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Postprint / Postprint
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Troch, P. (2019). Interwar Yugoslav state-building and the changing social position of the Sokol gymnastics movement. *European Review of History*, *26*(1), 56-83. https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2018.1468735

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in EUROPEAN REVIEW OF HISTORY: REVUE EUROPÉENNE D'HISTOIRE, 26:1, 60-83, on 09 Jan 2019, available at: http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/13507486.2018.1468735

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Interwar Yugoslav state-building and the changing social position of the Sokol gymnastics movement

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ABSTRACT

The Sokol gymnastics movement was both in numbers and in spatial range one of the largest voluntary associations in interwar Yugoslavia. It was very active and visible, through numerous public activities at the local, regional, national and even international level, prestigious new halls and regular publications and media presence. In giving a historical overview of the Sokol movement against the background of interwar Yugoslav state-building, this article focusses on the politicisation and state incorporation of the association. During the 1920s, the Sokol served as a proxy for local and regional political struggles between centralist and decentralist parties in the Croatian part of the country. Under the Royal Dictatorship, the Sokol movement developed into a compulsory and state-controlled institution for physical and national education. This article argues that the incorporation of the Sokol movement in the state-controlled civil sphere was not a one-directional development. The Sokol movement itself made use of the central state's predisposition towards state control over associative culture for internal institutional purposes. In the process, however, the social position of the Sokol movement transformed from a voluntary association that could mediate between state and society into an exclusive marker of loyalty to nation and state.

KEYWORDS

Interwar Yugoslavia; Sokol gymnastics; Yugoslav Sokol; Croatian Sokol; state control; politicization

The common interwar fascination with the body was a decisive societal feature in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929, Yugoslavia). It took a prominent position in the nation-building programmes and aesthetics in commemorative culture, education and associational life. The Sokol gymnastics movement was both in numbers and in spatial range one of the largest voluntary associations in interwar Yugoslavia. Its prominence indicates the centrality of the collective body in conceptions of the nation. Yet, the operation of the Sokol in the grey zone between voluntary associations and the state and the institutional divergences within the movement reflect many of the complexities of interwar Yugoslav

nation- and state-building. This article starts with an overview of the institutional and quantitative development of the Sokol association in interwar Yugoslavia. It then relates these developments to the Sokol's changing social position in interwar Yugoslav nation- and state-building. The first part of the analysis is devoted to the politicized division between the Croatian and Yugoslav Sokol during the 1920s. The second and third part turn to the transformation of the Sokol into a quasi-state institution for physical and national education and the gap between the Sokol's self-definition as a patriotic mass movement and the actual quality and impact of its work. Along the way, the article will turn to the gender prism in the Sokol's activities and social position. The article adopts an actor-driven approach, focusing on the role of the Sokol itself in these processes of politicization and state incorporation.

Introduction: the institutional development of the Sokol movement in interwar Yugoslavia

The Sokol, which literally means 'falcon', was a Slavic gymnastics movement founded in Prague in 1862. Inspired by the German *Turn* movement, Sokol gymnastics consisted of free exercises (calisthenics and athletics), exercises with apparatus, group exercises and combat exercises. Sokol clubs also organized social activities, ranging from fundraising evening programmes (masked balls, banquets, dance and music) to frequent public rallies, which typically lasted a couple of days and included gymnastics and athletics competitions, marching parades and rhythmic and synchronized calisthenic exercises performed by large groups (Figures 1 and 2). The Sokol had a liberal, national and pan-Slav orientation. In the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Sokol considered different Slavic nationalisms and pan-Slavism compatible and mutually enforcing. In brief, it strove to contribute to the physical and spiritual liberation of the Slav peoples within a spirit of Slavic brotherhood and cooperation. Only through the creation of a physically and morally strong national body could the Slavs preserve and strengthen their position within the human race.[1]

In the final quarter of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Sokol movement spread to the South Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. Its institutionalization took place in the decade before the First World War. In 1905, Slovenian Sokol clubs formed the Slovenian Sokol Union, which by 1913 was made up of 7653 members in nine districts and 114 clubs.[2] The Union of Croatian Sokol Clubs was established in 1904, consisting of 14 districts in Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia, two districts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and three districts among Croatian emigrants in North America. By the beginning of the First World War, the Croatian Sokol had 15,000 members.[3] Serbian Sokol clubs, finally, were formed in the early twentieth century, especially in Vojvodina and the Krajina. In 1909, the Serbian Sokol districts in Vojvodina, Krajina, South Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina merged with the Serbian Sokol club of Belgrade and formed the Union of Serbian Sokol Clubs *Dušan Silni*. In 1913, the Serbian Union had 122 clubs with 8000 members.[4]

Expressing the pan-Slav and Yugoslav orientation of the Sokol movement, initiatives towards formal cooperation between the South Slav Sokol unions had already existed prior to the First

[1] Nolte, Sokol, 50–73, 84–7, 90–100, 106–8.
[2] Kessler, "Der Sokol," 201–2; Nolte, Sokol, 71–2; Pavlin, "Razvoj sokolstva," 12–22.
[3] Kessler, "Der Sokol," 204–9.
[4] Kessler, "Der Sokol," 205–6, 208–9; Nolte, Sokol, 168–9.

