslovak sport and physical training. The efforts for their

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<sup>21</sup>SUA Prague, fund CSOV, protocols from CSOV meetings, Guth-Jarkovský 1936-1938.

<sup>22</sup>SUA Prague, fund of CSOV, 1924, 1932, 1934-36.

<sup>23</sup>Janoušek 1962, Prošek 1968.

unification were growing. The CSOV supported these endeavours but did not want to be involved in these actions as it thought it was in compliance with the Olympic Charter that it should keep its independence. Following the München Diktat in September 1938 and the acquisition of the Czechoslovak borderlands, the Czechoslovak government became involved in the unification negotiations, demanding the unification of the entirety of Czechoslovak physical training. In the interim, the members of Czechoslovak physical training teams and sportsmen changed their opinion. While before München they considered the possibility of unification, after München they were opposed to it.

The occupation of the Czech Lands and the formation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the independent Slovak State in March 1939 created an entirely new situation. Slovak sports and physical training became organizationally independent and started to have their first international contacts. In Czech Lands, however, it was necessary to settle the question of the future position of Czech sport, both within the protectorate and on the international level. The Czech state bodies and Czech sports and physical training organizations assumed defensive postures, attempting to maintain the status quo. But immediately after the occupation, German authorities became involved in the organization of Czech sports and physical education and their international position. The result was a report for Reichsportführer von Tschammer und Osten entitled "The Organization of Sports Life in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" in April 1939. The report differentiated between the nationally and politically oriented Sokol, and the relatively apolitical sports organizations and spoke in favor of an "independent" existence of Czech sport, as a vent to national feelings, even in international relations, mainly at the Olympic Games. At the same time, the report stressed that a permanent and efficient supervision would be ensured and that the measures did not follow any humane but political aims. Thus, it was decided that the Czech Olympic Committee would be allowed to continue to function<sup>24</sup>.

The Czech Olympic Committee also tried to become internationally recognized and wished to send Dr. Guth-Jarkovský to a session of the IOC in London in June 1939. Guth-Jarkovský demurred because of ill health. But here, the Reich's interest clashed with those of the German protectorate authorities. Guth-Jarkovský, because of the protectorate authorities, and despite the wishes of the Reich, did not leave for London. The fact that the trip was banned did not create a good impression for Germany in London. The IOC intervened and received permission for Guth-Jarkovský but it was too late for him to attend<sup>25</sup>.

In the absence of Dr. Guth-Jarkovský, the German member of the IOC, General von Reichenau, addressed the London Congress. He spoke in favor of Dr. Guth-Jarkovský's continued membership in the IOC. Among other things he said that "Bohemia and Moravia [should] remain an independent Olympic country."<sup>26</sup> The statement was felt to be symbolic only because of the ill health and what was felt to be the impending death of Guth-Jarkovský.

In the following period; the COV concentrated on maintaining the standard of Czech sport and until its "voluntary dissolution" financed the training of some outstanding Czech sportsmen. Dr. Guth-Jarkovský died in Náchod on 8 January 1943 and his death fulfilled the sarcastic words of Reich's Secretary Hans Pfundter who stated in 1939 that "the Czech representation in the IOC would be solved 'over the time,'" i.e., the death of Guth-Jarkovský. Shortly after his death, the COV officials received a "hint" that their organization had been dissolved by the German authorities. To prevent a loss of property, an emergency general

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<sup>24</sup>Bernett [1971], p. 105 f.; Janoušek [1968], p. 144 f.; Kössl [1977] p. 85 f.

<sup>25</sup>AMTVS Prague, estate R. Richter, manuscript Guth-Jarkovský: "The Annual IOC Meeting in London 1939"; SUA Prague, fund CSOV, Man. Widimský: "How We Fought for the Recognition of the Independence of the COV and about the Trip of Dr. Guth-Jarkovský to the London Congress."

<sup>26</sup>Ceské slovo, 20 June 1939; Bulletin Officiel du CIO, June 1939, no. 41, p. 16.

assembly was called, which decided about the “voluntary” dissolution of the association and the transfer of property to the Czech All-Sports Committee<sup>27</sup>.

