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THE CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH SPORTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN THE YEARS 1918–1939

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SUMMARY

The history of the Jewish minority living in Czechoslovakia is an integral and important part of the history of this phenomenon in the Czech Lands. This paper deals with the formation, progress and its disappearance on the eve of the World War II. Problems are divided into separate parts, each dedicated to the sport sector which was gradually done and developed by citizens of Czechoslovakia Jewish nationality. In many of them there were achieved so performance that represented Czechoslovakia at the international level.

Jewish sport was organized in Czechoslovakia in either individual sports clubs or sports sections of the organization Makabi. These Jewish sports corporations created separate organizational units within they competed, but in many sectors they involved in the activities of the national sports association and participated in its competitions.

The overall friendliness to the Czech environment for Jewish activities which was in large contrast to the situation in most neighbouring countries indicates among other things the exercise of separate Jewish sports associations in the Czechoslovak sport associations with the right of national autonomy and relative representation.

Extraordinary position both in size and material conditions and mostly in sport performance was in Prague Jewish sports club Hagibor which creation was dated back to the period just before the World War I. The most successful sector of Jewish sport in Czechoslovakia was swimming followed by athletics.

Key words: sports organization, sports association, national minorities, Jews

INTRODUCTION

The sportsmen of the Jewish nationality, and especially those ones in England, Hungary, France, Austria, Germany, USA and Canada, asserted themselves on both the national and international levels already at the end of the 19th century. They acquired to gain 13 medals during the first modern Olympic Games. These results were reflected also in the international Zionist movement. At the 2nd Zionist Congress in Basel in 1898, Max

Mandelstamm took the floor and stressed the necessity of the physical training as the integral part of the international recovery. At the 5th Zionist Congress in 1901, Max Nordau appealed on Jews to enhance their interests in the physical education and sports. Sports and gymnastics became the official parts of the Zionist programme. The answer on those appeals was the foundation of the Zionist Turner Movement after the 6th Zionist Congress in 1903. This movement was the direct predecessor of the Association Makabi and spread quickly from the Western and Central Europe and Palestine to other parts of the world.

On the eve of the World War I, more than 100 Jewish sports clubs provided their activities. The biggest successes were achieved by Hungarian Jews, the biggest clubs were Ha Koah in Vienna, Bar Kochba in Berlin. At the same time, the most important Jewish sports club came to existence in the Czech countries, and this was unequivocally the Jewish sports club Hagibor Prague.¹ This club originally formed the sports and physical education sections of the political club Poale Cion, which was the movement of the socialist Zionists.

Several Jewish physical education and sports clubs in the Czech countries were able to develop their physical education and sports activities even during the World War I. On the basis of those fragments, the republic organization Makabi was created after the foundation of Czechoslovakia. Its definitive form was then created in 1924, when the Association Makabi was constituted in the Czechoslovak Republic with its site in Prague² (2). This association became gradually one the strongest associations Makabi in the world and one of the most important Jewish organization in Czechoslovakia. In the frame of the Association Makabi there were subsequently created lower organizational bodies – sports associations and the function of the sports chief was introduced.

The Czechoslovak milieu was in general very welcoming to the Jewish sports activities, which was in quite a contrast with the situation in the most neighboring countries and this was proven by the existence of the independent Jewish sports associations in the frame of the Czechoslovak sports associations with the right of the national autonomy and proportional representation. We should mention the fact in this context that the Jewish football association in the Czechoslovak Republic was able to introduce not only inner but also outside administration in Hebrew and the issuance of the Czech-Hebrew Railway Identity Card for players being organized in this association, was the first example of the usage of Hebrew as an official language in Europe ever.³

THE SURVEY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTICULAR SPORTS BRANCHES IN THE YEARS 1918–1938

Gymnastics

The gymnastic exercising formed the basis of the Jewish physical education and the beginnings of the movement Makabi relied on them. The public gymnastics performances

¹ SUA, Jewish sports club Hagibor 1922, ZU – spol. 2A, 5762, k. 535 and also Encyclopedia Judaica (1966), Volume 15, Jerusalem, p. 292.

² SUA, Association Makabi 1924–46, MV-NR, sign. D 3111, k. 5073.

³ Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931), Sports and physical education in the Czechoslovak Republic and abroad, Praha, p. 374.

were always the part of the programme of the Zionist congress. Each such a public performance was important, not only for the movement itself, but also for the town where such a performance took place. Apart from this, the gymnastics competitions between particular sports clubs were organized.⁴

In June 1919, at the occasion of the conference Maccabi in Brno, the public gymnastics and sports races took place, at which 650 sportsmen from 27 countries participated. At the regional gymnastics competition in Brno, which took place in July 1921, sportsmen from 27 countries participated again. The additional races took place from September 1–14 at the occasion of the Zionist Congress organized in Karlovy Vary. The representation of the Czechoslovak Makabi participated in the sports exhibition in Karlovy Vary between August 6–18, 1923. In February 1924, the Makabi Plzen (Pilsner) organized a very successful regional gymnastics exhibition. In 1925, the representative team of the Czechoslovak Maccabi participated in races in Vienna. In 1926, the performance of more than hundred of gymnasts took place in Brno. The Czechoslovak Makabi sent a representative team to the races organized at the occasion of the 13th Zionist Congress in Basel in September 1927. The races took place in Brno from August 5–6, 1928. At the beginning of September, the Makabi took place in races in German Breslau, in October it continued in the tour through Germany and participated in races in Berlin. The large regional gymnastics and athletics races in Ostrava in 1929, with the audience of 60,000 watchers. 700 sportsmen came from Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Lithuania, Palestine, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. The team of the Czechoslovak Makabi participated at the world games Makabi in July 1930. The most important event of the year 1932 was the 1st Makabiah in Tel-Aviv.⁵ The Czechoslovak sportsmen were placed at the third place among all Makabi associations.

