

SERBIAN SOKOL MOVEMENT, A PHENOMENON THROUGHOUT THREE CENTURIES: ANNIVERSARIES OF THE SOKOL 2022

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SUMMARY

The history of the Sokol movement in Serbia is significant, interesting, and full of numerous events that are worth remembering and celebrating anniversaries. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the restoration of the Sokol movement in Serbia (1992-2022), the Sokol Association of Serbia organised the symposium "The Sokol movement of Serbia in three centuries and the Sokol anniversaries in 2022." It was held on 29 October 2022 in the Municipal Centre for Physical Culture of Belgrade - the former Sokol House "Matica", and since 1934 under the name "King Aleksandar I Karadjordjević". In the introductory lecture, I presented aspects of the origin and development of the Sokol training system in Serbia, based on ten significant anniversaries from the chronological factography of the Sokol movement, the contributions of its founders, as well as the characteristics of today's modern Sokol movement. The discussions of the participants of the meeting through the prism of perception of the importance of this training system, in the light of modern life and current events, will justify the attribute of the Sokol movement as a kind of phenomenon of the Sokol movement.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of physical training in Serbia, and its training systems - gymnastics and the Sokol movement, is a significant part of the history of Serbian society and cultural heritage, and yet, it still does not occupy a proper place in Serbian

historiography. This phenomenon deserves a more serious critical attitude on the part of the professional and scientific public because it is indispensable when it comes to events, relationships and phenomena of the past, the avant-garde, moments of romance and numerous values of the proud Serbian people. Both sports, gymnastics and the Sokol movement, represent significant segments of social, cultural, and even political life in Serbia, regardless of the ideological framework of state organisation from the Principality to present-day Serbia.

From the very beginning and under modest conditions, gymnastics was "a stone, fundamental sign" for half a century and the Sokol movement was the "lifeblood" of physical exercises, and later of sports and physical culture in Serbia. Time will confirm the enormous permanence of the essence, the role and importance of both training systems - as "queen" and "worker bee" in the development not only of sport but also of education, training and culture in the broadest sense, especially the Sokol movement, which will continue to play the mentioned role during the half-century.

The emergence of organised sport in the Principality of Serbia (1830-1882) was preceded by the introduction of certain new forms of exercise and a greater interest in the practice of skills: the subject of "fencing" was introduced in the College (Belgrade, 1808), and in 1839 the first private schools were founded, the so-called departments for training in fencing, combat, swimming and gymnastics: the First Fencing School (fencing - combat) of Atanasije Nikolić in Kragujevac in 1839, then in Belgrade the Fencing School of Jovan Ninić in 1843, the Fencing School of Djordje Marković - Koder in 1848 and the Fencing School of the Czech fencing teacher Karl Vilmess in 1851, Private Swimming School in Belgrade of Kosta Lepojević and Dimitrije Danić in 1843 where swimming instructor was Albert Dragoner; the Private Combat School of the Belgian Sarl Duseaux, which will grow in the same year, 1897, into the Combat and Ball Society "Serbian Sword" (Trujić, 1976; Petrović, 1983). Also, the emergence of equestrian sports in 1816, and archery in 1851.

In the Principality of Serbia, the idea of the importance of gymnastics and the need to introduce it into the school system as an equal subject did not spread easily. Famous personalities, poets, writers, scientists, and the first Serbian socialists including Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, Laza Kostić, Vasa Pelagić, Živojin Žujović, Svetozar Marković, Mita Cenić, Dragiša Stanojević, Josif Pančić and others (Trujić, 1976), contributed significantly to the breakthrough of "breakneck" gymnastics in schools. Gymnastics has been taught to cadets in Belgrade at the Artillery School at its foundation since 1850; and at Belgrade grammar schools since 1863. The first gymnastics teachers at the schools included active officers, and the lessons resembled pre-military training influenced by the political and military ambitions of the Obrenović dynasty. Except for the officers, lessons in gymnastics, combat and swimming were given by the famous teachers of these skills, Jovan Zamastil, Djordje Marković Sedlmayer and Ferdo Mihoković. Due to

the shortage of skilled workers, from 1863, until 1914 there were repeated engagements of Czech Sokol fronts as gymnastics teachers in schools and later in gymnastics societies. Soon after, Sedlmayer opened a respectable private gymnastics school in Belgrade in 1866 (Ilić, and Mijatović, 2006). Gymnastics did not receive the status of a subject until 1882, after the introduction of instruction, and the adoption of proclamations, and ordinances which started in 1863, then in 1868-69, 1871, 1873, 1881, 1882 and 1883, when the curriculum was adopted according to which gymnastics was taught twice a week (Trujić, 1976; Vukašinić et al. 2015, 2019). These beginnings were due to better circumstances in the principality, after the victories in the First and Second Serbian Uprisings against the Turks (1804 and 1815), and especially after the granting of greater rights to Serbia by the Hatissherifs in 1830 and 1833 and the surrender of the borders in 1833 and 1834.

METHOD

Both historical and descriptive methods were used in the research. Within the framework of heuristics, historiographical factography from monographic publications, journal series periodicals and archived documents was used to critically review what is known and to discover new data based on which existing knowledge can be supplemented.¹

SERBIAN SOKOL MOVEMENT AND SOKOL ANNIVERSARIES 2022

The year 1857 - For the emergence of organized sports in Serbia, most authors in primary sources cite the year **1857**, when the ***Gymnastics and Combat Group*** (fencing disciplines, weight lifting, author's note) was founded by students of the Lyceum, at Stevan Todorović's "Painting School". Although *the Group or Society* - as it is called in several sources (Spernjak, 1931; Brozović, 1935b; Jeftimijades, 1938; Jovanović, 1957; Petrović, 1983; Marković, 1972; Kragujević, 1994, et al., author's note) (Vukašinić et al. 2019). was active with minor interruptions for seven years (1857-1864), with 80 or more active people in the "Old Building" (atelier and gymnastics hall with modern equipment provided by Prince Mihailo Obrenović), left a significant impression on Belgrade and the Serbian public, and it became the forerunner of all subsequent civil societies for organised physical activity. This is **the first in a series of anniversaries - 165 years since the founding of the *Gymnastics and Combat Group***, and since the

¹ The results of this work, after the publication in this journal, will be posted on the website.

academic painter Stevan Todorović, arrived in the capital of Belgrade (Principality of Serbia) from Vojvodina after returning from his studies in Vienna, and as a representative of the intellectual avant-garde of the young Serbian bourgeoisie immediately took up the sleeping spirits of the provincial milieu, wouldn't the values of a better social and cultural life take root in the people and the state.

It was a time of enormous patriotic zeal aimed at cultural change and social progress in Serbia. Belgrade had 16,000 inhabitants at the time and was the first of all Slavic cities to have a gymnastics society. Steva, or Šćeva as the students affectionately called him, with the support and help of Prince Mihail Obrenović, taught them drawing, painting, singing and acting, and as a great believer in physical training, he taught them the skills of gymnastics and fencing. These Lyceum students, Vladan Djordjević, Miloš S. Milojević, Milan Kujundžić, Čeda Mijatović, Ljubomir Kaljević, Steva Popović-Crni, Andra Nikolić ..., will later occupy important positions in politics, science and education (Petrović, 1983). In his autobiography, Steva wrote how he enlightened his students: - "The most important thing for me was to know my students' home education, as well as their school knowledge" [...] "It cost me a lot of effort to develop a sense of noble actions in them, and above all a sense of love for Serbia and the homeland" (Todorović, 1899).