In Slovakia, after the formation of the Slovak State, the Slovak Olympic Committee was founded in Bratislava on 18 June 1939. It then asked the IOC for official recognition. The recognition became official upon the decision of the IOC President Henri de Baillet-Latour in a letter dated 24 July 1939<sup>28</sup>. It was not active for long but there were some efforts to revive its activities after 1945<sup>29</sup>.

The activities of the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee were resumed immediately after the liberation by a document of 15 May 1945 signed at the police headquarters in Prague. Its membership was practically the same as in 1941. Soon after, it followed in the footsteps of the efforts for unification of Czechoslovak physical training and sport, an idea which during the occupation filled the minds of a majority of Czech gymnasts and athletes. After the war these efforts assumed different forms and character. As the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia began to strengthen its positions, the enthusiasm for the unification of Czechoslovak physical training and sport was fading, because it could become one of the ways for the introduction of totalitarianism into Czechoslovakia. The CSOV agreed with the idea of unification but believed that it should remain independent although with a special orientation. In support of the unification tendencies and promotion of its activities and the Olympic Ideal, it started to organize Olympic Days in the years 1946-1948. The first one was held on 22 September 1946 in almost 60 cities and villages of Bohemia and Moravia and on 23 February 1947 a Winter Olympic Day was held. In September 1946, Prof. Dr. Josef Gruss, the President of CSOV, was elected a member of the IOC, and in his first address before its members he proposed the holding of annual Olympic Days in all countries for the promotion of the Olympic Movement. At the IOC Session in Stockholm in 1947, he repeated his proposal due to his experience with the organization of Olympic Days in Czechoslovakia. The IOC supported his proposal. As time went by the organization of Olympic Days became a tradition in many countries, while in Czechoslovakia none were held from 1948 until they were resumed in 1987.

During 1946 Slovaks demanded their representation as the CSOV practically ignored Slovakia. The CSOV was notified about the needs to settle Slovak representation by a letter from the Interior Ministry, dated 27 July 1945.<sup>30</sup> The CSOV held talks about the matter but the results are not known. In the meantime the Secretary-General of the Slovak Olympic Committee resumed his activities and in 1946 officially protested against the activity and the membership of the CSOV in the new body in charge of Czechoslovak physical training - the Czechoslovak Physical Training Union (CSTS).

The officials of the CSOV rejected the Slovak objections maintaining that Slovaks were represented in the CSOV by the Czechoslovak Sports Unions and refused to recognize the existence of the Slovak Olympic Committee (SOV). They were aware that by the election of Prof. Dr. Gruss as a member of the IOC, the CSOV was recognized internationally while the Slovak Olympic Committee was recognized in 1939 only by the decision of the IOC President and was not approved by the IOC plenary session. The SOV was not internationally recognized in the new political situation. The SOV was considered a body of the “clero-fascist” Slovak state which ceased to exist together with Slovakia’s independence. Therefore the CSOV refused to have direct talks with the representatives of the SOV but were willing to

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<sup>27</sup>SUA Prague, CSOV fun.

<sup>28</sup>IOC Archives, Lausanne.

<sup>29</sup>Grexa [1992].

<sup>30</sup>For the CSOV to be active and recognized in Slovakia, it was required to report its activities to the authorities of the Slovak National Council.

negotiate only through other organizations. On 1 June 1947 a meeting was held in Prague between representatives of the CSOV and the Slovak Central Sports Council which ended with the coaptation of Slovak representatives into the CSOV. Thus the SOV then ceased to exist<sup>31</sup>.

In 1948 the so-called unification of the entire Czechoslovak physical training and sport into one physical training organization took place. It retained its traditional title of the Czechoslovak Sokol. The CSOV, which was just organizing the participation of Czechoslovak athletes for the 1948 Olympic Games, temporarily evaded the unification process. As an association it survived until 19 Decembr 1951 when it was dissolved at its general assembly and according to the law N. 68/1951 of 12 July 1951, it joined the Czechoslovak Sokol as a special commission without legal independence. Vilém Mucha was elected the new chairman<sup>32</sup>.

From then until December 1989 the CSOV practically functioned as a special commission of the Czechoslovak Sokol. After the 1952 Olympic Games the CSOV did not convene for three more years. In 1955, the chairman of the new managing body of Czechoslovak physical training, the State Committee for Physical Training and Sport (SVTVS)<sup>33</sup>, Václav Pleskot, also became chairman of the CSOV. Since then the concept of a joint chairman of the Czechoslovak Physical Training Organizations and the CSOV has become standard. This caused the CSOV to become subordinated to an even greater extent to the interests and management of the SVTVS and thus also to the policy of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the government.

