

**Review Paper**

**SOKOLSTVO –  
THE NATIONAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENT  
OR A POLITICAL PARTY**

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**Zvezdan Savić, Dijana Savić**

Faculty of physical education, University of Niš, Serbia and Montenegro

**Abstract.** *By studying the historiographic projects, one can see that the history of Sokolstvo doesn't have an appropriate place in Serbian historiography, whereas there might be certain vagueness, perplexity and misuse of this national movement which left its trait in the physical culture of its time.*

*This study was provoked by the negative tendencies in presenting the Sokolstvo and its inadequate treatment by certain social institutions.*

*Hereby it should be pointed out that the entire activity in the physical culture (the sports activities) at the end of the XIX and the beginning of XX century up to 1941 was held in Sokolstvo and under its supervision, whereas one could feel the influence of Sokolstvo on ideological, political and cultural grounds.*

**Key words:** *Sokolstvo, physical culture, physical education, national movement, political party.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical education has, over the centuries, had its specific development which was conditioned by the development of the society; so we have the context of the social dependence of the physical culture. That is how one should see the *Sokolstvo* – as a part of the Serbian history of physical culture.

As a Slavic cultural, national-liberational and liberal movement, *Sokolstvo* was founded in Bohemia in 1862 under the leadership of a Czech doctor Miroslav Tirsh (Žutić, 1998: 5).

Since it was impossible to organize a military formation in Austria-Hungary, the leaders of *Sokolstvo* movement firmly decided to unite the Slavic people and prepare them to fight for territorial and spiritual freedom (Žutić, 1998: 6).

The Serbian *Sokolstvo* was in Austria-Hungary presented as the liberal national-liberational movement which covered up its true goal by sports activities, and the true goal was the freedom and union of all Serbian countries, thereby following the idea of the Slavs (Žutić, 1991:14).

The leaders and founders of the Serbian *Sokolstvo* were dr Laza Popović and Milan Todorović who founded the Serbian *Soko* in 1904 in Sremski Karlovci.

In the Yugoslav Kingdom the *Sokolstvo* presented a pacifistic and universally human organization which tried to cover up its liberal-ideological grounds because of the political situation at the time.

In socialist Yugoslavia, the history of physical culture during the Yugoslav kingdom was studied as the review of the sports results, but the organizational structure of the institutions and organizations for physical culture was partly uncovered. However, although *Sokolstvo* was taboo during this period it also had, as an organized physical activity, a great importance for the later development of physical culture, though it was known under a pseudonym.

After the Second World War the *Sokolstvo* was treated as a fascist, police and anti-social organization but never as a political movement or a political party. A number of authors considered it to be an ideological stream in the physical culture.

In different periods, with their social structures, the movement was differently treated, which gives different aspects of this movement but also the official prohibitions of its activity. The first was imposed in 1914 by the Austria-Hungary government because of, as they thought, pan-Serbian propaganda and the abuse of *Sokolstvo* in order to secede the southern countries from the Monarchy; another prohibition was imposed in 1945 in FNRJ because the government treated the *Sokolstvo* as an anti-national organization with fascist characteristics. However, the period from the foundation of this movement in 1904 until the cessation of its work in 1945 was long enough to make a strong impact on later development of physical culture, to initiate new attitudes, and to initiate the appearance of new organizations.

## 2. COURSE PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND FALCONY

The Serbian *Sokolstvo* was given a stimulus by the dynastic and political changes in the Yugoslav kingdom after Austria-friendly Obrenović dynasty had been dethroned, when the western democratic and liberal Karadorđevićs came to power.

*Sokolstvo*, as an ideological movement, was preceded by certain events and people of great importance for its later development. We should point out the influence of J. A. Komenski who was the first to include physical education in the school curriculum (1650). After the physical education had found its place in the school system, important social, economic and political changes took place during XVII and XVIII century. That was the time of J. Lock (1632-1704), J. J. Russeau (1712-1788), as well as Falenber and Bazedov. They are the most meritorious ones for the later development of physical education. Their work later inspired the educators to re-direct the development of physical culture into different directions. These directions of development point to rich resources of ideas and the possibilities of physical education.