Up to 80 members of the Gymnastics and Combat Group
trained in the Old Building

1882 – After the declaration of Serbia as an independent state at the Congress of Berlin, (1878), as a victor from the wars with Turkey (1876-1877), even better

It is an interesting and important fact that in some sources the name of Laza K. Lazarević is wrongly stated. Instead of Laza Kostić, as a member of the first Board, probably because Laza Lazarević, the best man of Dr Vladan Djordjević, was one of the initiators of the foundation of the *Belgrade Society for Gymnastics and Combat*, and the supporter of the idea of the importance of exercise (author's note). (*Srpske novine* 1882 in English *Serbian Journal*; Jeftimijades, 1938; Vukašinović, 2018).

In the next decade, the Belgrade Society influenced the establishment of similar societies in the cities of the Kingdom of Serbia and played an important role in the training of gymnastics teachers - they were founded in Zaječar and Šabac in 1882, in Smederevo in 1885 (Vukašinović et al. 2015), in Kragujevac in 1892/93. (Jevdjević, 2008)...



Belgrade Gymnastics and Combat Society, 1889.

In 1882, the first All-Sokol Slet (mass manifestation of the Sokol movement, the word *Slet* comes from the Czech word for "bird landing", Czech plural: *Slety*) took place in Prague (on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the "Prague Society for Physical Education" (1862), to which the Prague Sokols were to add the name "Sokol" the following year (1863). The idea of the Czech philosopher and leader Miroslav Tyrš – about the liberation of the Slavic peoples from the influence of Germanisation, the strengthening of national and cultural

consciousness, and the moral and physical revitalisation of the people, spread quickly and was promoted through physical exercise and mass performances by the Sokol members. The Sokols were taught in the spirit of the principles of the original Sokol movement which were based on libertarian ideas and the principles of civil society emerging from the French democratic revolution (credo: "liberty, equality, fraternity"), and the philosophy of the ancient Hellenes (the ideals of harmony of physical and spiritual development of man). The aim was to strengthen the mass movement, whose members came together regardless of class, nationality and religion, by spreading the ideas of democracy, altruism, equality, and brotherhood. In our country, the Sokol movement is recognised both as an exercise system and as an ideological movement of the Slavs to physically strengthen and promote an enlightened, cultured, nationally conscious, moral and healthy individual.



The third All-Sokol Congress, Prague, 1895.

1891 - Nine years later, under the influence of Pan-Slavic ideology, the Belgrade gymnasts decided to introduce the *Czech Sokol* exercise system in place of the German "Turner" system. At the suggestion of Dr Vojislav Rašić, the name of *Belgrade Gymnastics and Combat Society* was changed to the ***Belgrade Gymnastics Society "Sokol"*** on 7 April **1891**

(*Serbian Vitez*, 1910 in English *Serbian Knight*, edited by the author), and thus the Sokol training system was introduced **and this event which took place 131**

years ago, is considered the beginning of the Sokol movement in Serbia - the third anniversary.

Soon, "Sokol" societies were founded: in 1897 in Požarevac, in 1907 in Kragujevac, Niš, Šabac, Zaječar and Prokuplje, in 1908 in Jagodina, in 1909 in Piro, Vlasotinci and Aleksinac, in 1912 in Smederevo... (Ilić, and Mijatović, 2006; Cvetković, 2007; Jevdjević, 2008; Savić, 2011; Vukašinović, 2016).

One more note on the critical retrospection: The former Belgrade Sokols gave 1882 as the year of the beginning of the Sokol movement in Serbia, and some members of the present *Sokol Society Belgrade Matica* adopted this. *The Belgrade Gymnastics Society "Sokol"* (founded in 1891) is a successor of *the Belgrade Gymnastics and Combat Society* (1882), and the reason for calculating the beginning of the Sokol movement nine years earlier is probably because of the reports in the Sokol magazine of the 30s of the last century for the *Sokol Society Belgrade "Matica"* it was written that it was founded in 1882 - which is not true. The reason for the connection with 1882 (see picture - tabular overview of membership in 1931) can be interpreted and partly justified in the context of "heritage" and emphasis on the continuity of the same society, but there is no doubt that the Sokol movement in Serbia started in 1891. In support of this critical view, it can be noted that until 1891, the content of the work and the conceptual concepts of the different systems of practice were not the same. One can only justify the fact that *the Sokol society Belgrade Matica* inherits the year 1882, by the fact that only half of the members of the Belgrade Civic Gymnastics Society became followers of the previously mentioned societies and that since 1882 the Sokol ideology and exercise system, Sokol rules and principles, Sokol contents (e.g. Slets) and exercise methodology, uniforms, flags,

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Статистички преглед стања чланства, нараштаја и деце
 Соколске Жупе Београд, у 1931 години.

Редни број	Соколско друштво	Оснивао	Чланство		Нараштај		Деца		СВЕГА	Примедба
			муш.	жен.	муш.	жен.	муш.	жен.		
1	Аранђеловац	1923	62	19	20	25	81	54	261	
2	Батајница	1927	122	37	8	7	25	22	221	
3	Београд „Матица“	1882	631	101	58	81	126	177	1174	
4	„ I	1922	582	99	178	37	96	79	1071	
5	„ II	1927	239	53	73	72	115	67	619	
6	„ III	1928	116	25	14	37	63	65	320	
7	„ IV	1929	220	15	32	15	96	74	452	
8	„ V	1930	261	45	48	14	90	115	573	
9	„ VI	1931	76	27	35	21	176	132	467	
10	Бежанија	1930	112	11	12	9	—	—	144	
11	Црпаја	1919	46	14	2	5	—	—	67	
12	Гропа	1931	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
13	Дебљача	1930	30	8	4	3	25	20	90	
14	Добановци	1930	35	11	8	8	38	20	120	
15	Ивиња	1905	184	62	12	5	8	14	285	
16	Ковин	1928	76	25	6	—	30	—	137	
17	Лаковац	1930	98	6	31	24	—	—	159	
18	Лозница	1930	91	20	18	12	20	24	185	
19	Љиг	1930	50	28	20	30	—	—	128	
20	Љубовија	1929	36	8	12	10	—	—	66	
21	Никшић	1931	82	7	—	—	—	—	89	
22	Обреновац	1931	139	18	24	27	86	108	402	
23	Паланка (Смед.)	1930	67	19	50	47	57	73	313	
24	Пачево	1915	87	45	67	49	88	64	400	
25	Петровац (Пож.)	1930	68	20	14	6	45	12	165	
26	Пожаревац	1897	81	8	35	20	54	42	240	
27	Рума	1906	270	12	60	44	21	30	437	
28	Смедерево	1912	97	11	42	16	81	108	355	
29	Срем. Митровица	1905	352	67	62	71	90	138	780	
30	Стара Пазова	1906	209	32	30	15	115	87	488	
31	Ст. Билови	1928	54	10	5	—	12	14	95	
32	Шабац	1907	184	34	19	21	93	102	453	
33	Ваљево	1922	123	31	25	21	70	44	314	
34	Вел. Градиште	1929	154	76	37	12	40	39	358	
35	Врањик	1930	42	7	20	9	—	—	78	
36	Земул	1905	182	64	80	32	542	512	1412	
СВЕГА			5258	1075	1161	805	2383	2236	12918	

From the report of the Sokol Parish of
 Belgrade, for 1931.

booklets, badges...were not adopted - therefore, no doubt seriously organised gymnastics in Serbia started in 1882, and the Sokol movement in 1891. There are examples of other Sokol societies that were not fixed on earlier dates, e. g. *Sokol Society "Smederevo"* (founded in 1912) - the year 1885 when it was founded as a gymnastics society, was not written, as well as Šabac and other societies (author's note).