The large gymnastics competitions, which belonged to the biggest Jewish sports activities on our territory, took place in Prague between August 21 and September 13, 1933. 270 gymnasts participated in the 2nd Makabiah in Tel-Aviv in April 1935. The Czechoslovak sportsmen were placed at the third place in the sequence of clubs.

Football

There was a huge amount of Jewish football clubs on our territory, which existed even before the year 1918. The best ones were in Prague, Bratislava, Brno and Prostějov. At this most popular sport, the Jews had a very elaborate organization at the very good level. Almost each sports entity and sports club or the association managed its own football team. Those teams were meeting other Jewish but also non-Jewish teams in the frame of the republic and they also traveled quite often to meet their counterparts abroad. The Jewish football had as the unique sports branch in the interwar Czechoslovakia its independent, officially recognized association.

The Jewish Football Association in the Czechoslovak Republic was founded at the conference in Brno in June 1919.⁶ The main initiator of the foundation was Dr. Josef Parkus. The site of the association was in Prague, in the street Karoliny Svaté No. 23.

⁴ Pick, J. C. (1971) Sports. In: *The Jews in Czechoslovakia*. 2. Philadelphia – New York, p. 194.

⁵ A. Herzog, *Erinnerungen und Eindrücke von der I. Makkabiah in Tel-Aviv im Jahre 1932*, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden*, 1966, p. 143–145.

⁶ SUA, Jewish football association 1921, ZU – spol. 2A, inv. c. 1591, k. 408.

The association was recognized officially by the Ministry of Interior after a series of administrative obstructions concerning several articles of the charter on May 12, 1921.⁷ Oskar Kaminsky became a president of the association.

The excerpts from the charter of the Jewish football association in the Czechoslovak Republic:

- § 1. The association is called in Hebrew Kevucoh mesachekej kadar regel jehudis b Czechoslovakia, in Czech–Jewish Football Association in the Czechoslovak Republic, and in German-Judischer Fussballverband in der Tschechoslovakische Republik.
- § 2. The purpose of the association is the organization and representation of all Jewish associations in the Czechoslovak Republic raising the football sport and supporting their sports activities. The association excludes any political tendency. This purpose is achieved by teaching and watching the actual associations and following the foundation of new associations, organizing regular competitions and games of various kinds in which the football sport organized by Jews is to be represented, explaining the basic regulations and game orders, organizing lectures and publishing the press on football sport, supporting and widening of the sports idea in the Jewish nation.

The Jewish football association became the co-founder of the Czechoslovak Football Association with the right of the national autonomy and proportional representation in 1922 “... Jewish football in the Czechoslovak Republic got furthestmost from all the parties of the national movement and also furthestmost from all the Jewish organizations in the whole world...”⁸

Apart from the Jewish football association, there existed in the Czechoslovak Republic also a board of the Jewish football referees. It is extraordinary that we can detect the fragments from the history of such a specific association. The adoption of the charter of the “Board of the Jewish football referees” was recognized on March 14, 1922. The negotiations with the Ministry of Interior were led especially by Rudolf Fischl. One of the main officials was also Otto Baru from Brno. The board of referees formally terminated its activity as far as on June 15, 1950, when it was erased from the cadastre of associations.⁹

Both organizations became the proper members of the Czechoslovak Football Association founded in March 1922 and which members were also the Czech, German and Hungarian football associations. In the structure of the Czechoslovak Football Association, there was also a health council. The regional physician Dr. Jakub Stransky was the head and he was assisted by Jewish physicians Dr. Arnold Brandeis and Dr. Leopold Furst.

The majority of the Jewish football teams in the Czechoslovak Republic were pure amateurs. Only clubs from Bratislava, Brno, Prostějov and Olomouc were able to create half-professional teams. Those clubs could be compared to other non-Jewish clubs in the republic and abroad. Maccabi Brno belonged to the most successful football clubs in Central Europe for certain period of time.

⁷ The same as above.

⁸ Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931), Sports and physical education in the Czechoslovak Republic and abroad. Praha: Almanach of sports, p. 374.

⁹ SUA, Board of Jewish football referees in the Czechoslovak Republic 1922, 1950, MV-NR, sign. D 3111, k. 5080.

The financially demanding policy of this part of the association led to the financial deficit, which endangered the whole existence of Hagibor. Moreover, after the first boom of the football section of Hagibor at the beginning of the twenties in Prague, where juniors had 5–6 teams and when the financial impact was positive, it came later to a huge financial crisis which resulted in firing of the best players. The club also lost its agreement and as well as the rent of the sports ground of Sparta Prague in 1923. The activity of the football section of Hagibor was able to renew later and to create new amateur teams. The football enthusiasts with the head Dr. Frantisek Lagus were able and willing to organize the financial support for the construction of the new football stadium in the Prague district of Stranice, opposite the Vinohrady cemetery. This construction became a reality already in 1926. This stadium became the important centre of young Prague Jews and was inaugurated by the sports competitions called Days of Youth.