In March 1957 there was another change in the management of Czechoslovak Physical Training. The SVTVS was dissolved and a voluntary organization, the Czechoslovak Union of Physical Training and Sport (CSTV), was founded. In 1958, František Kroutil became the joint chairman and the CSOV received a status which seemed, at least to other countries, to have the semblance of independent legal existence. Dr. František Kroutil became its Secretary-General. The CSOV secretariat consisted of two people, both of them employees of the CSTV. Nevertheless, the situation had improved. Various commissions were founded within the CSOV which started to promote the Olympic Ideals among the public of Czechoslovakia<sup>34</sup>.

In 1965, Prof. Dr. Josef Gruss resigned his IOC membership and Dr. František Kroutil was chosen from among the many candidates to join the IOC. He also remained as Secretary-General of the CSOV until 1974.

The political changes at the end of 1967 and 1968 activated the CSOV. In December 1967, Dr. Emanuel Bosák was elected chairman of the CSTV and the CSOV. Under his guidance a new status had been prepared for the CSOV. At the same time, very serious proposals were made suggesting Prague as a venue for the 1980 Olympic Games. In the period of the so-called consolidation, that is, after 1969, the idea of organizing the 1980 Olympics in Prague was abandoned, especially when Moscow voiced its desires to hold the Games. The CSOV continued to be subordinated to the CSTV.

In 1969 Dr. Richard Nejezchlev was elected as the new chairman of the CSOV and CSTV. In 1972, when he was appointed to a government post, he was replaced by Antonín Himl. Mr. Václav Hubicka was elected as the new Secretary-General in 1974.

The stormy developments in the Olympic Movement in the 1960's and '70's were reflected in Czechoslovakia as well. There was a need to provide greater space for the work

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<sup>31</sup>SUA Prague, CSOV Fund, protocols from CSOV meetings 1946-1947. For more concerning this, see Grexa [1992].

<sup>32</sup>AMTSVS Prague, estate of Prof. Dr. J. Gruss.

<sup>33</sup>Founded in accordance with Law N. 71, Col. of 12 December 1952.

<sup>34</sup>An example is the competition between Olympic Hobby Groups.

of the CSOV, even if it continued to function under the absolute rule of the CSTV Chairman and was controlled by the political and educational section of the CSTV. In 1974 a new CSOV status was approved. It confirmed its subordination to the CSTV but various working groups and commissions began to be active within its framework (especially the Club of Czechoslovak Olympians), and these made possible independent work by the CSOV. In 1977 the Czechoslovak Fair Play Club also joined the CSOV.

This was a time when Czechoslovak representatives also started to work more actively in the individual bodies and organizations of the International Olympic Movement. The increased activity of the CSOV was also made apparent when the 79th IOC Session was held in Prague in 1977. On the initiative of the CSOV a number of publications were published, including "The Small Encyclopædia of the Olympic Games," and "The History of the Czechoslovak Olympic Movement," among others. In addition, in 1980 Dr. František Kroutil resigned from the IOC and in 1981 Prof. Dr. Vladimír Cernušák, CSc. was elected as an IOC member in his stead.

Antonín Himl also became involved in international activities. In 1976 he became a member of the IOC Tripartite Commission and in 1983 he was named chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the IOC Sports for All Commission. After the establishment of the Sports for All Commission in 1985, he was appointed as its vice-chairman. While Himl at first did not have good relations with the Olympic Movement, he gradually became more involved and abandoned many of his original prejudices. After long discussions he agreed to approve the formation of a Czechoslovak Olympic Academy. It was founded in the presence of IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch on 30 April 1987.

In the meantime, in 1984, an event had taken place which was unprecedented in the history of the Czechoslovak Olympic Movement. The CSOV gave in to the political pressure from Moscow and on 13 May 1984, Czechoslovakia joined in the boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. This was to the detriment of Czechoslovak sport and to this day remains a sensitive topic among Czechoslovak sportsmen.