1892 - Adherence to the new - Sokol system of exercise led to disagreements and divisions among the members, so at the initiative of the social gymnastics teacher Jovan Stojanović, a new society was founded – the ***Civic Gymnastics Society "Dušan Silni" (Powerful)***, edited by the author), in November 1892 (*Srpski Vitez*, 1910), and soon after the name was changed to the ***Chivalric Society "Dušan Silni"***. This is the fourth anniversary, marking the **130th anniversary of the founding of the Civic Gymnastics Societies "Dušan Silni"** and its subsidiaries (so-called "sub-societies"), whose activities were extremely important for the development of gymnastics and sports throughout Serbia: in 1892 in Zaječar, in 1895 in Smederevska Palanka and Vranje, in 1896 in Knjaževac and Leskovac, in 1897 in Niš, Pirot, Požarevac, Arandjelovac, Negotin, Kruševac, Paraćin, Jagodina... Gymnastics societies were founded under other names: "Obilić" in Šabac (1899), "Šumatovac" in Aleksinac, Kragujevac Gymnastics Society (1905), "Raški župan Časlav" (Raška prefect Časlav, edited by the author) in Raška (1904). Over time, some will evolve into societies, as in Knjaževac in 1908 (Vukašinović, 2016). *The Association of Chivalric Societies "Dušan Silni"* also gained a good reputation outside the borders of the Kingdom of Serbia and was attended by Slovenian gymnastic societies. In 1907, it had about 1,000 members, two society administrations, a Girls' club, a professor and four gymnastics teachers (Ilić and Mijatović 2006).



Fencing school of Gymnastics Society "Dušan Silni", 1892.

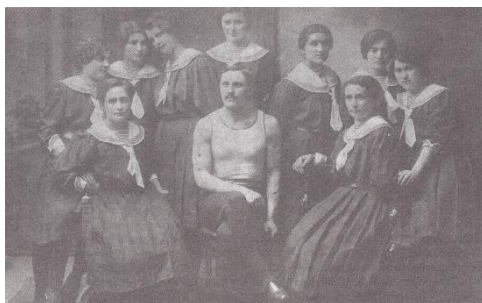
For the next 18 years, there will be a great rivalry between the "Sokols" and the "Dušan's people", due to different understandings of the idea on which their work should be based - whether to practice according to the Tyrš Sokol system, or the chivalric system, with features from the cultural and political history of the Middle Ages Serbia. Dr Vojislav Rašić, the editor of the *Serbian Vitez*, assessed this long-standing disagreement "These two societies soon found themselves as real enemy camps, and they were torturing each other for years, killing the idea itself in Serbia" (*Serbian Vitez*, 1910). Although this rivalry slowed down the development of both civic gymnastic societies, both gymnastics currents, with their active work, lofty goals and noble intentions, worked for the good of the people. Prominent citizens were their members and were supported by the crown prince as an honorary member and patron prince Djordje Karadjordjević. Both "Sokol" and "Dušan Silni" attracted new societies throughout Serbia, and during this period they provided the greatest contribution to the training of professional staff by organising shorter courses, lessons and exams, where some new exercise content was presented and then introduced.



"Niš Sokol, a memorial to the citizens of Belgrade, 1907."



Gymnastics Society "Sokol" Belgrade, 1907/8.



Women's Pre-leader Board and Jan Svoboda, Kragujevac, 1911.

1902 - Modern sport took hold in the Kingdom of Serbia at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, precisely at the time when the sports club split off from the superior civil gymnastic - Sokol and Knight societies, right at the time of their great rivalry. To maintain and revive its work, *Belgrade Sokol* expanded its work programme by statute in **1902**, and formed "gymnastics" departments, which soon developed into "sports" departments. This **120th anniversary** is the fifth anniversary, and marks **the beginning of the formation of the Sokol's "gymnastics - sports departments"**, which will be **the forerunner of sports clubs (since 1902) in archery, martial arts (fencing, boxing, wrestling), horse riding, rowing, swimming, skating, cycling and balling**. Under the auspices of the Sokol movement and later, numerous sports were developed and founded: volleyball, basketball, athletics, skiing, tennis and many others (Ilić and Mijatović 2006; Vukašinović, 2016a).



Ball department *Sokol*, is the oldest photo of the first football team in the Kingdom of Serbia, 1898.

Serbian Sokol movement outside the Free Kingdom of Serbia - In the areas where Serbs lived **under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy**, the Sokol movement emerged and developed somewhat later, on several sides and depending on the circumstances. Gymnastics also paved the way for the Sokol movement in Vojvodina, and it was affirmed by the famous Serbian doctors Laza Kostić, Jovan

Jovanović Zmaj and Milan Jovanović Batut, Djordje Marković Koder, all of whom propagated the importance of exercise for health. The first Sokol society was founded by the young Dr Laza Popović, who was attracted by the romantic enthusiasm of the youth of Karlovac after he returned from his studies in Vienna. In Sremski Karlovac, he founded *the Serbian Sokol*, according to the instructions he had received from the Czech Sokols, which had previously been approved by the authorities on 19 January 1904, and the following year, in 1905, the initiative was taken to found the *Serbian Sokol Parish of Fruška Gora*. The statutes of the parish were approved in 1907 (Savić, 2011).

After taking up the idea of Tihomir Ostojić, a grammar school teacher from Novi Sad, who was known for promoting the idea of gymnastics, Popović took up the Sokol programme at the Vidovdan Ralley of Peoples in Fruška Gora Ravanica (The First Serbian Sokol Slet, Ravanica, 1905). From then until the Second World War, thousands of people from Srem, Bačka and other visiting Sokols gathered in Ravanica. Later, the famous "Vidovdan Slet exercise", first performed in the Prague Slet in 1912, was often performed in Slets. In addition to traditional folk dances, Slet and gymnastic exercises, speeches about Vidovdan - one of the most important Serbian holidays, were given and poems were recited of Serbian Kosovo heroes, Prince Lazar and Miloš Obilić. This national symbolism - the link between Vidovdan and the Sokol movement was not broken until the beginning of the Second World War (Vukašinović et al. 2016v).