The characteristic signs of the Jewish football in the interwar Czechoslovakia were the fluctuations in the number of organized clubs and players. In 1922, there were 1654 registered players in 44 clubs, but in 1926 only 194 registered players in only 8 clubs. It came to a certain growth in 1930 when 550 registered players were in 15 clubs. The fluctuation was related to the leaving of the majority of professional players from the Jewish football association. The most successful Jewish football club was ZSK Makabi Prostějov. Other well known clubs apart from Hagibor were Makabea Bratislava, Makabi Brno and Makabi Moravská Ostrava.

Athletics and long-distance running

The athletics (track, cross-country and long-distance running) developed at the beginning as the integral part of the gymnastics activities. It gained independence soon to which especially the popularity of distance races contributed. The winner of the first year of our most popular road race Bechovice–Prague organized in 1897 became the athlete of the Jewish origin Jakub Wolf, who at that time raced under the team AC Sparta. His constituent record on the course of approximately 10km was 39:03 minutes. He repeated his victory in the two following years and he improved his time. In 1921, the members of the team AC Sparta, Josef Alcantara Wicher, Karel Frankenstein became the Czechoslovak champions in the race on 4 × 400 meters. Karel Frankenstein became also a champion in the race on 800 meters.¹⁰

In 1923, only three Jewish sports clubs in Czechoslovakia had their own athletic teams and these were Hagibor Prague, Hakoah Olomouc and Makabi Prostějov. All three clubs were the members of the Czechoslovak Amateur Athletic Union.

There exist very few remaining findings on the athletic activities of the Jewish clubs except of the athletic section of Hagibor. In the period after the World War I, the activity of athletes of Hagibor was on the good level and they achieved many important successes. Hagibor won the first prize in the relay race through Prague. Hagibor also kept a book of records from 1923.¹¹ Thanks to Max Lewy they organized the so-called athletic league. Vincenc Machacek, the well known trainer, belonged to its most important officials.

¹⁰ Pick, J. C. (1971) Sports. In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia 2*. Philadelphia – New York, p. 200

¹¹ Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, unworked fonds of the Jewish sports club Hagibor – light athletic section 1933–1938.

The new club stadium was opened in Strasnice on June 12, 1927. At this occasion, the huge athletic competitions took place. The relay race was organized to the 10th anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia, at which twenty athletes from Hagibor participated. The track led from Bila Hora to downtown Prague. In 1929, the Machacek Memorial was organized by Hagibor to honor its devoted trainer. The outstanding runners Andrej Engel and Oskar Heks joined Hagibor and the second named became the most successful long-distance runner of that time. The official records of the association Makabi in the Czechoslovak Republic were mostly kept by the athletes from Hagibor Prague on December 31, 1929. F. Polak was the champion in the 100 m and 200 m run, O. Margolius in the 400 m run, W. Frankel in the 800 m and 1500 m run, as well as 5 and 10 km, J. Klempfner in the shot put, J. Reach in the high jump, long jump and triple jump, Dr. Zander in the javelin throw. Only javelin thrower Feher and discus thrower Dr. Gorok from Bratislava were able to join them.¹²

Ten athletes sent by the Czechoslovak Maccabi participated in the sports festival of the World Association Makabi organized in summer 1930 in Antwerpen. They achieved a range of success. Dr. Zander won here in both high and long jumps, Engel was 2nd in the 200 m run and 3rd in the 100 m run.

The relay of Hagibor won the open championship of Germany in Hamburg that year. In the following year, Andrej Engel created a new Czechoslovak record in the run on 200 m and won the international completion in Pardubice. Oskar Heks won repeatedly the Czechoslovak title in the marathon. In 1932, the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee nominated Andrej Engel and Oskar Heks to the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Hagibor supported their participation from its own budget. Engel ended in the semi-finals at the Olympic Games, Heks came on the 8th place in the marathon.¹³

In 1933, Andrej Engel participated in the student world games in Italian Torino and won here the gold medal in the 200 m race. In August, Hagibor co-organized the sports games in Prague at the occasion of the performance of the eighteenth Zionist Congress. Oskar Heks won the races Bechovice–Prague, Pribram–Dobris, Prague–Beroun. In the years to come, Engel vindicates his titles on 100 m and 200 m and Heks was unconquerable in the marathon.

The complete athletic team participated in the Makabiah in Tel-Aviv in 1935. The first place won Bedrich Waser in the long jump and high jump. Vilda Retschau won the first place in the nonathlon. Jiri Freund won the completion of the discus throwers. In the same year, Engel and Freund represented Czechoslovakia in the interstate competition with Japan. In October, Engel won the athletic competitions in Frankurt am Main.

In 1937, Jakub Birnhoz Kubik from Hagibor won the running races of the army games in Brevnov. The Machacek Memorial was organized for the last time on September 1, 1938, which was also the Czechoslovak junior championship in athletics. Girls from Hagibor won the second place, boys ended on the third place. The Day of Youth was organized in September at the stadium in Strasnice and this was in fact the last athletic action of the club.