According to Živanović, (2000: 156-158) we can point to five different aspects of physical education development:

- ethnocentrism
- biocentrism
- egocentrism
- anthropocentrism
- theoanthropocentrism

Each of these aspects was formed within certain social periods, with characteristic philosophy of physical education. The Ethnocentrism was, as a movement, formed in turbulent times at the end of XVIII century, when there were international conflict in Europe, and when Napoleon's wars presented the conflict between the old and the new. The nations were strengthening and the period of professional soldiers was over. In such circumstances people (potential soldiers) feel the need for physical activities. The most important representatives of this movement are: Frans Nahtegal, Per Henrich Ling, Fridrich Ludvig Yan, and Miroslav Tirsh as the representative of *Sokolstvo* (Živanović & Živković, 1997: 129).

The work of these people shows the idea of ethnocentrism. It is characterised by group exercises, strengthening and developing the relationships within the groups, introducing the military gymnastics which forms strong and brave soldiers with strong body and determination for the defence from the enemy. In one word, a new army was formed – the civil army, and not the individuals who were to state the demands of the society.

Biocentrism grew out of the human recognition of natural, impulsive movement, the need for playing, discovery of oneself and the world by means of experience and physical activities.

Egocentrism was founded in England in sixteenth century. The main activities were games and sports, and they emphasized glory, fair play, sports dignity, individual strain and courage.

Anthropocentrism is the philosophic view of the world which conceives the man as the centre of the world and the final cause of its development.

Theoanthropocentrism is the movement which considers the physical activity a beneficial nourishment for the human body (Živanović & Živković, 1997: 130).

The *Sokolstvo* was founded and developed, not by mere chance, within the Ethnocentrism which marked the social situation of its time. We can say that the basic object of *Sokolstvo* was developing the strength and morale of the Bohemian people and strengthening the national conscience which they needed in their fight against the Germanization and for their national freedom. *Sokolstvo* soon spread into all the Slavic countries, aiming at the freedom and the union of the Slavs; thus the *Sokolstvo* reached the area where the Serbian people lived.

The Serbian *Sokolstvo* was born in March 1904, when the Austria-Hungarian government approved the Rules of the Serbian *Sokolstvo* in Sremski Karlovci, and ever since that day, dr Laza Popović devoted himself completely to the Serbian *Sokolstvo*. "He gives *Sokolstvo* the soul, the body and the skeleton", and he became the leader of the Serbian *Sokolstvo*, giving it the contents, the object, and directing it towards the spiritual and territorial union (Pavlović, 1999: 43).

At first, The Serbian *Soko* accepted the ideas and objects of the Bohemian *Soko*, and the members of the Serbian *Soko* acted according to their system, but soon dr Laza Popović adapted the ideas and objects to the spirit of the Serbian people. He introduced

the Serbian spirit, Serbian games, commands, songs, Serbian customs and culture. He set the basic objects to the Serbian *Sokolstvo*: the development of the body and mind, maintenance of its members' health, development of social life and strengthening of the Serbian spirit of Saint Sava (Pavlović, 1999: 17).

After the Second World War the communist regime forbid the activities of the Serbian *Soko*, declaring it a fascist and anti-national organization of fallen bourgeoisie, confiscating its possessions and giving it to the physical education movement "Partizan". Only since the beginning of 1991 have people tried to renovate the activities of *Sokolstvo* and to form the new *Sokolstvo* movements, first in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later in Serbia.

### 3. THEORETICAL ASPECTS THE PROBLEM

Negative tendencies in presenting the *Sokolstvo* in certain social contexts show the need to explain the basic definition of national and social movements, political movements and political parties.

"**National movement** is a group of active people who fight for the accomplishment of the social goal" (Goati, 1994: 43). That name is brought into connections with different kinds of movements: revolutionary, students', massive, ideological, cultural, political, economic and liberational movements. The name "social movement" was first used by Lorenz Von Stein (XIX century) as the central name in the social science, and he defined it as the massive groups of activities directed towards the change and maintenance of the social-economic movement. Therefore, a cultural, religious or other movement could be conceived as social if it influences the spreading of the political and economic power. Subjects of social movement are social class, national, race, religious and other groups.

National groups can, according to their activity in social movements, be classified into: class, national, race and religious.

If we take into consideration the means by which the movements accomplish their goals, they can be classified into: non-violent (peace-loving), and violent social movement.