In January 1988, during a visit to China, Antonín Himl, chairman of the CSOV and CSTV, died suddenly. Jindřich Poledník was elected as chairman of both organizations in his place. He lent his support to those members of the CSOV who favored the introduction of new guidelines and organizational independence at about the same time as political changes began to sweep Czechoslovakia.

In December 1989 some members of the presidium of the CSOV presented a resolution to Poledník and to the new chairman of the Central Committee of the CSTV, Pavel Klapuš. The resolution dealt with the proposed legal and organizational independence of the CSOV. The proposal was approved and soon after appeared in a slightly adjusted form in Czechoslovak newspapers.

On 21 December 1989 a plenary meeting of the CSOV was held, which accepted the resignation of the chairman and elected a coordinating committee which completed the work on the new CSTV guidelines. The founding meeting of the new CSOV as an independent organization within the Czechoslovak system of physical culture was held on 25 April 1990. The seven-time Olympic gymnastics champion, Vera Cáslavská, was elected as the President of the CSOV.

In the meantime, the CSTV as a unified organization ceased to exist. A number of new organizations were found instead, e.g., the Confederation of Czechoslovak Sports Unions (the most important partner of the CSOV), the Czech Union of Physical Education, Association of Physical Training Unions, the Czechoslovak Sokol Movement, and in Slovakia, the Council of Physical Culture. The activation of social life led to an increased interest in the questions about the future of Czechoslovak physical training and sport as well as the Czechoslovak Olympic Movement. The Olympic Society of Slovakia was founded within the framework of the CSOV in spring of 1990 (its Czech counterpart was not founded). The name of this group

was changed to the Slovak Olympic Committee on 16 October 1990. Thus far the plenary meeting of the CSOV has failed to approve its establishment.

The work of the independent CSOV was successful. They ensured above all sufficient financial means for activities of its various sections (such as the Czechoslovak Olympic Academy, the Club of Czechoslovak Olympians, and the Fair Play Club) and commissions, as well as for the participation in Olympic Winter Games in Albertville and the Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992.

However, political fortunes in Czechoslovakia resulted in the division of the country into two independent states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic or Slovakia. Still, before the official split (on 1 January 1993) the Slovak Olympic Committee was founded in Bratislava in 19 December 1992 (with Prof. Ph. Dr. Vladimír Cernušák, IOC member, as President) and the Czech Olympic Committee was founded in Prague on 21 December 1992 (with Vera Čáslavská as President). The Czech Olympic Committee (COV) acknowledged its continuity to both the CSOV and the original COV founded in the year 1899 by Dr. Jiri Guth. The COV accepted the symbol of the CSOV as further proof of this continuity. The COV was registered by the Interior Ministry of the Czech Republic on 25 January 1993. The previous working sections and commissions of the CSOV were gradually constituted as Czech ones. Finally on 16 March 1993, the IOC gave provisional independent recognition to both the Czech Olympic Committee and the Slovak Olympic Committee, to allow them to organize their athletes for the 1994 Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer. Final recognition came at the plenary session of the IOC in Monaco in September 1993. The Czechoslovak Olympic Committee officially ceased to exist as of the closing meeting on 27 March 1993 in Prague. The membership of the CSOV departed and divided as close friends, realizing the necessity of maintaining close and friendly cooperation between two nations which had existed together for so long.

The Czech and Czechoslovak Olympic Committees ensured the participation of Czechoslovak athletes at all the Olympic Winter Games and missed only three Summer Olympic Games, those of 1896 in Athens, 1904 in St. Louis, and 1984 in Los Angeles. Overall, Czechoslovak athletes have won 174 Olympic medals; 149 at the Olympic Games (49 gold, 51 silver, and 49 bronze), and 25 medals at the Olympic Winter Games (2 gold, 8 silver, and 15 bronze), including one silver and two bronze medals won in the Art Competitions.