¹² Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931). Sports and the physical education in the Czechoslovak Republic and abroad. Praha: Almanach of sports, p. 377.

¹³ Pick, J. C. (1971). Sports. In: The Jews of Czechoslovakia. 2. Philadelphia – New York, p. 203.

Swimming

The swimming and other swimming sports were most probably the most successful sports branches of the Jewish sportsmen in the interwar Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak Amateur Swimming Association was founded in January 1919. The Jewish clubs joined it in 1922.¹⁴ The association represented Czechoslovakia in the International Swimming Federation FINA. 72 clubs were organized in the Czechoslovak association on March 1, 1925. The biggest Jewish clubs were Bar Kochba Brno and Hagibor Prague.

The great amount of Jewish swimmers raced in other clubs. In 1924 at the Olympic games in Paris, there were 5 Jews from the total Czechoslovak representation of 14 swimmers. The biggest credit of the promotion of the swimming among Jews had the swimming club Bar Kochba Brno. This club raised also the later successful representatives, which were Rudolf Piowaty and Julius Balasz. Balasz started his racing career in Zilina in Slovakia. His disciplines were springboard jump and diving. He became a Czechoslovak champion with Olympic ambitions. He later moved to Prague and joined Hagibor. R. Piowaty was an extraordinary backstroke swimmer who kept a range of Czechoslovak records and won many champion titles. In Bar Kochba Brno, later excelled swimmers like backstroke F. Landau and crawler Wilhelm, among women Ledererova-Hanslova. Due to its intensive work in this sports field, Prague took the leading role from Brno, which was originally the main centre of the Jewish swimming sport. Hagibor Prague had the only competitor and this was the champion team Bar Kochba Bratislava.

Hagibor had very competent officials in the leadership of the swimming section. The most important was probably Hugo Steiner who himself attracted several extraordinary swimmers to join the club. The first swimming activity for public was presented at the Institute for Blind, where Hagibor used their swimming pool for trainings. Hugo Steiner belonged to the basis pillars of the Hagibor team, which only in 1923 participated in 13 national and 3 international swimming competitions and won 79 prizes, from which 27 were first places. This period was also a beginning of the swimming career of Frantisek Getreuer, holder of 25 Czechoslovak records. He was also for a long period of time the biggest star of the water polo team, which won the champion title four times. It was in the years 1928, 1935, 1936 and 1937. Hella Bester showed already the high level at the age of 14 and together with her sisters Tilli and Bessi they formed the extraordinary crawler relay of Hagibor. Hella Bester and Anka Klempfner were later nominated to the women's representation team. Makabea Bratislava organized the international swimming completions in April 1924. In June 1925, Hagibor Prague celebrated the 30th anniversary of the races on the route on the Vltava River between the Strelecky island and Zofin. These races were co-created in 1895 and co-organized by the writer Ignac Hermann, who had the function of the main referee at that time. Two swimmers of the Jewish nationality got two Czechoslovak records in 1926. It was Elsa Messingerova from Kosice on 100m in freestyle¹⁵ and Jiri Messinger on 100m in backstroke. Balasz won again and was nominated to the European Championship in jumps in Budapest, where he took the third place. In the club range of the Czechoslovak association for the year 1926, the male team

¹⁴ Pick, J. C. (1971). Sports. In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*. 2. Philadelphia – New York, p. 206.

¹⁵ Further freestyle.

of Hagibor got the second place and the female team ended up at the third place. Dr. Pavel Steiner from PTE Bratislava was nominated to the European championship in 1927 in Bologna. He was also nominated to the Slavic race in Beograd.

Due to those successes, it was managed to receive a state support for the construction of the modern swimming pool in Klimentska street. This pool was festively opened with the international competitions. Kurt Epstein, Frantisek Getreuer, Frantisek Schulz and Pavel Steiner, Julius Balasz were nominated to the Czechoslovak representation to the Olympic games in Amsterdam in 1928.

F. Getreuer was the multiple champion of Czechoslovakia and the holder of several Czechoslovak records especially on 200m and 400m in freestyle. The Czechoslovak record was held by the relay of Hagibor on 4 × 200 m in freestyle, composed of swimmers Lederer, Rado, Polakof I., Getreuer.¹⁶

The Jewish swimmers got 14 national records in 1929. Steiner, Balacz and Getreuer were unbeatable in their disciplines at that time. Those successes provided inspiration for the youth and resulted in the raise of the number of members in the swimming section of Hagibor. It had around 1000 members.

In the sports festival of the World Association Makabi which was held in Antwerpen in summer 1930, 15 swimmers delegated by the Czechoslovak Makabi participated. They achieved a range of victories and many top places. The big supremacy was achieved in the water polo where two complete male teams competed.

The domestic invincibility of Hagibor swimmers was interrupted at the competitions in Prague in 1931 by the French swimmer Taxis. He won all races. Steiner was also successful at the competitions in Paris. In the same year, Czechoslovakia participated in the European championship in the water polo in Paris. Two from seven team members were Jews. In 1933, the interstate competitions between Czechoslovakia and Poland took place in Warsaw. There were five Jews in the Czechoslovak team. In 1934, the Hagibor swimmers participated in the competitions in France and one year later in Germany. Balasz won water jumps at the second Makabiah in Tel-Aviv in 1935. In February 1937, Hagibor invited the founder of the modern water polo Bela Komjady to the match of his mother Budapest team with Hagibor. The club from Bratislava won further champion titles. The fourteen year girl Erica Singer became the star of the domestic championship in 1937.

