

The Miroslav Tyrš Sport History Center in Prague, Czechoslovakia

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Dr. Miroslav Tyrš (1832-1884), professor of art history at Charles University in Prague, was the creator of the Sokol idea and the founder of the Sokol system of physical training. This ardent desire to free the small Czech nation with a glorious past, induced him to seek a suitable way for the physical and moral development of the nation.

Tyrš's system of physical training covered all gymnastic exercises known in his time which were logically divided into 4 groups: 1) The exercises where no help of another exercising person is needed and no apparatuses are used, 2) the apparatus gymnastics, 3) the exercises where the help of another exercising person is needed, and 4) combative exercises.

The Sokol was a national organization in the broadest sense of the word. Sokol training was conducted in the national spirit. From the first Tyrš' aim was to gather within the organization members belonging to all classes of society. Membership in Sokol organization was open to both sexes, to all political parties and all religious confessions.

The most joyous manifestations of the Sokol movement and the most inspiring surveys of Sokol achievement were the All-Sokol Festivals. The first one was held in 1882 and Dr. Tyrš in person directed it. The number of participants taking part in exercises was 720. The Sokol Festival arena prepared for modern festivals had the dimensions of 300 × 200 meters with seating for 250,000 spectators and dressing rooms for 150,000 gymnasts.

The Institute for Physical Training and Sport, the largest sports school in Czechoslovakia, is housed in Ujezd No. 40. The course lasts eight terms (4 years) and the school, which has university status, is equipped with swimming basin and gymnasium, running track, cinema for the showing of instructional films and training grounds. Beside the institution is the State Museum of Physical Training and Sport, installed in the Michna Palace, which is a building of art-history interest. Here you can follow the whole history of Czechoslovak sport, on hand of documentary material of all kinds connected with the Sokol, the physical training organizations, and a survey of the present-day unified and sports structure.

Collected here are the different types of sports equipment: Old skates, the first skis and even the original bike, well termed a "boneshaker."

Here are the banners of sports organizations, mementos of other sporting triumphs, sports badges, Czechoslovak stamps with sports motifs, sports dress in which fashion plays an important part as in any other form of costume snapshots and photos, Olympic victors, world and European champions, data on the present-day organizational structure of Czechoslovak physical training and sport.