### Olympic Winter Games

Year	Venue	Number of Czech Athletes	Gold	Medals Silver	Bronze
1924	Chamonix	27	-	-	-
1928	St. Moritz	27	-	-	1
1936	Lake Placid	6	-	-	-
1932	Garmisch-Partenkirchen	55	-	-	-
1948	St. Moritz	47	-	1	-
1952	Oslo	22	-	-	-
1956	Squaw Valley	41	-	-	-
1960	Cortina d'Ampezzo	21	-	1	-
1964	Innsbruck	47	-	-	-
1968	Grenoble	48	1	2	1
1972	Sapporo	44	1	-	2
1976	Innsbruck	58	-	-	1
1980	Lake Placid	41	-	-	1
1984	Sarajevo	50	-	2	4
1988	Calgary	62	-	1	2
1992	Albertville	80	-	-	3

### Games of the Olympiads

Year	Venue	Number of Czech Athletes	Gold	Medals Silver	Bronze
1896	Athens	-	-	-	-
1900	Paris	5	-	1	-
1904	St. Louis	-	-	-	-
1908	London	22	-	-	2
1912	Stockholm	50	-	-	-
1920	Antwerp	123	-	-	2
1924	Paris	128	1	4	5
1928	Amsterdam	69	2	5	2
1932	Los Angeles	7	1	3/1*	2/1*
1936	Berlin	179	3	5	1/1*
1948	London	77	6	2	3
1952	Helsinki	106	7	3	3
1956	Melbourne	64	1	4	1
1960	Rome	120	3	2	3
1964	Tokyo	107	5	6	3
1968	Mexico City	122	7	2	4
1972	Munich	186	2	4	2
1976	Montreal	167	2	2	4
1980	Moscow	211	2	3	9
1984	Los Angeles	-	-	-	-
1988	Seoul	171	3	3	2
1992	Barcelona	209	4	2	1

\* The numbers after the “/” are for the medals won in the Art Competitions.

### Presidents of the COV/CSOV

1899 - 1929	Jirí Guth-Jarkovský <sup>35</sup>
1929 - 1951	Josef Grauss <sup>36</sup>
1951 - 1955	Vilém Mucha
1955 - 1958	Václav Pleskot
1958 - 1967	František Vodslon
1967 - 1970	Emanuel Bosák
1970 - 1972	Richard Nejezchleb
1972 - 1988	Antonín Himl
1988 - 1989	Jindřich Poledník
1990 - date	Vera Čáslavská <sup>37</sup>

### Secretary-Generals of the COV/CSOV

1900 - 1908	Václav Rudl
1908 - 1913	Václav Rudl and Josef Rössler-Orovský
1913 - 1929	Josef Rössler-Orovský <sup>38</sup>
1929 - 1951	František Widimský <sup>39</sup>
1951 - 1958	Karel Popel
1958 - 1974	František Kroutil
1974 - 1987	Václav Hubicka
1987 - 1990	Petr Pomezný
1990 - date	Karol Špacek <sup>40</sup>

### Czechoslovakian Members of the IOC

1894 - 1923	PhDr. Jirí Guth-Jarkovský
1946 - 1955	Prof MUDr. Josef Grauss
1965 - 1981	JuDr. František Kroutil
1981 - 1992	Prof. PhDr. Vladimír Černušák <sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>1899 - 1919 as President of COV; 1919 - 1929 as President of CSOV.

<sup>36</sup>During the occupation of Czechoslovakia [1939-1945], as President of the COV.

<sup>37</sup>From 1990-1992 as President of the CSOV; since 1993 as President of the COV.

<sup>38</sup>In the years 1908 - 1919 as Secretary-General of the COV; from 1919 - 1929 as Secretary-General of the CSOV.

<sup>39</sup>From 1929-1939 and 1945 - 1951 as Secretary-General of the CSOV; from 1945 - 1951 as Secretary-General of the COV.

<sup>40</sup>From 1990 - 1993 as Secretary-General of the CSOV while since 1993 as Secretary-General of the COV.

## Presidents of the Slovak Olympic Committee

1992 - date          Vladimír Cernšák

## Secretary-Generals of the Slovak Olympic Committee

1992 - date          Jan Mraz

## Slovakian Member of the IOC

1993 - date          Prof. PhDr. Vladimír Cernušák

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*Commentary by James Riordan, Ph.D.*

I think that the theme and the treatment by Kössl is well-worthy of publication, with some provisos. I'd have preferred that the authors keep the reader informed all the way through of historical landmarks: setting up of Czechoslovakia in 1918, take-over in 1938, second take-over (by communists) in 1948, Communist invasion of 1968, fall of communism in 1989, etc. English language readers know mostly little of these events. But I do have several questions:

On page 11, why did Guth change his name? Was he at the IOC founding meeting in Athens/Paris in 1896? Was he placed on the IOC at that time? Surely, the “Czech Republic” was not one of the “co-founders” of the IOC. I would also recommend giving some short background to Sokol, as a national liberation movement similar to Jahn's movement in Germany. Since the Czech Olympic Committee was not formed in 1896, how can the Czech Republic have been a co-founder of the IOC?