The first Serbian Sokol Slet, Ravanica, 1905.

Thanks to the tireless Dr Laza Popović, and his close associates Nikola Maksimović and Milan Teodorović, 30 societies were founded in a very short time: in Šid, Novo Sad, Zemun, Vukovar, Ruma, Sremska Mitrovica; Korenica, Pakrac, Stara Pazova, Vinkovci, Indjija, Zagreb and other. places. In less than seven years, the Sokol movement spread rapidly and counted about 100 societies, one Association and three Sokol parishes: *Krajišk parish* based in Zagreb (founded in 1910), *Bosnia - Herzegovina parish* based in Sarajevo (1910), and later *Primorje parish* in Herceg Novi and Dubrovnik (1912). The Sokol movement also began early in Montenegro after the visit of the Czech Sokols under the leadership of the senior leader Dr Steiner, the Montenegrin Sokol Society *Cetinje Sokol* was founded (1906). It is interesting that later, after liberation, the Sokol parish was founded in *Mostar* (1919, active members were Aleksa Šantić, Jovan Dučić and Svetozar Ćorović, and in the same year the *Bačka Sokol parish of Novi Sad* was founded (Vukašinović, 2016). In southern Serbia, the first Sokol society was founded in Kumanovo (1909), and after the First Balkan War, Sokols were organised in Skopje, Prizren, Djakovica, Pec, Vučitrn, Priština, and Nova Varoš (Metikoš, 1913).

Shortly before the beginning of the First World War, **the initiative** was taken in Zagreb and it was decided to found **the Yugoslav Sokol Association**. Members were Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian Associations, the initiators were Steva Todorović, Djura Paunković, Dr Laza Popović, Dr Lazar Car from Croatia and the Slovenian Sokols. The Association did not come into being due to the fateful assassination in Sarajevo, namely the shooting on Vidovdan (Association *Serbian Sokol*, 2013).

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1910 – In this year **three events** from the history of the Sokol movement and Serbian sport are significant for the sixth anniversary - **and three 112th anniversaries**. Attempts to unify and connect the Sokol organisation will include the founding of *the Association of Serbian Sokols*, on the initiative of Dr Vojislav Rašić (16 March 1908, in Kragujevac, the Association of Sokol Societies in Serbia, edited by the author) and *the Association of Serbian Knights* (February 1909, the initiative to establish this Association came from the new - third Society of *Belgrade" Sokol"*, established in October 1908, the founder was Dr Vojislav Rašić). To ensure the unity of the entire Serbian Sokol movement close cooperation was established with the Sokol leaders of the Serbian Sokols outside Serbia, Dr Laza Popović and Dušan Bogunović. These associations and the new society will however only exist for a short time - **until the unification of Sokol and the civil gymnastic organisations of knights**, at the insistence of the South Slavic Sokols, into a single *Association of Sokol societies "Dušan Silni"*. Reconciliation was achieved on 21 November 1909 at the meeting in Kragujevac, and the first joint meeting was held on 2 February **1910** (Stevan Todorović was elected president of the Association, and the Czech Frantisek Hoffmann was

elected chief) and the very next day, on 3 February, the joint "Academic Hour" was held at National Theatre (*Srpski vitez*, 1911), - this is the first 112th meeting.

In the same year, the united "Sokols" and "Dušan's people" organised a two-day **First Serbian All-Sokol Slet (7-8 July 1910) in Belgrade**, where about 1,500 Slavic Sokols gathered, and stopped on their way to Sofia, before joining the 3rd Sokol Festival of the Bulgarian *Hero* (July 10-12, 1910) - the second 112th anniversary.

At the time of the Slet, four months after the unification, Rašić's proposal was followed by **the admission of the united Sokol Association from Serbia - *the Association of the Sokol Societies "Dušan Silni" into the All-Slavic Sokol Association*** (Sofia, July 1910) - the third 112.

King Petar I. Karadjordjević and 17 deputies of the National Assembly expressed their affection for the United Association, the Sokol idea, and the progress and massification of the Serbian Sokol movement. At the time of the founding of the *Association of Sokol Societies "Dušan Silni"* (February 1910), there were ten societies in Serbia: Belgrade, Niš, Zaječar, Pirot, Kragujevac, Valjevo, Obrenovac, Šabac, Aleksinac and Gornje Milanovac (Ilić and Mijatović, 2006). During 1910, the number of Sokol societies "Dušan Silni" doubled (20 societies, 1472 members), and societies were founded in Užice, Kraljevo, Požega, Svilajnac, Požarevac, Kruševac, Bela Palanka, Čuprija, Krušar, Čačak, Leskovac and Knjaževac, and in just three years - by the end of 1913 - the number of Sokol societies grew from 10 to 122 and 14,778 members (Vukašinić, 2013). Parallel to the development of the Sokol movement, the "sports sections" became independent thanks to the greater popularisation of modern sports, which influenced the establishment of the *Serbian Olympic Club* in Belgrade (Hotel "Moskva", 10 February 1910), which already had ambitions to organise "Dušan Silni" competitions.

1911 - The inclusion of the united Sokol Association in the All-Slavic Association was a great incentive for all Serbian Sokol organisations, and on the initiative of Dr Laza Popović, the ***Association of Serbian Sokol Societies was founded*** (the entire Serbian Sokol - the so-called "All-Serbian" Sokol Association, author's note), during the Second All-Sokol Croatian Slet in Zagreb from 31 July to 2 August 1911 (Medaković, 2004). This seventh anniversary - **111 years after the founding of the Association of Serbian Sokol Societies** - marks the "spiritual union, 1911 (Medaković, 2004). This seventh anniversary - 111 years after the founding of the Association of Serbian Sokol Societies - marked the "spiritual unification of all Serbia Sokols" wherever they were: from Serbia, from *Fruška Gora, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Krajina the Sokol parishes* and the Sokol societies on the coast (from 1912 *Primorje* parish), the Sokol in Hungary, the Sokol in America (since 1911 the Serbian Sokol parish in Chicago, whose honorary elder Mihajlo Pupin said at that time: "Under the wings of the Serbian Sokol we expect the

unification of the Serbian people"). The representatives of all Serbs were elected to the boards of the Association - to the main board: president Stevan Todorović, Dr Laza Popović, Voja Živanović and others, in the expert council: chief "Franta" Hoffmann, Stevan Žakula, Milan Teodorović, Dr Milan Metikoš, Čeda Milić... Secretaries were Atanasije Popović and Sreten Obradović (Metikoš 1913, 1914; Vukašinović 2016).

In the same year, the head of the Association, Czech teacher František Hoffmann, by invitation, brought nine Czech Sokol teachers in March 1911, who were distributed in the larger cities by decision of the government of the Kingdom of Serbia to provide professional help and support in education and the Sokol movement, which was of great importance for the development of physical education.