World War. In 1914, the Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian Sokol joined forces in the Yugoslav Sokol Union (*Jugoslovenski sokolski savez*) to develop Sokol gymnastics among South Slavs, strengthen South Slav cultural rapprochement and cooperate in organizing rallies and specialist courses.[5] After the political unification of South Slavs in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian Sokol merged into the Sokol Union of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Sokolski savez Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca), quickly renamed the Yugoslav Sokol Union (Jugoslovenski sokolski savez).[6]

Against the favourable background of the nationalizing Yugoslav state, the South Slav Sokol association expanded (Table 1). In the immediate post-war period, the Slovenian Sokol had 6839 members, the Croatian Sokol 14,653 members and the Serbian Sokol 7729 members.[7] The membership of the Yugoslav Sokol Union increased to 59,202 in 1921 and 74,763 in 1924. It dropped to 65,150 in 1926 to rise again to 73,674 in 1928. The number of local clubs grew from 361 in 1921 to 443 in 1929.[8] The Yugoslav Sokol continued to have the highest concentration of members and clubs in Slovenia and Croatia-Slavonia and its best gymnasts and practically the entire leadership stemmed from the ranks of the Slovenian Sokol.[9] However, the overall increase in membership during the 1920s was the consequence of a sharp rise in membership numbers in pre-war Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Sokol movement had a much more recent or no tradition. Whereas in the district of Skopje, for example, the membership number almost quadrupled from 1641 in 1923 to 5017 in 1928, in Zagreb, membership dropped from 5465 to 2981 and in Ljubljana, from 9902 to 6932.[10] Men dominated the Sokol. In 1928, the adult section of the Sokol had 37,097 male members and 8797 female members.[11]

Table 1. Membership of the Yugoslav sokol union (1923, 1928) and sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1931, 1934, 1937) per district.

District	1923	1928	1931	1934	1937
Banja Luka	1903	2581	3503	8744	6790
Belgrade	3035	4364	14,302	22,877	22,730
Bjelovar	1595	1298	7149	8017	3142
Celje	3562	3084	10,890	12,008	8568
Cetinje	/	2501	6691	13,524	6944
Karlovac	/	/	5050	7794	4310
Kragujevac	1977	2310	4441	8496	8726
Kranj	3466	2726	5855	5815	4913
Ljubljana	9902	6932	16,024	18,451	12,963
Maribor	5614	4695	14,917	18,386	12,120
Mostar	3676	3907	12,684	19,324	10,979
Niš	1273	1584	9832	17,908	11,592

[5] Brozović, Sokolski zbornik, 221–4.
[6] Brozović, Sokolski zbornik, 225; Brozović, Soko Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 94.
[7] Brozović, Sokolski zbornik, n.p.
[8] Pavlin, "Razvoj sokolstva," 55.
[9] Ibid., 56–8.
[10] The numbers for 1923 are from Sokolski glasnik 5, nos 11–12 (1923): 382. Those for 1928 from Švajgar, Jugoslovenski sokolski kalendar, 87.
[11] Švajgar, Jugoslovenski sokolski kalendar, 87.

Novi Sad	5609	6217	20,730	20,487	22,480
Novo Mesto	2777	2014	2303	2722	1800
Osijek	1988	2660	17,643	18,090	7105
Sarajevo	1416	2261	8281	14,787	10,120
Skopje	1641	5017	8136	14,342	11,570
Split	5699	4549	7693	9235	5673
Sušak	/	/	8221	12,536	7455
Šibenik	1808	2482	5062	9924	4846
Tuzla	2334	3006	4272	11,803	8970
Užice	451	1099	2916	3293	1240
Varaždin	/	/	9207	11,164	3396
Vel. Bečkerek	3117	2366	16,114	14,707	10,891
Zagreb	5465	2981	17,416	27,782	6664
Total	74,473	73,674	240,239	332,356	215,924

Source: The membership of Yugoslav Sokol Union for 1923 is taken from *Sokolski glasnik* 5, nos 11–12 (1923): 382. Those for 1928 from Švajgar, *Jugoslovenski sokolski kalendar*, 87. The members of the Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia for 1931, 1934 and 1937 from Pavlin, 'Razvoj sokolstva', 130–1, 136, 200–1.

The drop in membership for the Yugoslav Sokol in Croatia-Slavonia and Slovenia was related to the growth of rival gymnastics associations. The Croatian Sokol was re-established in 1922. By 1929, it had 27,127 members in 180 clubs (Table 2). The majority of these were active in historical Croatia and Slavonia, where the Croatian Sokol outnumbered the Yugoslav Sokol. As its Yugoslav counterpart, the Croatian Sokol was dominated by men. Of its adult members, 16,732 were men and 2892 women.[12] The Orel movement, literally meaning 'eagle', was formed in the Czech lands as a Catholic reaction against the secular character of the Sokol movement. The movement also set foot in Slovenia, reaching 5228 members and 165 clubs in 1913. After the First World War, the Orel movement expanded in the Catholic parts of Yugoslavia. In 1926, the Croatian Orel had 160 clubs and 9694 members.[13] By 1928, the Slovenian Orel had 15,335 members.[14]

Table 2. Membership and clubs of the Croatian sokol union per district in 1929.