On page 12, did the five Czech athletes at the 1900 Olympics compete as Czechs, under the Czech flag? You also state in the following paragraph, “Until 1905, there were two . . . ” From when?

On page 14, (with footnote 13) it is stated, “. . . the state principle of participation in the Olympics finally won over the national which . . . is being boosted again.” I would suggest being more explicit here: where, by whom?

On page 15, Why did the Olympic Fund become extinct in 1951? Please explain.

On page 16, near the bottom, does this mean that the Olympic torch relay crossed Czechoslovak territory? If so, this is a very important political statement; after all, as far as I know, it was only at the Berlin Games that such a ritual commenced.

On page 19, discussing the change in the management of Czechoslovak physical training and sport, this needs to be made clear that this accompanied the Communist take-over. Why did the CSOV avoid the unification process? Is the Czechoslovak Union of PT and Sport

the CSTV? If so, I would say so. Who is Kroutil? A party appointee? Respected ex-athlete? Sports official? What is his background?

Who were the Club of Czech Olympionics and the Fair Play Club? Were they outside politics? What was the Sokol doing in this period? Was it outlawed as a pan-Slavist 'bourgeois' movement? Who are Himl and Cernušák? Please give background details here.

There are other questions worth posing. Did the political purges (for example, of Rudolf Slanský) affect sport and the Olympic Movement? Were any leading officials or athletes purged? How did 1968 affect the Czechoslovak Olympic Movement? We know that Emil Zátopek was on the "wrong" side. Is the present personnel basically the same as what it was prior to 1989?

What I'm saying is that I think the article would be more interesting and relevant to Western readers if the events described were tied into the political developments that motivated them; they certainly didn't happen in a vacuum. This is a good, solid article that could be made more accessible to Western readers with more care and background information.

*Reponse by Jiri Kössl*

Thank you for the chance to respond to Prof. Riordan's questions. Guth did not "change" his name, but merely added an "artistic" name to his own name in 1920. In 1894 he was elected an IOC member at the Sorbonne Congress although he was not present there. However, he was present in 1896 at Athens.

Until the end of World War I (1918), there was no Czech Republic. The Czech Lands were at that time a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Czechs can be considered co-founders of the IOC because of the presence of Dr. Guth on the IOC. As to the background of Sokol, this would require a separate article which would have to be provided at a future date.

In 1894, there were no "National" Olympic Committees. They began to be formed after the formation of the IOC and during the preparations for the 1896 Olympic Games.

In 1900 the "Czech" athletes mostly represented Bohemia at Paris. The two IOC members from the Austro-Hungarian Empire were Dr. Guth of the Czech Lands, and Dr. Franz Kemeny of Hungary.

On page 14, until the 1914 Congress it was possible for nations which lived in multi-national state formation (e.g., the Czechs under Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Finns under Russia, etc.) to participate in the Olympics as separate entities. Since 1990, with the break-up of the Soviet Union, many new nations, which had previously been a part of the multi-national state formation of the Soviet Union, have competed independently at the Olympics.

On page 15, referring to the Olympic Fund, the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee stopped existing as a mere club or association and became a department in a united sports organization and under a unified management. The Fund thus lost its *raison d'être*.

On page 16, the Olympic Torch relay did indeed cross into Czechoslovak territory.

On page 19, only until 1951 could the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee avoid the unification process which was occurring in all sports institutions in those days. Afterwards, it had to become a part of a unified system of sports and physical education. The Czechoslovak Union of Physical Education and Sports - the CSTV, is of course the name of that institution where one may take the training education.

Other notes: both the Club of Czech Olympionics and the Fair Play Club formed a part of the Czech Olympic Committee, and today they are standing outside politics. Sokol attempted to be a Pan-Slav sports organization and existed until 1948. The Union of Slavonic Sokol also existed. Sokol, which was not ruled by any nationalist concept, was reinstalled in 1993. Himl was President of the Czechoslovak NOC and the CSTV, while Cernušák has been an IOC Member to Czechoslovakia since 1981.