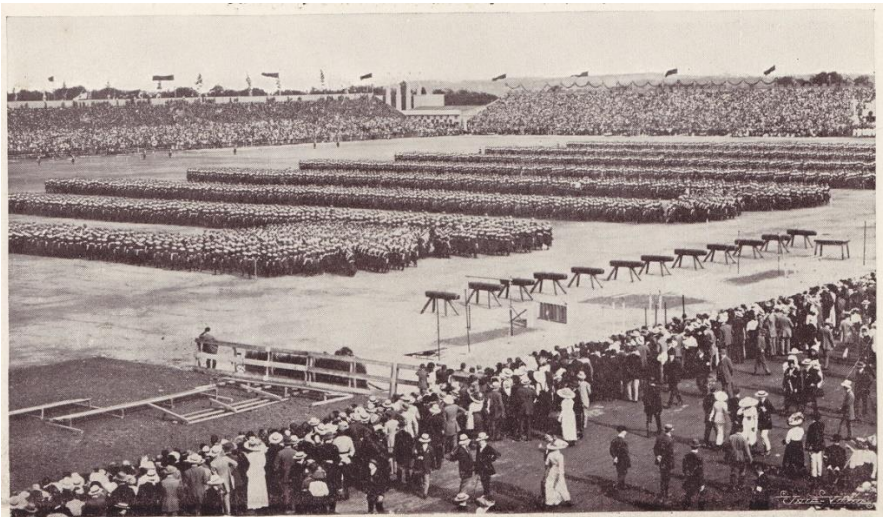


Serbian Sokols at the Second All-Sokol Croatian Slet, Zagreb, 1911.

1912 - The year remembered for two extraordinary events - the eighth anniversary:

- **110 years since the participation of the unique Serbian Sokol Movement** (Sokols from the Kingdom of Serbia and the lands of Austria-Hungary) in the **First All-Slavic and Sixth All-Sokol Slet in Prague (1912)** - The appearance of Serbian Sokols from seven cities of the Kingdom of Serbia (Kragujevac, Niš, Zaječar, Aleksinac, Požarevac, Čuprija and Belgrade) and from the territory of Austria-Hungary was in large numbers and represented the unique Serbian Sokol movement. 1169 Sokols participated with considerable success. 11,000 Sokols and 6,000 Sokol girls, a festive Sokol parade with 17,700 participants and 112,000 spectators on the stands are the reason why this Slet will be remembered.

- **110** years since the first **participation** of Serbian athletes, namely **Sokols from "Dušan Silni"** in the **Fifth Olympic Games** (Stockholm, 29 June - 22 July 1912). "Dušan Silni's" Sokol, Dušan Milošević, also a sprinter of the "Dušan Silni" Athletic Club and a football player of "BSK", finished third in his group in the 100 meters race qualification (6 July), but was substituted due to weakness caused by "severe arsenic poisoning". ("Poisoned, the police are investigating") he could not continue to compete - "it was expected that Milošević' would return to Belgrade with a medal because the new world record time of 10.6 set in the qualification was achievable for Milosevic". But, "he ran the race with a high fever and fell unconscious at the finish" [...] "Among others, Pierre de Coubertin also visited him in the hospital".... And an "excellent gymnast", Dragutin Tomašević, from the Sokol Club "Dušan Silni", finished 37th in the competition of 62 marathon runners "and held the whole race as one of the better runners, Baron Coubertin congratulated him warmly..." (Archives of Serbia, 1912; Marković, 1972).



The Sixth All-Sokol and the First All-Slavic Sleet, 6,000 Sokol at the exercise, Prague, 1912.

The Sokol press was a powerful means of ideological, cultural, and moral uplift and enlightenment of its members. The most widely read periodicals were "Srpski Vitez", "Serbian Sokol Glasnik" (Courier), "Serbian Sokol", "Sokol Glasnik" and "Sokol Glasnik by Dušan Silni", edited by Dr Vojislav Rašić, Dr Laza Popović and Dr Sreten Obradović. Special attention was paid to the "**four Sokol aspirations**", which contain the essence of the **Sokol idea: physical, moral, patriotic and democratic education** - firmness, strength, health, beauty; chivalrous spirit, exemplarity, boldness, perseverance; patriotism, folk and national ideals, spirit and harmony; and equality, solidarity, friendship (Vukašinović, 2013).

At the time of the emergence of Serbian Sokol, which is also true for sports in Serbia, Sokol and sports activities were significantly limited or interrupted by the Balkan wars. After the assassination of Crown Prince Ferdinand in Sarajevo on Vidovdan in 1914, a difficult period began for all Serbian Sokol and other societies, Sokols were arrested, societies were closed, and property was confiscated and destroyed (Brozović, 1935a; Pantelić et al. 2016; Vukašinović et al. 2016b). As soon as World War I broke out, the Sokols gathered and organised Yugoslav volunteer units on various fronts and those who were forcibly recruited deserted from the Austro-Hungarian army and went to the Serbian or Russian side. The Sokols were also a major force in the breakthrough of the Thessaloniki front.

In these wars, the Sokols provided many self-sacrificing fighters and made sacrifices for national ideals and liberation. Among them was the winner of the gymnastics competition in Sofia at the Slet of the Bulgarian Hero in 1910, as well as a year later, the third-place winner at the First All-Slavic and Sixth All-Sokol Slet in Prague in 1912, Sreten Stanić - Cukić of the Sokol of Belgrade "Dušan Silni", he died in the war against the Bulgarians, in Bregalnica in June 1913. "What an irony of life... a year before his death he joined the Bulgarians, fought with them and defeated them in their Slet"..." (Vukašinović, 2014). The wartime fate of the Sokols of "Dušan Silni", the first Olympians, is also known, and both Tomašević and Milošević were mobilized in the war against the Germans in October 1915. Tomašević was severely wounded on Bujanj Hill near Požarevac, where he succumbed to his injuries at the age of twenty-five. He was buried in his native village of Bistrica with an Olympic badge from the Olympic Games in Stockholm. Milosevic was captured near Kruševac and interned in Hungary, where he remained until the end of the war.



Leader Sreten Stanić Cukić, on the occasion of the visit of the Belgrade Sokol of "Dušan Silni" in Smederevo, 1910.



Olympian Dragutin
Tomasevic, 1912.

The Sokol movement in the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (proclaimed in Belgrade on December 1, 1918) - "tribal" organizations (national Sokol organizations) united in a single Sokol organization. At the first Sokol Assembly (Vidovdan, June 28, 1919, in Novi Sad), Duke Živojin Mišić, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, addressed the people with the words: "The Sokols will be a granite wall for the enemies" The unified "*Sokol Association of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*" was proclaimed, as well as **the basic principle and ideological credo: "One country, one nation, one Sokol movement"**. In 1920, the Association was then renamed the *Yugoslav Sokol Association* (Vukašinović, 2014).

Based on the decisions of the Novi Sad Assembly, the Sokol Associations will be dissolved and 33 Sokol parishes will be established, which will bear the name on a territorial basis (the Belgrade municipality will retain the name "Dušan Silni" in its name). At the time of its establishment, the Sokol Association included 254 societies with about 400,000 members. *The Belgrade Sokol Parish "Dušan Silni"* was founded in 1920 in Belgrade, with societies from 9 cities. Stevan Todorović was elected honorary elder for life, and Ljuba Jovanović was elected first elder. *The Morava Sokol Parish* was founded in Niš (June 20, 1920), including 10 towns, then, in Kragujevac, on January 16, 1921, the *Sokol Parish of Kragujevac (so-called Šumadija)* with 15 societies, *the Sokol Parish of Užice* in 1922 in Užice (*Zlatibor*), etc. (Jevdjević 2008; Savić 2011; Vukašinović 2016).