Tennis

The tennis started to spread among the Jewish minority in the Czech countries already at the beginning of the 20th century. The well known actor Ernst Deutsch achieved an excellent accomplishment before the year 1918, further players were Herbert, Karel Fuchs, Stedry and Schidloff. After 1918, Arnost Gottlieb from Brno was the first Jewish national who became the member of the Czechoslovak Olympic team. He moved ahead to the second round of the male doubles together with Friedrich Rohrer in Paris in 1924. Frantisek Soyka from Prague Smichov was very successful at the championship of

¹⁶ Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931). Sports and physical education in the Czechoslovak republic and abroad. Prague: Almanach of sports, p. 278.

Czechoslovakia in 1925. He lost his game as far as the finals with the extraordinary Jan Kozeluh. In the same year, Ota Hermann from Mlada Boleslav helped to the victory of Czechoslovakia in the match against Italy. The Czechoslovak Tennis Association – CLTA gathered at that time more than 17 thousands of registered players of several nationalities. The leading personality and recognized organizer was the factory owner Karel Robetin.

In 1927, the Czechoslovak Davis Cup team set on two Jewish players in the match against Greece, namely Frantisek Soyka from Prague and Arnost Gottlieb from Brno. Soyka himself won in Davis Cup for Czechoslovakia two winning singles until 1928 and together with his partner Marsalek, he celebrated five victories from seven starts.

In the break between 20th and 30th, the tennis was a very popular sport among Jews in the Czech and Moravia. The best Jewish tennis players usually did not play in the Jewish clubs, but even though the tennis achieved a great development in Hagibor Prague, then in Makabi Brno, Makabi Teplice, Makabi Prostějov and Makabi Olomouc.¹⁷ The tennis was played even by single persons in different clubs.

Ladislav Hecht, native from Slovak town Zilina, became a permanent member of the Czechoslovak Davis Cup team in the years 1931–1938. During this period, Czechoslovakia achieved the finals of the European zone. Ladislav Hecht also represented Czechoslovakia at the championships in Wimbledon, Paris, Rome and overseas in the USA, Canada, Japan, China and India.¹⁸ He won championships of Hungary and Poland and six times the Czechoslovak Robetin Cup. He was twice among the first ten players of the world chart, three times among the first five players of the European chart. He was the player number one in Czechoslovakia in 1936 and 1938.

In the period between April and May 1938, the Czechoslovak Davis Cup team traveled to the match to the Yugoslav Zagreb. Hecht was refused the entry to the country at the Yugoslav border due to his Jewish citizenship.¹⁹ The captain of the team insisted that either the whole team would travel to Zagreb or nobody. In the sensitive atmosphere marked by the Nazism coming to power, the Czechoslovak team lost at the end.

Table tennis

The table tennis was played in Czechoslovakia unorganized until 1924 or was played as a supplementary activity in some tennis clubs and student dormitories. In the same year, a group of followers under the leadership of Arnost Taussig, the sports editor of the newspaper *Prager Tagblatt* and the entrepreneur in the aviation industry Milos Bondy, made the first steps to the organization and immediately organized a first tournament, which took place at the student dormitory at Albertov in Prague.

The Czechoslovak Association of Table Tennis – CSTTA was founded in 1925. A year later, this association became a member of the International Federation of Table Tennis. In 1928, the CSTTA acted really on the nationwide level and all the ethnic groups living in then Czechoslovakia had their representatives there, including Jewish entity. Milos

¹⁷ Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931). Sports and the physical education in the Czechoslovak Republic and abroad. Prague: Almanach of sports, p. 278.

¹⁸ F. Farber, Jews and sports in our time. In: Jews and Moravia, 1999, p. 138.

¹⁹ Pick, J. C. (1971). Sports. In: The Jews of Czechoslovakia. 2. Philadelphia – New York, p. 212

Bondy and Zdenek Heydusek had the greatest merit in its foundation.²⁰ At the beginning of 30th, this association already had 62 clubs and 1046 registered members. Truda Klein, only fifteen years old girl from Makabi Brno, excellently represented Czechoslovakia in the World Championship in Olomouc at the beginning of 1935. She knocked down Marie Kettner, acting champion, also from the Czechoslovak Republic and due to that fact she was nominated to the Czechoslovak team for the World Championship in London in 1935. Women won there the game of teams and in the game of individuals, Truda Klein achieved the third place. In 1936 in Prague, the Czechoslovak team vindicated its victory and in won the third place in Baden by Vienna. Truda Klein with Erwin Kohn, the champion of the World Makabi Union won the world championship in the mixed doubles. In 1937, she won the first place in the Moravian-Silesian championship.

Albert Bergman from Kosice also belonged to the successful tennis players of the Jewish nationality. He was the winner of the male singles at the Makabi games organized between 23. – 29. August 1933 in Prague. He achieved his victory before eyes of the president of the World Makabi Union, the Lord Melchetta and the patroness of the games Lady Erleigh. Albert Bergman also won the Slovak championship in the table tennis inn the years 1935 and 1936. He was practically unbeatable at the competitions and tournaments in the frame of the Eastern Slovakia. Imre Salser from Bratislava and Pavel Lowy from Prague belonged to successful players at the regional level.