District	Membership	Clubs
Fonova (Zagreb)	4323	28
Ljudevit Posavski (Sisak)	1854	16
Magdić (Varaždin)	1122	11
Preradović (Daruvar)	3566	34
Starčević (Lika)	783	5
Strossmayer (Osijek)	3770	23
Hanuš (Western Slavonia)	2827	17
Zrinski (Karlovac)	1361	9

[12] "Iz tajničkog izvještaja saveznoj glavnoj skupštini," Hrvatski Sokol 11, no. 9 (1929): 384–93.

[13] Krišto, Hrvatski katolički pokret, 133–78. In the interwar period, the conflict between the liberal/secular Sokol movement and the Catholic Church and its political supporters continued to define the social position of the Sokol. For more on this, see Nielsen, Making Yugoslavs, 221–8; Troch, Nationalism and Yugoslavia, 157–64.

[14] Nolte, Sokol, 154–5; Dolenc, Kulturni boj, 311–15.

Frankopan (Sušak)	932	10
Tvrtko (Sarajevo)	1789	10
Other (Southern Dalmatia and Herzegovina)	4800	17
Total	27,127	180

Source: 'Iz tajničkog izvještaja saveznoj glavnoj skupštini', *Hrvatski Sokol* 11, no. (1929): 384–93.

In December 1929, all existing gymnastics associations were banned and replaced by the Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in line with the integral Yugoslavism and radical centralism underlying King Alexander's Royal Dictatorship (see later in this article). The Sokol exploded into a mass organization, reaching 332,356 members in 1934 (Table 1). It remained a male-dominated association, with 161,523 adult male members and 23,951 female members.[15] In many places, membership numbers tripled or quadrupled in five years' time. After the death of King Alexander and the relaxation of the dictatorship, the Sokol's fate changed and its membership declined drastically to 215,924 in 1937. The decline was evident throughout the country, with the exception of the districts of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Kragujevac.

Croatian and Yugoslav Sokols in the political storm of the 1920s

There was considerable resistance within the Croatian Sokol Union against the immediate institutional merging of the pre-war Sokol institutions into the Yugoslav Sokol Union. The Croatian Sokol districts of Zagreb, Osijek and Gospić argued for a looser form of cooperation along the lines of the 1914 agreement, which would preserve the autonomy of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian Sokol unions.[16] The dispute led to a rift in the Sokol club in Zagreb, which was the result of the 1919 merger of the city's pre-war Serbian and Croatian Sokol clubs. The leader of the Croatian Sokol club, Milan Dečak, was a strong opponent of the institutional unification of the Yugoslav Sokol Union, while the leader of the city's Serbian Sokol club, Srđan Budisavljević, supported an unconditional merger. Attempts to install a compromise leadership headed by Lav Mazzura, former leader of the Croatian Progressive Youth and delegate in the Croat and Croat-Hungarian Diet for the Croat-Serb Coalition in 1910–1913, failed when Dečak declined to join the coalition leadership.[17] After the faction around Dečak and Franjo Bučar won renewed elections by a narrow margin, their opponents established a separate Sokol club in Zagreb.[18]

At the second general assembly of the Yugoslav Sokol Union, held on 30 June 1921, Dečak and Bučar demanded the reorganization of the Yugoslav Sokol Union and the re-activation of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian Sokol Unions. The proposal was rejected and on 18 January 1922, Dečak and Bučar officially quit the Yugoslav Sokol Union and re-established the Croatian Sokol.[19] During the 1920s, Croatian Sokol clubs were (re-)established in Croatia-Slavonia and

[15] Pavlin, "Razvoj sokolstva," 135.
[16] "Glavna skupština Hrv. Sokol. Župe Fonove," Sokolski glasnik 1, no. 2 (1919): 54–6; "Zapisnik XI. Redovite glavne skupštine Hrvatskog Sokolskog Saveza," Sokolski glasnik 1, no. 3 (1919): 94–8; Brozović, Sokolski zbornik, 91–4.
[17] Brozović, Sokolski zbornik, 96–101.
[18] Sokolski glasnik 3, no. 12 (1921): 424–6.
[19] See the declaration in which the Sokol club announced its departure from the Yugoslav Sokol Union: "Sokol na Wilsonovom trgu Jugoslovenskom Sokolskom Savezu," Sokolski vjesnik 4, no. 1 (1922): 1–4; "Sokolski sporovi u Zagrebu," Sokolski vjesnik 4, no. 1 (1922): 4–8.

to a lesser extent Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in most cases following a split in local clubs between Yugoslav and Croatian Sokols (Table 2).