The cause of forming social movements can be divided into two groups. The first group of causes are: dissatisfaction of the social groups with their position and knowledge that it can be changed by social activities. The second group of causes are those who feel socially endangered by those who are satisfied with the social structure.

**Political movements** are characterized by their member's activity in political events, while these movements themselves do not have a developed inner institutionalization as the political parties. That is why, when talking about a movement, we should rather say followers than members, loyalty than discipline, the authority of the widely accepted leaders.

An important characteristic of political movements is that they have the necessary action ability for changing the political relationships. The action ability of the political movements comes from their political ideology. It is through their ideology that the followers of a movement adopt the common view of the world, the system of values, the rules of political performance, and the uniqueness of their actions. A political movement can only function if there is a minimum of organizational connection in their members' communication and activities.

**Political parties** are different from social-political movements in their organizational connection and the hierarchical relationships within the party. The word "party" comes from the latin word "part" and it has been used since XIX century as a word which denotes the number of people who are active in politics. Political parties are political organizations with political programmes, whose strategic object is winning the power in the state.

There are people from different classes in a political party. Political parties, as voluntary and free associations of people, can only exist in democratic political systems. Their object is the accomplishment of the common goals and forming the political will. Political parties also form the attitude towards the political system, and express class interests (Butigan, 1994: 72).

#### 4. ANALYSIS

*Sokolstvo* represented the Slavic, cultural, national-liberational liberal movement. Taking into account its basic characteristics it belonged to the national movements with traits of ideological and cultural aspects. As a social movement *Sokolstvo* had its subjects in social and national classes. As a social movement it acted from the revolutionary, national and peace-loving aspect. It sought the basic causes in the dissatisfaction of social groups.

The basic objects of *Sokolstvo* in Bohemia were: spreading the national conscience, physical and spiritual strengthening of the Bohemian people through physical and ethic education. *SOKOL* (falcon) was the symbol of the bird of light, sun, height and courage.

The Yugoslav *Soko* was the non-political social organization with a knightly trait for both physical and moral education of children and adults. The object was: physical and moral education, medical and intellectual, social and cultural, esthetic and spiritual.

Basic characteristics of *Sokolstvo* were: massivity which reflected in great *Soko* rallies and performances, in social organizations through: unions, districts, societies, chiefs and heads of the unions. The *Sokolstvo* movement had its statute on: mission, membership, management committee, control board, social traits (uniform, flag, coat of arms). *Sokolstvo* had its liberal slogan, the idea of the French revolution: freedom-brotherhood-equality.

Members of *Sokolstvo* were of different religion, class, nationality, or political choice. Female and male members were equal. Rules of conduct were written for all members, and everyone had to act according to them. They tried hard to develop the national conscience of its members. The *Sokolstvo* gatherings were best places for spreading these ideas. The first *Sokolstvo* gathering was in Novi Sad on 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1919.

*Sokolstvo* was also concerned for education. *Sokolska Matica* (home office) was founded in Ljubljana on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1923. The same year, the *Sokolstvo* bulletin was published. Medical departments were active in the movements. Their assignment was to embetter the hygienic conditions.

Political organizing and organized political activities with the final object of changing the system and taking the power over were not a part of these movements' activities.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In attempt to gather the entire nation falconry set in the liberal slogans of the French revolutions (liberty, equality, brotherhood) and gathered members regardless of religion, class or nationality (Brozović, 1930: 28).

Falconry was national movement Slavic people.

Legal way of work in which the Slavic idea was best manifested were the so called "Fly dauns of falcons" in which the education national ideology system of the falconry movement was best expressed and they also obtained the character of great public national manifestations (Almanah, 1921: 342).

One can conclude Yugoslav ideology and national awareness were dominant in the political activity in the falconry organizations and also initiators in the falconry orders before the first world war. Nevertheless Serbian falconry in the countries of Austro-hungarian Monarchy, unlike Croatian and Slovenian falconry which pointed out the necessity of Yugoslav unity besides the national propaganda which had the unity of Serbian countries within the monarchy with the Serbian Monarchy, as its main goal (Žutić, 1991: 9).

At that time the Falconry movement with its endeavour for the cultural – national autonomy started cause great damage to communistic movement, ignoring the class struggle and propaganda of nationalistic feelings (Brozović, 1930: 20).