Fencing

The popularity of the fencing among the Jewish community in Czechoslovakia was different in Czech countries and in Slovakia. In the Czech countries, it was the issue of only several individuals from the higher society and student circles, on the contrary, in Slovakia it was a broader phenomenon. Ivan Tanzer and Slavo Kalny and Alexander Salamoun had the merit on the development of fencing in the Eastern Slovakia. A. Salamoun founded the first school of fencing in Levoca even before the First World War and in 1919, after he moved to Kosice, he contributed to the foundation of the fencing school also there. In 1922, the first championship took place in Kosice and the winner weans Edmund Szenes. The graduates of the fencing school in Kosice, which was later directed by Samo Pacenovsky, could pride themselves with the range of titles of the international and national champions in the years 1927 to 1938. The most successful were Dr. Tibor Klein, Alexander Barta, Dr. Herbert Gador, Dr. Gejza Nemeyi and Otto Lewith. In 1927, Otto Lewith won over the Olympic champion Hungarian Dr. Posta in Kosice.

The traces which remained from the history of the fencing in the Jewish dispersion in the Czech countries are less expressive. In 1930, Slavia Prague organized the international competition in fencing, at which Emil Ascher from Prague won the third place. In the same year, the student of the Faculty of Law of the Charles University in Prague Frantisek Vohryzek-Vernon won the academic championship of the Czechoslovak Republic in all three fencing disciplines. He became a member of the Czechoslovak representative team in 1934 and consequently he participated in the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. There

²⁰ Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931). Sports and physical education in the Czechoslovak Republic and abroad. Prague: Almanach of sports, p. 300.

he was disqualified from the sword of singles in the first round and in the competition of teams he continued in the second round in a sword as well as in a fleuret.

Rowing and canoeing

Even though the sportsmen of the Jewish nationality did not have their own rowing and canoeing clubs in the interwar Czechoslovakia, the results of some of them had also the international impact.

In 1923, Emil Ascher, the international secretary of the Association of Rowers of the Czechoslovak Republic, participated in the congress of the International Federation of Rowing FISA, which took place in Como in Italy. This meeting entrusted to Czechoslovakia the organization of the following European championship in rowing, which took place in Prague between September 5–6, 1925 and which organization brought the international merit.

In 1929, Viktor Langer, a member of the eight CAC Roudnice co-created at the so-called Prague Mayor Race – the race for the trophy of the city of Prague for eights with Cox – the Czechoslovak record on the route of 2000 m with the time of 6 minutes and 21 seconds.

In 1930, the members of the Travel Club Prague Steinerova-Kende won with the time of 5 minutes and 31.6 seconds in the competition of the canoe couples on the route of 1000 m at the 3rd Women's World Games. Those ones were organized by the Federation Sportive Feminine International FSFI in Prague and competitors from 18 countries participated.

Field and ice hockey

The field hockey was a popular sport in Czechoslovakia in the twenties and thirties. The Jewish sports clubs in Prague, Moravská Ostrava, Brno and Bratislava had their hockey teams. The majority of players were students. The biggest rivals in this sport were Hagibor Prague and Hagibor Moravská Ostrava.

In December 1923, the team of Hagibor Prague took the second place at the tournament organized by the at that time the Czechoslovak champion team – Sokol Karlin. The organizer of the league in Brno was Walter Wolf. The trainings started in February 1924. Dr. Eric Kresta, Pavel Corwin, Kurta Hanus, Lehr Peld and Armin Herz belonged to the best hockey players in Moravská Ostrava. They competed with Zdenek Fort, Max Posin and others who were nominated at the Theodor Herzl Cup. Starting from 1927, they started to use the stadium at Hagibor for field hockey. Dr. Arnost Katz was responsible for the administration of hockey competitions. Arnost Fuchs and Hella Hahn organized the women's hockey team. At the out sorting part of the Czechoslovak hockey championship, the women's team Hagibor competed with the German hockey team. All the Czechoslovak hockey clubs at that time kept the vivid foreign contacts. At the end of the twenties, the Czechoslovakia was represented by field hockey players from Hagibor – Margolius, Frankl, Herz, Lekner and Dr. Lagus.²¹

²¹ Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931). Sport and the physical education in the Czechoslovak Republic and abroad. Prague: Almanach of sports, p. 256.

The first Jewish player at the representative ice hockey team was Dr. Karel Hartmann, the Prague lawyer, who was for many years the player of AC Sparta. He was a member of the Czechoslovak hockey team at the Olympic Games in Antwerpen in 1920. Furthermore he was in Chamonix in 1924 and in Saint Moritz in 1928. Another player of the Jewish nationality, George Taussig, played at the regular basis for Sparta.