The associational division between the Croatian and Yugoslav Sokol was an interplay of socio-political divisions on various scales. At the local level, the parallel existence of Croatian and Yugoslav Sokol clubs led to numerous disputes. In such cases, the public Sokol activities carried clear elements of competition with them (see Figure 3). In December 1924, for example, the Croatian and Yugoslav Sokol club of Varaždin were in dispute over the use of the local gymnasium for the traditional celebration of New Year's Eve. The local authorities intervened in support of the Yugoslav Sokol.[20] The Sokols also disputed the right to commemorate shared historical resources, as was the case with the holiday of Petar Zrinski and Fran Krsto Frankopan, seventeenth-century Croatian noblemen who were beheaded on the accusation of organizing a conspiracy against the Habsburg throne. This resource took an important place in the Croatian national and Sokol calendar, while the interwar nationalizing Yugoslav state attempted to integrate it within a Yugoslav national framework.[21] The Croatian Sokol typically established a front of Croatian voluntary associations to commemorate Zrinski and Frankopan. In 1923, the Croatian Sokol in Zagreb organized a public parade, which was attended by various Croatian associations, such as the heritage preservation association Braća Hrvatskog Zmaja, the women's associations Katarina Zrinska and Hrvatska Žena, the Croatian Nationalist Youth, the cultural-intellectual association Matica hrvatska, the fire brigade and the Croatian mountaineering assocation.[22] In 1925 and 1927, the Yugoslav Sokols in Đakovo requested to participate in the public commemoration of Zrinski and Frankopan but were rejected by the local Croatian Sokol club and the Croatian choral society, because the holiday was an exclusively 'Croatian' affair. The Yugoslav Sokols organized their own commemorative event with the local fire brigade.[23]

The division, however, also reflected the statewide political divide over the question of the centralist or decentralist organization of the state.[24] The Yugoslav Sokol was strongly associated with the Yugoslav Democratic Party and the split-off Independent Democratic Party of Svetozar Pribićević. This party was particularly strong among Serbs in Croatia-Slavonia and was the main propagator of the unconditional national and political centralization of the new state.[25] The leader of the Serbian Sokol in Zagreb, Srđan Budisavljević, was a longterm political associate of Pribićević and member of his (Independent) Democratic Party. The political alignment between the Sokol and Pribićević was one of the major grounds for the re-establishment of the Croatian Sokol in Zagreb.[26] During his terms as Minister of Education in 1920–1922 and then again in 1924–1925, Pribićević strongly promoted the Yugoslav Sokol. He

[20] Hrvatski Sokol 7, no. 1 (1925): 24–5.
[21] Troch, Nationalism and Yugoslavia, 167–8.
[22] Hrvatski Sokol 5, no. 6 (1923): 157–8.
[23] Hrvatski Sokol 7, no. 7 (1925): 208–9; Sokolski glasnik 9, no. 9 (1927): 211. For Sokol rivalry over the commemoration of the millennial anniversary of the Croatian Kingdom in 1925 and Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, see Troch, Nationalism and Yugoslavia, 168–77.
[24] For the broader political divide between centralists and decentralists, see Djokić, Elusive Compromise.
[25] Banac, National Question, 178–89; Djokić, Elusive Compromise, 53–60.
[26] "Sokolski sporovi u Zagrebu," Sokolski vjesnik 4, no. 1 (1922): 7; "Glavna skupština Hrvatskog Sokola u Zagrebu," Sokolski vjesnik 4, no. 3 (1922): 40–1; "Uspostava Hrvatskog Sokola u Zagrebu," Hrvatski Sokol 5, no. 2 (1923): 33–4; Pavlin, "Zmaga-svoboda," 224–5.

ordered that schoolchildren could only become members of the Yugoslav Sokol Union and could not join gymnastics or sports associations which were based on what he called separatist, 'tribal' or religious ideas, which in fact came down to all gymnastics associations apart from the Yugoslav Sokol.[27] This decision was withdrawn twice after Pribićević's (Independent) Democratic Party had been ousted from power, only to be reinstated as soon as Pribićević was in government again.[28]

The Croatian Sokol aligned with Croatian decentralist parties and increasingly sided with the Croatian (Republican) Peasant Party, the dominant Croatian party and leader of the decentralist opposition.[29] Rudolf Horvat, professor of history at the University of Zagreb and a leading figure in the Croatian Peasant Party, was responsible for the Croatian Sokol's educational and cultural work. Especially in the years 1924 and 1925, after the Croatian Peasant Party abandoned its policy of abstention and established leadership over the decentralist Opposition Bloc, the Croatian Sokol closely associated with the Croatian Peasant Party and the public events of the Croatian Sokol received an explicit political character. On 21 September 1924, for example, the party's leader Stjepan Radić attended a public rally and performance by the Croatian 'peasant' Sokol in Rečica in central Croatia, praising the Croatian Sokols for their patriotic work. The Sokol's rally was followed by a political rally of the Peasant Party.[30] After the assassination of Radić in the Yugoslav parliament in 1928, the Croatian Sokol participated in the originating martyr cult of Radić as victim of the centralist oppression of Croat calls for political autonony. Croatian Sokol clubs frequently carried pictures of Radić with them in parades and a new district in Daruvar (western Slavonia) carried the name of Stjepan Radić. The new leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, Vladimir Maček, was a former member of the Croatian Sokol.[31]