With these changes, the narrow national character was displaced by the broader - Yugoslav, Slavic-oriented. The Sokol societies in Serbia will resume their activities in the post-war years. These activities were supported by the political representatives of all three nations, especially by the regent Aleksandar I. Karadjordjević, "the unifier." The state counted on an even stronger role of the Sokol movement in bringing people together and connecting them, especially on the cultural, educational and pedagogical tasks assigned to it.

Gymnastics is still the backbone of Sokol activities, always useful, attractive and very popular, especially thanks to the remarkable achievements and results of the male Sokol gymnastics team in the World Championships and Olympic Games, especially the successes of the most outstanding Sokol, Leon Stukelj.

However, the regular activity of the Yugoslav Sokol movement was hindered in the first years by political conflicts that had already arisen in the young country (due to the secession of a part of the Croatian Sokol movement in 1922). There was also a threat of dissolution of the Association, but the leaders of the Sokol movement did not allow this and resorted to the idea of holding joint landings.



"Sokols of Čačak" - postcard, 1926.

1922 - Another significant ninth anniversary, symbolizing the irreplaceable role and strength of the Sokol movement in this period, is the decision of the state in **1922 to introduce the Sokol movement system into school and military physical education**. Leadership courses (social, community, and federal) trained Sokol leaders to work in Sokol societies, as well as to teach in elementary and secondary schools, due to a shortage of teachers. In 1926, important decisions were made about the exercise of children and young people and the introduction of the increasingly popular "sports games" into the exercise program - new sports under the auspices of Sokol: athletics, swimming, mountaineering, skating, skiing, hiking, travelling, holidays and camping.

The Sokol Movement in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia - After the introduction of the dictatorship of 6 January (1929) - and the establishment of a unitary monarchy and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (on 3 October 1929, due to the crisis of parliamentarizam, as a result of class, national and political differences in the multinational state of the Kingdom SHS - Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) the Law on the Establishment of the Sokols of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was passed (5 December 1929). Since then, the *Association of Sokols of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia* has been under the auspices of the Karadjordjević dynasty, which, with its nationalisation and established hierarchy, will create the

conditions for greater influence on the cultural, educational, pedagogical and health transformation of the population in the towns and villages. Thus, the Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia reached its zenith in the 1930s and is the leading Sokol organisation alongside the Czechoslovak one.



Novi Sad Sokols, welcoming King Alexander, Novi Sad, 10 June 1934.

Slets - district, municipal, generational, provincial and all-Sokol events - symbolized above all the strength of the Sokol movement, the masses, technical gymnastics and choreographic training, they also had an ideological and national character in addition to competition. The Sokols from Serbia participated and performed at the All-Slavic and All-Sokol Slets in Prague (since the Third All-Sokol Slet in 1895) and the Slets of Junak (Hero, edited by the author) in Sofia (since 1911). At the famous Sixth All-Sokol and First All-Slavic Slet in Prague (1912) of Serbian Sokols, among the 232 participants, the Sokols from Niš were the best placed in the general competitions and those from Belgrade in the individual competition (Savić, 2011). The first Sokol competitions that are remembered for their large number of participants and importance were the Yugoslav All-Sokol Slet in Ljubljana (1922) and the large provincial Slets: The first in Maribor (1920), the second in Osijek (1921), the third in Sarajevo (1924, on the occasion of the Vidovdan), the fourth in Zagreb (1924, on the occasion of the second rally), the fifth in Ljubljana (1927), the sixth in Skopje (1928). (Vukašinović, 2016).

In 1930, **the first all-Sokols meeting of the Sokols of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia** was held in Belgrade (8-30 June 1930, on the Slet field behind the

Faculty of Technology). At that time, it was written: "Belgrade - the capital of the world", the Sokol parade in front of 200,000 and the Slet exercises in front of 50,000 spectators, King Alexander I, Queen Maria, Crown Prince Peter, members of the government; A "magnificent" manifestation attended by some about 30,000 Sokols, more than 13,000 Sokol children and generations, a gymnastics team led by Stukelj, 7,000 Sokols and Sokols from the Czech Republic, etc. (Vukašinović, 2013).



The first All Sokol Slet of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, 1930.

As time went by, the development of the sport was increasingly accompanied by rivalry relations between the Sokol organisation and the newly established sports clubs and Associations. This lasted **until 1930 when the Sokol Association of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was incorporated into the Yugoslav Olympic Committee (YOC)**, and since then independently organised competitions in athletics, swimming, volleyball and skiing were held - with the participation of the Sokol movement and the sport continued to be cultivated and developed. Numerous sports were founded and developed under the auspices of the Sokols: Fencing, boxing, wrestling, football, handball, athletics (running - all distances, high jump, bowling, relay, triple jump, long jump, discus, javelin, marathon), basketball, dance, rhythmic, cycling, equestrian sports, rowing, tennis, archery, shooting, cross-country skiing, model sports and sailing. At the international championships in sports, gymnastics, Sokols from Serbia were among the permanent participants in international tournaments and selection competitions for the world championships.

The content of Sokol work - the timeless values of Sokol - will be deeply imprinted in the memory of numerous Sokol generations: Mass Slets, public classes, gymnastics academies, events, concerts, shops, festivals, humanitarian actions; libraries and reading rooms, Sokol cinemas, choirs and orchestras, folklore, puppetry, theatre, health and other fields; Sokol celebrations with the performance of the national anthem "Hey, Slavs", the Sokol uniforms, pledges in front of the social flag and the elder King Petar II Karadjordjević - that they will perform tasks for the benefit of the people (the so-called "Five-Year Plan of Sokol Petar"), trips, holidays, voluntary construction of Sokol houses and open summer training grounds from their contributions, etc.

The Sokol houses, as they were popularly called, were built on a large scale in the 1930s. As the state was primarily influential in the creation of the Sokol infrastructure, the designers and builders of the Sokol houses strove to ensure the houses symbolised the beauty, strength and representativeness of the Sokol movement. The multifunctional Sokol houses fulfilled a complex state-building and social function. In them, the ideas of all Slavs, Yugoslavia and the Sokol movement were promoted, people came closer and were strengthened both physically and mentally, and in addition to sporting activities, pedagogical, educational, health, social, cultural, artistic, ideological and other influences of the state were realised (Vukašinović, 2016).