Skiing and skating

The first Jewish sports club which founded a section of winter sports was Makabi Most, it was in October 1923. Makabi Teplice-Sanov founded its skiing section in February 1924 and Hagibor Praha in October 1924. In the same year, the championship of Czechoslovakia in skating took place, at which Ota Margolius from Hagibor won the first place in the race on 500 meters and second place in figure skating in the junior category. The popularity of winter sports among Jewish sportsmen grew quickly in Czechoslovakia. Their activities were not quite coordinated at the beginning. As lately as 1929, the Jewish skiing association was founded with its site in Brno.²² Its members were mostly Moravian clubs Makabi. In February 1933, the Jewish Association of Winter Sports was founded in Bratislava. The elected president was Pavel Morz from Novy Bohumin. The number of members exceeded soon 3000. The decision to organize the international winter games Makabi in Polish town Zakopane contributed to its foundation. The nomination competitions were organized in January. It took place in Krkonose for the Czech clubs, in Beskydy for Moravian and Silesian clubs and in Lubochna for Slovak clubs. The games itself took place in Poland from February 2–5. The sportsmen came from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Romania. Such a first example of winter sports attracted 350 active participants and more than 10,000 watchers. 46 newspapermen were present, among them also Arnost Frantisek Taussig, the sports editor of the daily Prager Tagblatt. He became also the main speaker at the closing ceremony. The growing number of Jewish skiers led to the construction of their own skiing centers. The first one was opened in January 1933 by Makabi Teplice- Sanov in Zinnwald. The group of Zionists from Jablonec conducted by Dr. K. Liebshtein, F. Synek, F. Fafael together with friends from Liberec and Trutnov opened their centre in Korenov in December 1934. The dormitory Makabi was opened at Klinovec in Krusne mountains in February 1935. At the same time, the skiing races were organized, in t which all the members of the association of winter sports participated. Artur Herzog, president of the Czechoslovak Makabi, Dr. Angelo Goldstein and Fritz Ullmann guided the opening ceremony. In September 1936, the chalet Nad Kralikama and the winter house Makabi were opened in Banská Bystrica and Kremnica in Slovakia. The last prewar activity in winter sports was the skiing championship organized in February 1938 under the auspices of the World Organization Makabi.

Horseback riding

The history of the organized horseback riding started in the Czech countries in 1838, when Prince Franz Lichtenstein, the officer of the riding regiment in Pardubice, founded

²² The same, p. 378

the Hunting Association. The hunting was organized in English style. The necessary horses were bred partly at the private noble farms, but also in many farms of Jewish owners who were considered to be experts in horse breeding. Baron Moritz Bergman was the co-founder of the Association for the upgrading of the horse breeding and horse races in the Czech countries, which was later renamed to the Czech racing association and which initiated in 1874 the organization of the 1st year of the famous Great Pardubicka and which organized those races until the year 1919. The Prague riding club was founded in 1923 and allowed the membership to the Jewish nationals. Those members were Hugo Perutz, Artur Perutz, Pavel Kominik, Frantisek Kominik and Frantisek Kliner. The most successful horse racer of the Jewish nationality in the Czech countries was probably the captain Arnost Eisner who ended at the third place in Great Pardubicka in 1927 on the horse named Dunka.

The harness races were organized by the Harness racing and all sports association founded in Prague in 1921. This association had two Jewish members, Karl Friedman, the farmer from Prague Nusle and Josef Mendl, the chairman for the production of leather garments in Prague Vysocany.

Aviation

Josef Popper-Lynkeus from Kolin belonged to the pioneers in the aviation, who made lots of experiments in the aviation techniques and who published the results of this test in 1911.

The exclusive position had Karl Arnstein, the native from Prague and the head designer and engineer of the society Luftschiffahrts Gesellschaft Zeppelin in German Friedrichshafen. He participated as an engineer on the construction of more than 40 airships, including overseas ones. In 1924, he moved to the USA where he continued in the development of airships and later aircrafts as well.

Mrs. Margaretta Ferrari-Kohnova excelled among active pilots in the Czechoslovak Republic. She was most probably the only Jewish woman pilot in Czechoslovakia.²³ In June 1933, she participated in the international races in Poland and won 4 prizes. She was also the holder of several Czechoslovak women's records. In 1934, she won the 3rd place at the international aviation day, organized by the Moravian aero club. The flying on sail planes became the new branch. This less demanding branch developed quickly. Frantisek Stein belonged to the outstanding personalities of the Jewish origin in the aviation who was also the producer of the aviation spare parts and also edited the magazine Aviation and further Otto Teller, bank officer from České Budejovice who however tragically died at the air show in 1931. Bohumil Stein from Vlasim belonged to the best Czech parachutists who successfully jumped from at that time real height of 2000 meters.

Handball

The handball was very popular especially among Jewish girls. The highest efficiency had Jewish girl's handball teams in Znojmo, Prostějov and Ostrava. In the regions where there were no special Jewish handball clubs, the Jewish girls played in regional representative

²³ Pick, J. C. (1971). Sports. In: The Jews of Czechoslovakia. 2. Philadelphia – New York.

teams. The successful trips of Jewish handball girl players from Czechoslovakia to Vienna and Budapest contributed to the expansion of the women's handball to the local Jewish sports clubs.²⁴

Other sports

Volleyball and basketball also developed in the Jewish minority in the interwar Czechoslovakia, but only on the non-competitive level. Handball was also on the minimum level. The most popular tourist activity was the water tourism but also only in the non-organized form.