This statewide political division strongly affected internal associational life and relations between local rival clubs. Frequent changes in government and political alliances at the central level led to shifts in political support for both branches. Until the end of 1922, the Democrats formed the central governments and occupied the ruling positions in regional and local governments in the former Austro-Hungarian part of the country. This put the Croatian Sokol in a clearly unfavourable position. On 14 June 1922, the regional government of Croatia-Slavonia banned the Croatian Sokol club in Zagreb because of anti-state slogans at one of its parades.[32] Local authorities forbade newly re-established Croatian Sokol clubs to hold public activities,[33] or interfered in conflicts between Yugoslav and Croatian factions in Sokol clubs by

[27] "Pribićević brani hrvatskim djacima vježbati u Hrvatskom Sokolu," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 10–11 (1922): 165–6. The official discourse of the period referred to three 'tribes' within the Yugoslav nation, namely: Serbs; Croats; and Slovenes.

[28] Decisions p.br. 7307, 8132 and 12.418, Archive of Yugoslavia (further AJ), 66–258-500.

[29] Biondich, Stjepan Radić.

[30] Hrvatski Sokol 6, no. 11 (1924): 355–6.

[31] Hrvatski Sokol 11, no. 1 (1929): 39–40.

[32] The leadership of the Croatian Sokol club complained that the authorities had mobilized provocateurs in search of a reason to ban the Croatian Sokol club. Dečak, "Raspust."

[33] "Dalnja nasilja proti Hrvatskome Sokolstvu: nepodobštine u Sisačkom kotaru," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 8–9 (1922): 141; "Kakovima se sve nasiljima ne služe proti hrvatskome sokolstvu," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 8–9 (1922): 136–41.

allocating the Sokol club's property to the Yugoslav branch.[34] Illustrating the – at least perceived – strong link between Yugoslav Sokols and state authorities, in this period the journal of the Croatian Sokols consequently denoted the Yugoslav Sokols as 'police-Sokols'.[35]

The ousting of Democrats from government in December 1922 led to a more beneficial position toward the Croatian Sokol. On 14 January 1923, the new regional government had already lifted the ban on the Croatian Sokol club in Zagreb, on the condition that it would not participate in political life.[36] Where local authorities had blocked the establishment of Croatian Sokol clubs, the new district authorities allowed the stronger Croatian factions in the Sokol clubs to hold assemblies, which decided that the Sokol club would step out of the Yugoslav Sokol Union and re-enter the Union of Croatian Sokols.[37] At the same time, numerous Yugoslav Sokol clubs complained to central institutions about discrimination by local authorities, especially in property disputes.[38]

The formation of yet another new coalition government between the Radical Party and the Independent Democrats of Pribićević in March 1924 led to renewed favouring of the Yugoslav Sokol movement. The Ministry of Education provided explicit financial support to Yugoslav Sokol in its struggle with rival Croatian Sokol and Orel clubs and interfered in ongoing disputes over property or the use of public buildings.[39] The authorities explicitly forbade schoolchildren to participate in activities of local Croatian Sokol clubs, referring to the Ministry's ban on 'separatist' associations.[40]

Especially in the first half of the 1920s, such local, politicized divisions had a paramilitary character.[41] The Yugoslav Sokol saw itself as the defender of the fragile Yugoslav liberation and unity against internal enemies, that is, the confederalism of the Croatian (Republican) Peasant Party and the calls for decentralist autonomy raised by the Slovenian People's Party.

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[34] This was the case for example in Bjelovar and Gospić ("Nasilje protiv Hrvatskome Sokolstvu," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 4–5 [1922]: 70–2) and Klanjec ("Dalnja nasilja proti Hrvatskome Sokolstvu: nepodobštine u Klanjcu," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 8–9 [1922]: 139–40).

[35] "Policaj-sokoli," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 10–11 (1922): 165–7.

[36] "Uspostava Hrvatskog Sokola u Zagrebu," Hrvatski Sokol 5, no. 2 (1923): 33–42.

[37] See the reports on Ogulin, Klanjec and Križevci, respectively: Hrvatski Sokol 5, no. 5 (1923): 136–7; Hrvatski Sokol 5, no. 6 (1923): 155; Hrvatski Sokol 5, no. 6 (1923): 155.

[38] In Nova Gradiška in southern Slavonia, the split-off Yugoslav Sokol did not have its own gymnastics equipment and local authorities refused to support it. Illustrative of the changing relations, before the war the Serbian and Croatian Sokol in the village had shared equipment (report from the Sokol club of Nova Gradiška to the Ministry of Education, December 8, 1924; response by the Ministry of Education, December 19, 1924. AJ 66–474-746). See also the example of Križevci (letter from the Sokol club of Križevci to the Ministry of Education, August 12, 1922. AJ 66–474-746) or Crikvenica (report from the Yugoslav Sokol club in Crikvenica to the Ministry of Education, December 30, 1924. AJ 66–473-746).