At the second falconry convention held on March 18th 1924. in Zagreb, the resolution "Falconry and politics" was passed. The orientation of the falconry excluding any political fights within it was greatly emphasized (Brozović, 1930: 92).

The ideology of JSS was, just like the liberal ideology of Czech Falconry, based on religious indifferentism, national and class equality, with creation of "the cultural type of , with creation of "the cultural type of Yugoslav man as the means of uniting humanity" as its main aim (AJ, 74-18-31).

In the Yugoslav monarchy the falconry represented an universal human organizations which tried not to stress its liberal ideological basis because of the situation in its environment. This can be seen in numerous works of Anela Brozovic, Franjo Bucar and Laza Popovic as the managers of the falconry time, and in works of Nikola Žutić the researcher as well. Official falconry was in the Yugoslav Kingdom national movement, (one country, one people, one Falconry).

In the Socialistic Yugoslavia, history of physical culture of Yugoslav Monarchy was studied in form of result check. However the organizational structure of institutions and associations for physical culture was partly revealed.

After the World War II, the falconry was after treated as fascist and anti-national organisation but never as a political party or a movement. Some authors considered to have been an ideological movement in physical culture.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

We can say that *Sokolstvo* was, in the previous period, characterized as the national, ideological and cultural movement. We could also see the movement in the physical education, Ethnocentrism, to which *Sokolstvo* belonged. It appeared at a certain point of time which had its social relationships with a certain philosophy of physical education. A number of authors considered it to be an ideological movement in the physical culture too, and it was also presented as a part of the history of physical culture in Serbia.

By its clear declarative determination shown in the first Constitution established in 1919 at the First Yugoslav *Sokolstvo* gathering, and in the revised version adopted at the second gathering, the Yugoslav *Sokolstvo* declared itself as an organization which would accept any adult Yugoslav or a member of any other Slavic people, no matter what their religion, class or occupation may be, if they should accept the basic principles of *Sokolstvo* (Organization JSS, 1925: 31).

As for the politics, *Soko* should, as a member of the *Sokolstvo*, act from the position of its ideology and for the society. It was also said that the membership must not be misused by anyone for political or any other purpose.

Serbian *Sokolstvo* in Austria-Hungary was presented as a liberal, national-liberational organization which used physical activity to cover up its true goal – the liberation and union of all Serbian countries, following the idea of the Slavs.

In the Yugoslav kingdom *Sokolstvo* was presented as a pacifistic and universally human sports organization, but its liberal-ideological aspect was covered up at the time. In socialist Yugoslavia *Sokolstvo* was forbidden and it was considered a fascist anti-social organization but never a political movement or a political party with a final object of taking the control over.

The important characteristics of *Sokolstvo* which set it apart from these categories are its goals, assignments, membership, organization and structure, its traits, plan, great number of members, and rules of conduct.

The basic objects of *Sokolstvo* were to, by means of physical activity, harmonically develop body and mind, maintain and strengthen its members' health and develop the social life; Serbian *Sokolstvo* also aimed at strengthening the spirit of Saint Sava with the Serbian people.

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**SOKOLSTVO -  
NACIONALNI POKRET, POLITIČKI POKRET  
ILI POLITIČKA PARTIJA**

**Zvezdan Savić, Dijana Savic**

*Izučavajući istoriografske projekte, uviđa se da Sokolska istorija nije dobila odgovarajuće mesto u srpskoj istoriografskoj nauci, pa se stoga možda i javljaju određene nejasnoće, neodumice i zloupotrebe ovog nacionalnog pokreta koji je obeležio i fizičku kulturu toga vremena.*

*Ovo istraživanje podstaknuto je negativnom tendencijom prezentiranja Sokolstva i njegovim neadekvatnim tretmanom u društvu od strane pojedinih institucija.*

*Ovom prilikom treba istaći da se celokupna aktivnost u fizičkoj kulturi, tj. sportske aktivnost, i na našim prostorima sa kraja XIX i početkom XX veka, pa do 1941. godine, upravo odvijala u Sokolskim društvima i pod njihovim nadzorom, a samim tim osećao se i uticaj Sokolstva na ideološkom, političkom i kulturnom planu.*