THE JEWISH PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS COMMUNITY IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC

This organization should have become the connecting link between the nationally and physical educationally oriented movement Makabi and the Jewish sport represented especially by the Jewish Football Association, the Board of Jewish Football Referees and the Jewish sports clubs which successfully developed the activities in Prague (Hagibor²⁵, Hakoah²⁶) and several other big towns. It was officially founded on September 17, 1921.²⁷ Dr. Evzen Stern, the chairman, belonged to the most significant representatives and as well as the two vice-chairmen, Artur Herzog and Evzen Justic. He was at the same time the chairman of the Jewish Football Association. The excerpts from the charter of the Jewish physical education and sports community in the Czechoslovak Republic:

- § 1. The association is called in Hebrew Aguda lehitamlut u lesport becechoslovakea, in Czech Jewish physical education and sports community in the Czechoslovak Republic and in German Judische Turn- und Sportgemeinde in der CSR. The site is in Prague.
- § 2. The purpose of the association is the unification of all Jewish sports and physical education associations, promotion of the continuous physical education of the Jewish people and the awakening of the national self-confidence.

²⁴ Bures, P., Plichta, J. (1931). Sports and the physical education in the Czechoslovak Republic and abroad. Prague: Almanach of sports, p. 275.

²⁵ Hagibor Prague was enlarged gradually to the most important Jewish sports association in the period of the first republic in Czechoslovakia. The club was composed of single, relatively independent sports sections. The football section, then during the World War I the light athletic section, after the war the hockey section (field and ice), the swimming and tennis sections. Hagibor also offered other sports like rowing, chess, and winter sports and also women's sports. The swimming and light athletic sections became the most important sections during the time. Especially in those sports sections, the sportsmen of Hagibor achieved the excellent results. The site of the club was at Celetna street No. 22. The club colors were blue-white – SUA, Jewish sports club Hagibor 1922, ZU – spolk., 2A, 5762, k. 535.

²⁶ The constituting meeting of the Jewish sports club Hakoah Prague took place on August 29, 1926. This club was aimed especially to the association ball games, Egon Muller was elected the chairman, the CEO Josef Steiner, cashier Hynek Manler and the head of the football section Josef Haudniczky. The provincial political administration recommended to the police directory on September 25, 1926, to register the association Hakoah Prague to its association registrar. According to the approved charter, its was the association non-political, was not allowed to organize political activities or participated in the political activities. The sign of the association was the five-pointed David star of the golden color – SUA, Sports club Hakoah 1926, ZU – spolk., 2 A/4673, k. 721.

²⁷ SUA, Jewish physical education and sports community 1921–28, MV-SR, sign. 6/59/20, k. 1040.

The Jewish physical education and sports association but never started to fill its prospective role as the roof organization of the Jewish physical education and sports in Czechoslovakia and after several years, the negotiations on its dissolution started. The resolution on its dissolution was adopted by the general assembly which took place in Brno on August 29, 1927. Consequently, its vice-chairman Artur Herzog informed the police directory in Prague on November 8, 1927 that the association had dissolved voluntarily. According to the attached agenda, the proposal for the dissolution of the association was adopted unanimously. The information on the dissolution of the association was published in the Official List on November 24, 1927. Furthermore, several members opposed the fulfillment of the clause of the charter on the three quarter participation at the general assembly in question. After the consequent negotiations, the association stopped existed factually and officially in 1928. It was quite clear that the original ambitious plans to create an official unifying connecting link between the nationally oriented physical education movement and rather non-political Jewish sports failed and both branches of the physical education and sports in Czechoslovakia were connected only unofficially.

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PŘÍSPĚVEK K DĚJINÁM ŽIDOVSKÉHO SPORTU V ČESKOSLOVENSKU V LETECH 1918–1938

JAN ŠTUMBAUER

SOUHRN

Historie sportu židovské menšiny žijící v Československu tvoří nedílnou, a nikoliv nevýznamnou, součást dějin tohoto jevu v Českých zemích. Toto sdělení pojednává o jeho vzniku, postupném vývoji a jeho zániku v předvečer 2. světové války. Problematika je členěna do samostatných celků věnovaných jednotlivým sportovním odvětvím, která byla postupně pěstována a rozvíjena občany Československa židovské národnosti. V řadě z nich dosáhli takové výkonnosti, že reprezentovali Československo na mezinárodní úrovni.

Židovský sport byl v Československu organizován buď v samostatných sportovních klubech, nebo ve sportovních sekcích organizace Makabi. Tyto židovské sportovní korporace vytvářeli samostatné organizační celky, v rámci kterých soutěžili, ale v řadě odvětví se podíleli na činnosti celostátního sportovního svazu a účastnili se jeho soutěží.

O celkové přívětivosti českého prostředí k židovským aktivitám, která byla ve značném kontrastu se situací ve většině okolních zemí, svědčí mimo jiné právě existence samostatných židovských sportovních svazů v rámci československých sportovních asociací s právem národní autonomie a poměrného zastoupení.

Zcela mimořádné postavení a to jak co do velikosti, materiálních podmínek a hlavně sportovní výkonnosti, měl pražský Židovský sportovní klub Hagibor, jehož vznik se datuje do období těsně před vypuknutím 1. světové války. Nejúspěšnějším odvětvím židovského sportu v Československu bylo plavání následované atletikou.

Klíčová slova: sportovní organizace, sportovní svazy, národnostní menšiny, Židé

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