[39] See the examples for Križevci (letter from the Sokol club in Križevci to the Ministry of Education, January 25, 1925. AJ 66–474-746); Slavonska Požega (letter from the Sokol club in Slavonska Požega to the Ministry of Education, April 14, 1924. AJ 66–474-746); Bakar (Hrvatski Sokol 7, no. 5 [1925]: 126–40); Karlovac (letter from the Yugoslav Sokol club of Karlovac to the Ministry of Education, June 11, 1924. AJ 66–474-746); Čakovec and Voćin (Hrvatski Sokol 7, no. 1 [1925]: 22–3).

[40] This was the case in Crikvenica (Decision by the Ministry of Education, September 18, 1924. AJ 66 (pov)-59–154), Podgorač (Hrvatski Sokol 7, no. 2 [1925]: 42), Otočac, Pakrac, and Požega (Hrvatski Sokol 7, no. 5 [1925]: 126–40).

[41] For paramilitary divisions in the former Austro-Hungarian parts of the country, see Newman, Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War, part II.

'If the nation requires more sacrifices, the Sokol will be first to not get scared off, no matter how bloody they will be.'[42] Indeed, pro-Yugoslav Sokols in Zagreb had taken part in the violent suppression of a protest rally of soldiers against Yugoslav unification on 5 December 1918.[43] Although the Yugoslav Sokol leadership denounced such claims,[44] the Yugoslav Sokol was associated with the Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA, Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista), a paramilitary patriotic association close to Pribićević that protected the centralist unity of the country from decentralist threats from within in Slovenia, Dalmatia and Croatia-Slavonia.[45] The Croatian Sokols, for their part, joined forces with the Croatian Nationalist Youth (HANAO, Hrvatska nacionalna omladina), a paramilitary youth association that copied and opposed ORJUNA, and engaged in frequent violent clashes with ORJUNA and the Yugoslav Sokol.[46] At a rally organized in 1922 by the Zagreb district of the Yugoslav Sokol, it came to violent clashes and the arrest of eight Croatian Sokols.[47] Journals affiliated to the Yugoslav Sokol reported that members of the Croatian Sokol club disturbed the rally and even fired gunshots during the parade and the closing party.[48] The Croatian Sokol press reported that shots were fired at the counter-rally organized by the Croatian Sokols in another part of Zagreb.[49] At a regional rally of the Yugoslav Sokol in Zagreb in August 1924, it again came to riots between Yugoslav and Croatian Sokols, with both sides blaming each other for instigating the violence.[50]

Finally, the political struggle over the centralist or decentralist organization of the state divided the movement and challenged its pan-Slav character. The institutional rivalry within the Sokol movement redefined its position toward Yugoslav nationhood. The Croatian and Yugoslav Sokol both laid exclusive claim to Yugoslav nationhood and the pan-Slav and Yugoslav tradition of the Sokol movement. While the Yugoslav Sokol argued for a more integral and centralist understanding of Yugoslav national unity and denounced the Croatian Sokol as 'separatist', the Croatian Sokol propagated the coexistence of Croatian and Yugoslav nationhood and accused the Yugoslav Sokol of pushing through Greater Serbianism under the guise of Yugoslavism.[51] In a text of 1922, which criticized the Czech Sokol for supporting the Yugoslav Sokol, Milan Dečak declared:

> Even today, notwithstanding unmerited persecutions by the soulless and wicked powerholders – Yugoslavs, the Croats still consider themselves Croats – Yugoslavs, only they do not want to drown in Greater Serbia, where they would have to be slaves without any rights, if they would not convert to Orthodoxy and renounce everything Croat. The Croats are the ones who first propagated Yugoslavia, while Serbs and Slovenes did not want Yugoslavia. That is why our state

[42] Ravnihar, "Sokolstvo na straži," 138.
[43] Newman, Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War, 131–2.
[44] "Izjava," Sokolski glasnik 5, no. 7–8 (1923): 224.
[45] Newman, Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War, 149–57.
[46] Hrvatski Sokol is full of reports of violent clashes between Croatian Sokols and HANAO on the one side and Yugoslav Sokols and ORJUNA on the other.
[47] "Progoni hrvatskih sokolova," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 6–7 (1922): 112.
[48] Sokolski glasnik 4, no. 7 (1922): 214–17.
[49] "Hrvatsko sokolsko slavlje u Šestinama," Hrvatski Sokol 4, nos 6–7 (1922): 103–4.
[50] For the Yugoslav version, see Brozović, Sokolski slet, 37–99, 165–82, 219–26); "Sokolski dnevi v Zagrebu," Sokolski glasnik 6, nos 16–18 (1924): 252. For the Croatian version, see "Komunikej Starješinstva Hrvatskih Sokolskih društava u Zagrebu," Hrvatski Sokol 6, no. 9 (1924): 254–6.
[51] Troch, Nationalism and Yugoslavia, 172–7.