After the assassination of King Alexander in Marseille (9 October 1934), **the attitude of the state towards the Sokol movement deteriorated**. Internal separatism and nationalism undermined the Sokol organisation; Sokol resolutely opposed this, maintained cohesion in the organisation, and raised the morale of the people. In 1940, exercise activities were replaced by defensive training. The Yugoslav Sokol had about 350,000 members, who were considered the "second layer" of the national defence. The last time Sokol members gathered in large numbers was at the **March demonstrations** and then at the mass public meetings when the People's Putsch was carried out and the Triple Alliance annulled (1941). Most Sokols fled from the occupiers or were mobilised, and the work of the Sokol organisation was banned, so the Sokol houses were closed. Sokols were persecuted, arrested and killed, especially Sokol elders and prominent Sokols. Prominent members of Sokols between the First World War and the Second World War were kings, heirs to the throne, patriarchs, priests, officers, war heroes, diplomats, academics, scientists, writers, poets, politicians...

After **the end of the Second World War**, the Sokol movement was not restored because it was not allowed. According to the will of the state in the new socio-cultural system, Sokol was rejected and "forgotten", although the formation of a new gymnastics movement and the beginning of the work of gymnastics societies in liberated Yugoslavia was continued by the pre-war Sokol leaders. And so half a century passes until the new, resurrected summer of the Sokol movement.

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1992 - The last one, the tenth anniversary, although there could be many more after the rich history of the Serbian **Sokol movement, is the 30th anniversary of the restoration and return of the Sokol movement** - the tenth anniversary, the event when the Yugoslav Sokol movement was restored at the meeting of the pre-war Sokol officials, in Belgrade **in 1992**, Miodrag Jevtić, the pre-war Sokol elder, was elected elder. This significant event also symbolises the return to the traditional original Sokol principles, although the Sokol work is carried out in the spirit of modern times. The Sokol Parish of Belgrade - today's Sokol Association of Belgrade - was rebuilt in 1995.

The Sokol Association of Serbia has been active since its foundation on 29 August **1998**. (The Association Sokol of Serbia). Since 2000, this Association has been the eleventh member of the World Sokol Association. The Sokol Association of Serbia (the elder mPetar Stakić) is a non-partisan and non-profit sports and recreational organisation where members of all ages come together to play sports, promote their health, develop their physical skills and improve their educational and educational skills, especially among the youngest and young members. In addition to their regular content, Sokol societies are active in manifestations and actions: Sokol meetings of societies, gymnastics demonstrations and competitions such as trampolining, excursions, public courses in the squares of cities, athletics days, all-around events, dance demonstrations, tent camps, occasional seminars and participation in foreign Sokol events in Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Switzerland, Portugal



Sokols of "Belgrade Matica" jumping from the trampoline in front of Tyrš's House, Prague, 2018.

More than 20 Sokol societies were active throughout Serbia, seven in Belgrade, two in Sremska Mitrovica, Novi Sad, Vršac, Pančevo, Batajnica, Ruma, Smederevo, Bor, Sefkerin, Šabac, Sremski Karlovac, Stara Pazova, Arandjelovac, Arilja, with more than 4000 active members of both sexes and all ages.

The Serbian Sokol Association (the older Jevdja A. Jevdjević) is the second chivalric and non-partisan Sokol sports organisation based in Belgrade, which also follows the pre-war Sokol movement in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It was founded to spread the idea of physical and moral education for the citizens of Serbia, to develop patriotism and patriotic feelings among its members, and to spread the idea of inter-Slavic cooperation and togetherness. After the end of Yugoslavia, the association was registered on 9 April 2008 under the name Association of Serbian Sokol. After the meeting on 15 September 2010 in Belgrade, the name was changed to the Association of Serbian Sokol and registered on 17 November 2010. Since the restoration of the Sokol movement, the Association organized two Slets, on 15 September 2010 in Belgrade with the blessing of Patriarch Irinej and under the patronage of Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjević, and on 3 June 2011 in Nis (Association of Serbian Sokol, 2013).



At the reception of the Serbian Sokol Association on the occasion of the restoration of the Serbian Sokol movement, Belgrade, 2022.

Both Associations celebrated the 30th anniversary of the restoration and return to the Sokol movement. The Serbian Sokol Association organised a professional conference (Belgrade, October 31), a ceremonial Sokol Academy at the National Theatre (12 November), the showing of Sokol films at the Cinematheque, and some other activities. And the Serbian Sokol Association organised an anniversary event of the Sokol Academy to mark the restoration of the Sokol movement under the patronage of Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjević (Belgrade, 16 December).

The Status and prospects of the Sokol movement in Serbia are not encouraging, Sokol enthusiasts are making great efforts to maintain activity in the societies, with the modest support of the state and local self-governments. The government does not know or recognize the values of the Sokol movement. Under these conditions, one cannot speak of the development of the Sokol organisation, but only of its survival. Many Sokol societies do not have the basic requirements for their work, which limits the versatility of activities and mass membership.

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Giants of Serbian Gymnastics and the Sokol Movement - The footprints of prominent gymnasts and Sokols - socially, athletically, culturally and historically - make gymnastics and the Sokol movement a unique phenomenon in the legacy of Serbia's past and cultural heritage. Among these hardworking and capable followers of the Sokol idea, some leaders were visionary in building a system of gymnastics movement in their communities. Based on the biographies of gymnastics and Sokol masters, as well as the contributions of prominent personalities already mentioned in the previous text, **five** meritorious promoters of the emergence and development of physical education, visionaries of sport and physical culture in Serbia **stand out - giants of Serbian gymnastics and the Sokol movement** (note of the author) - these are **Stevan Todorović, Vladan Djordjević, Vojislav Rašić, Laza Popović and Miroslav Vojinović**. What they have in common is their avant-garde work on creating new values of social and cultural life in the Principality and Kingdom of Serbia. Versatile educated and charismatic, they were zealous founders, helpers, builders, educators, great patriots and tireless torchbearers of the physical, health and spiritual progress of the people. These scholars each in their way, have left a strong, pioneering, important and indelible mark in the initiation, foundation and development of civil gymnastics and Sokol societies in the Principality and Kingdom of Serbia. It is thankless and difficult to describe in just a few lines how and with what these giants gifted Serbia and the Serbian people².

² The data for "**The Greats of the Serbian Gymnastics and the Sokol Movement**" were taken from Vukašinović, Vladan. (2016). *Gymnastics and the Sokol Movement in Serbia until 1941: the Greats of*

Stevan Steva Todorović (1832-1925), academic, painter and professor - founded the *Gymnastics and Combat Group* in 1857 - the first organised society for physical activity (forerunner of the *Sokol movement*, modern sport and physical culture in Serbia). He exercised numerous activities: in the *Belgrade Society for Gymnastics and Wrestling* he was vice-president and president in two mandates, as well as a member of the board; in the Sokol movement: President of the *Belgrade Gymnastics Society "Sokol"*, President of the *United Association of Sokol Societies "Dušan Silni"*, President of the *Association of Serbian Sokols*; he was the representative of the All-Serbian Sokols in the *All-Slavic Sokol Association*, lifelong Honorary President of the *Belgrade Sokol Parish*, lifelong Honorary Elder of the *Sokol Society Belgrade-Matica*. He participated in the Bulgarian Hero Slets in Sofia (1910), the Sokols in Zagreb (1911) and the first All-Slavic Sokol Slet in Prague (1912). One of the founders of the Serbian *ball* club Sokol, a gymnastics teacher at the Belgrade Gymnasium (1874-1881) and a long-time lecturer in various subjects. In the Serbian-Turkish wars, he was distinguished as a war painter and a newspaper reporter. He was elected first an honorary member and then a full member of the Royal Serbian Academy.