is not called Yugoslavia, but the kingdom of SCS. The name of the state kingdom of SCS does not indicate national unity but national division and in that state the government fights against Yugoslavism.[52]

The Sokol as a quasi-state institution

In January 1929, King Alexander established a Royal Dictatorship. Arguing that the unity of nation and state was under threat from parliamentary democracy, he dissolved parliament, abolished the constitution and banned political parties. The King held full legislative and executive power with assistance of a Council of Ministers, appointed by royal decree. The purpose was to create a new political order, based on centralism, national unity (so-called integral Yugoslavism) and mass popular participation. The dictatorship invested heavily in promoting integral Yugoslav nationalism in politics, education, culture and associational life and banned all political parties and associations based on 'tribal' (that is, Serbian, Croatian or Slovenian) or religious elements and expressions provoking 'tribal' or religious hatred or disunity. The state bureaucracy was mobilized to promote collective patriotic activism and act against any form of deviation from the integral Yugoslav norm.[53]

The leadership of the Yugoslav Sokol immediately offered its full support to the dictatorship, reflecting the general disillusion in the public sphere with Yugoslav parliamentary democracy. The Yugoslav Sokol also seized the opportunity for eliminating its institutional rivals. Early in 1929, the Slovenian leader of the Sokol, Engelbert Gangl, sent a draft law on physical education to the King and discussed the matter in more detail during a royal audience. Gangl also wrote a letter to King Alexander in which he appropriated the language of integral Yugoslavism to discredit 'religious and separatist fanatics' in the Croatian Sokol and other gymnastics associations. Indicating its continued Yugoslav orientation, the Croatian Sokol tried to assure the regime that it was not based on 'tribal' fundaments and had always supported national unity.[54] However, by the end of 1929, Gangl's advocacy efforts had effect.[55] After the Council of Ministers discussed the issue of 'tribal' separatism of the Croatian Sokol, the Dictatorship banned existing Sokol institutions and established the Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, with the goal of training 'physically healthy, morally strong and nationally conscious citizens of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia'.[56]

The Yugoslav Sokol Union disbanded and collectively entered the new Sokol. Gangl himself became the first leader of the Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The leadership of the Croatian Sokol left the decision up to the Sokol clubs. It seems that a considerable number of clubs decided to join the new Sokol. Two former leaders of the Croatian Sokol occupied leading positions in the Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Also, the immediate sharp increase in the Sokol's membership to 114,506 by the summer of 1930 – in comparison to the 72,806 members the Yugoslav Sokol Union had in 1929 – can only be explained including a substantial

[52] Hrvatski Sokol 4, no. 8–9 (1922): 130.

[53] Djokić, "(Dis)Integrating Yugoslavia;" Dobrivojević, Državna represija; Nielsen, Making Yugoslavs; Troch, Nationalism and Yugoslavia.

[54] "Kraljev Ukaz i Hrvatsko Sokolstvo," Hrvatski Sokol 11, no. 2 (1929): 49–50.

[55] Nielsen, Making Yugoslavs, 115–17.

[56] "Statut o organizaciji i poslovanju Sokola Kraljevine Jugoslavije," Službene novine 12, no. 36 (1930): 315–20, art. 1; "Zakon o likvidaciji jugoslovenskog sokola, hrvatskog sokola, orla i srpskog sokola," Službene novine 12, no. 5 (1930): 3.

number of Croatian Sokols.[57] Only the Catholic Orel categorically refused to join the new Sokol.[58]

The Sokol established itself as a pillar in the dictatorship's Yugoslav state- and nation-building project. It became a constituent element in the national cult of King Alexander. Heir to the Throne Prince Peter, in his legal function as leader of the Sokol movement, typically appeared in public in his Sokol uniform (Figure 4).[59] The 1930 All-Slavic Sokol rally in Belgrade served as an important propaganda event for the dictatorship and the nominally new Sokol (Figure 1). Momir Korunović, a prominent architect of official government buildings and the head of the Sokol's architectural department, designed a wooden stadium with space for 40,000 spectators.[60] The King attended the rally and used the occasion to donate to the Yugoslav Sokol a new flag and bless the Sokol as 'the healthy educator of the youth, warrior for brotherhood and love, champion of the great Yugoslav idea and carrier of the combative and national spirit'.[61] At the local level, Sokol clubs played a prominent role in patriotic celebrations of the state holiday on 1 December and the King's birthday on 17 December. The festivities typically included oath-taking ceremonies for new Sokols, performances of Sokol gymnastic exercises, lectures on the importance of the date for the state and the Yugoslav Sokol and entertainment, with a strong focus on patriotic themes.[62]