Vladan Djordjević (1844-1930), physician, historian, writer, politician and diplomat - Besides his merits for the socio-cultural, scientific and political life of Serbia, he also made a great contribution to the development of physical culture in the Kingdom of Serbia at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. With the foundation of the *Belgrade Society for Gymnastics and Combat* (1882, today *Sokol society Belgrade-Matica*), he laid the foundation for the modern gymnastic society, which he presided over for two terms as president and one as vice president. He wrote about the importance of the movement, initiated the publication of activities, information and exchange of experiences of gymnasts in the weekly newspaper "Narodno zdravlje" (National Health), helped to establish similar societies throughout Serbia and played an important role in the training of gymnastics teachers. In a visionary way, he foresaw the role of civic gymnastics societies in the development of modern sports. For his contribution to the development of physical education, the Sokols of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia posthumously (1938) awarded him the status of honorary member, calling him the "father of gymnastics clubs and the pioneer of the Sokol movement". He was elected a full member of the Royal Serbian Academy.

Serbian Gymnastics and the Sokol Movement Belgrade: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, pp. 111-157; Vukašinović, Vladan. (2019). "Vladan Djordjević, Life and Work of an Athlete, Scientist, Politician, Writer, Founder of the Serbian Gymnastics and the Sokol Movement" and "Stevan Todorović, Life and Work of an Athlete, Artist, Educator and Founder of Organised Sports in Serbia". U: N. Živanović et al. (ed.) *The beginnings of Sokol Movement in Serbia, Book 5*, pp. 130-155 and 104-118. Niš: FIEP Serbia; Bratislava: FIEP Europe .

Vojislav Rašić, (1869-1943), doctor of law, publicist, diplomat - He made an undeniable contribution to the development of social, cultural and sporting life in Serbia. He exercised the functions of secretary and vice-president in the gymnastics and Sokol movements and associations and enjoyed great prestige among the Czech Sokols because he patiently and tirelessly helped, initiated and founded new societies and associations in Belgrade and throughout the interior of Serbia: *Belgrade Gymnastics Society Sokol* (1891), *Association of Serbian Sokols* (1908), *Belgrade "Sokol"* (1908), *Association of Serbian Knights* (1909), he is one of the founders of the *Association of Sokol Societies "Dušan Silni"* (1910, "most responsible for the reconciliation and unification of Sokol and Knights organisations"), the advocate of the *Association of Sokol Societies "Dušan Silni"* in the *All-Slavic Sokol Association* (1910), one of the founders of the *Association of Serbian Sokol Societies* (1911), founder and president of the *Athletic-Wrestling Sokol Society*. He published the patriotic magazine *Srpski vitez* and is credited with bringing Czech gymnastics instructors to Serbia, bringing the Sokol uniform to Serbia, since 1918 he propagated the Sokol movement by writing articles, songs and books. Since 1911 he participated in the Bulgarian *Junak* and *Sokol Slet*.

Laza Popović (1877-1945), doctor of medicine, full-time professor of radiology. Known as the "father of the Serbian Sokol movement in Austria-Hungary", he contributed significantly to the development of the Sokol movement in Austria-Hungary and southern Serbia and was responsible for the foundation of about 100 Sokol societies and four Sokol parishes. He founded the first Sokol society *Srpski Soko* (Serbian Sokol) in 1904 and the *Fruška Gora* parish in *Sremski Karlovci* in 1905. He established contacts with the Czech, Croatian and Slovenian Sokol masters. He worked tirelessly to unite and unify all the Serbian Sokol societies and associations as well as All-Slavic Sokols wherever they were. At the end of 1911 and the beginning of 1912, he moved the centre of the Serbian Sokol movement from *Sremski Karlovac* to Belgrade, in the free and independent Kingdom of Serbia. He devoted himself to the Sokol movement, was repeatedly elected an elder of the Society and founded the Sokol Reading Room with libraries in *Karlovci*. and in the villages to promote literacy in village life. The journalistic and editorial work of Dr Laza Popović is extremely rich. He was a gifted orator and writer, known for his patriotic Sokol sayings, and he was the editor of several newspapers and magazines, the best known of which is *Serbian Sokol*.

Miroslav Vojinović (František Hoffmann 1878-1948), Sokol teacher, rector, teacher of gymnastics in II, III and IV Belgrade Grammar School and Military Academy (1908-1927), advisor to the Ministry. A thirty-year-old experienced expert, the Czech František Hoffmann (he later adopted a Serbian first and last name), arrived in the Kingdom of Serbia in 1908 and started reorganising, improving technical work, management, training, introducing titles and new modern content at Sokol in Belgrade. Miroslav Vojinović's enormous contribution to the development of gymnastics and the Sokol movement in Serbia is reflected in

his mediation in connecting the Serbian and Czech Sokol movements (1910) and bringing Czech teachers and his participation in the foundation of the *Association of the Serbian Sokol Movement* (1911). He distinguished himself by the numerous positions he held: head of the *Belgrade Sokol Gymnastics Society* - later *Matica Beograd*; head of the *All-Serbian Sokol Association* (since 1911); deputy head of the *Yugoslav Sokol Association* in Ljubljana (since 1919), member of the Council of Elders of the *Belgrade Sokol Parish*; head of the *Dušan Silni Sokol Parish* in Belgrade (since 1920); he organised and taught leadership courses and gymnastics courses at the community and federal levels in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Zagreb and Skopje; officer and advisor in the Department of Physical Education of the Serbian Ministry of Education; as deputy head of FSKY (Association Sokol Kingdom of Yugoslavia), he prepared and led the Sokol Slets in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Prague, three times in Sofia and twice in Ravanica; deputy and first assistant of Dr Viktor Murnik in the three-year preparation and implementation of the first All-Sokol Slets of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Belgrade (1930).



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Popović and Hoffman-Vojinović

CONCLUSION

Today's times are catching up with us faster than ever, as the conditions and features of modern life are changing with incredible speed and unfortunately gear towards dehumanisation, depopulation, restriction of traditions, national identities, freedoms, health, faith, truth, and prosperity. Therefore, I believe that in the face of all the dehumanising influences that prevail in the world and in our country today; it is useful to occasionally remember the value systems of past times, when conditions were created for individuals and there was an opportunity to rise - nationally, morally, culturally, educationally, and health-wise, in all areas. The Sokol movement is one of several such opportunities, both in the past and today. And in the future, we shall see.

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The Sokol movement in Serbia exists and survives in an area where eight states have changed, from the Principality of Serbia to the present Republic of Serbia. Rulers, dynasties, regimes, arrangements and ideologies change. Without changing its essence, the Sokol movement as a progressive movement has left deep traces in the history of Serbia and the Serbian people over a long period.

The Serbian Sokol movement, a phenomenon for three centuries, lives and survives. Sokol marathon runners still run their laps of honour today. Sokol greets "Hello "!

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