The Sokol also engaged in the dictatorship's integral Yugoslav nation-building project, with a heavy focus on bodily unity and revitalization. The founding assembly of the new Sokol specified that its goal was 'the development of all physical and moral powers of the individual and, through him, the entire Yugoslav nation and other Slavic nations'.[63] The final aim was the creation 'of a higher cultural type of Yugoslav man, regardless of tribe, faith or class, who will protect the unity of the Yugoslav nation and the unity and independence of the Yugoslav Kingdom at all times'.[64] This Yugoslav nationalism concurred with pan-Slav unity: the step from 'tribal' belonging to Yugoslav nationhood was only a first step to the cultural unity of all Slavs.[65] Sokol physical education was framed as a prerequisite to address the dramatic impact of the World War on the physical and mental qualities of the Yugoslav population. The elementary-school curriculum envisaged that Sokol gymnastics at school would revitalize the nation within two or three generations. It would raise physically and morally healthy 'women and men' who would be able to lead the Yugoslav nation to economic and cultural victories in

[57] Pavlin, "Razvoj sokolstva," 86–93.
[58] Pavlin, "Ustanavljanje," 70–1.
[59] "Zakon o osnivanju sokola Kraljevine Jugoslavije," Službene novine 11, no. 287 (1929): 2151–2.
[60] Ignjatović, Jugoslovenstvo, 399–426. Sokol halls greatly contributed to the visual presence of the Sokol movement. In 1935, the Sokol had 211 halls in Yugoslavia, of which 150 had been built after the First World War. Ignjatović, Jugoslovenstvo, 285.
[61] Sveslavensko sokolstvo, 304–6, quotations on 306.
[62] "Svim bratskim župama i društvima," Sokolski glasnik 6, no. 19 (1924): 269–70; "Proslava 1. decembra," Sokolski glasnik 1, no. 27 (1930): 1.
[63] Putevi i ciljevi, 5.
[64] Ibid., 12.
[65] Ibid., 11–16.

an ongoing worldwide battle, which would no longer be carried out through arms but 'where those nations that were not physically and mentally strong would disappear'.[66]

The Sokol's nation-building project was decisively liberal. According to its programme, the Sokol valued every human being based on his/her merits and not on class, faith or 'tribe'. It respected every religious conviction, but disputed the public role of religion, seeing religion instead as 'the most intimate part of the internal spiritual life'.[67] With regard to gender, the Sokol considered men and women equal and women participated in the gymnastics training and public performances of the Sokol (Figure 5). The training was divided, but the exercises were the same for men and women. Public performances by the Sokol typically included group performances by girls' and boys' youth sections as well as male and female adult sections (Figure 6). The courses, summer camps and excursions organized by the Sokol were mixed and the Sokol organized specific sports competitions for women. In principle, women could perform every managerial or technical function in the Sokol movement and all councils, from the local to the central level, were mixed.[68] As we have seen, however, in numbers, the Sokol remained dominated by men and the central managerial functions were men-only.

The Sokol did not implement an explicit programme of women's emancipation and did not have special exercises or sections targeting women. Gender issues were not a topic in the Sokol press, although the Sokol did adopt a gender-sensitive discourse and always referred to 'brothers and sisters' and male and female Sokols ('sokoli i sokolice'). The Sokol press did not report any particular problems related to gender and Sokol meetings did not discuss the issue, apart from references to the weaker numerical attendance of women. Regardless of the lack of an explicit women's emancipation agenda, however, the prominent public role of women and the mixed character of the Sokol's activities challenged patriarchal gender patterns (Figures 7 and 8).

Under the dictatorship, the Sokol increasingly operated in the grey zone between voluntary associations and state institutions. Programmatic calls for close cooperation with the state apparatus were not new. Already in the 1920s, the Sokol liked to represent itself as a third partner for national education, alongside school and the army. In 1920, Laza Popović, the initiator of the Serbian Sokol movement in Sremski Karlovci in the early twentieth century, presented a draft law on obligatory physical education according to the Sokol system for all Yugoslav citizens from the age of three or four. It would be carried out in schools, army and Sokol clubs under the coordination of a specific state department for physical education, which would in fact serve as an executive branch of the Yugoslav Sokol.[69] As we have seen, democratic ministers also took measures to tighten the links between the Yugoslav Sokol and formal education by introducing the Sokol gymnastics system into the school curriculum,

[66] "Opšta i posebna metodska uputstva za sve narodne škole u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji," 1933. AJ 66–1281-1527: 90–1.
[67] Putevi i ciljevi, 5–10, quotation on page 9.
[68] Ibid., 20.
[69] Popović, "O Sokolstvu."

recommending teachers to contribute to the development of the Sokol and placing school premises at the disposal of the Sokol.[70]

Making use of the favourable circumstances established by the dictatorship, the Sokol pushed through demands for the integration of the Sokol in the formal education system. The draft law submitted by Yugoslav Sokol leader Gangl foresaw that the Yugoslav Sokol Union would oversee physical education in the army and organize compulsory Sokol training sessions for children and youth.[71] Dušan Bogunović, one of the main publicists of the Sokol movement, demanded that Sokol themes should permeate the entire educa education programme, including music (singing Sokol songs), history (attention to the place of 'Sokol characteristics' in national history), geography (the importance of the Sokol for the protection of the country) and language (reading of texts from Sokol journals). Further, schools should participate in Sokol events, Sokol texts should be included in readers, and schools should organize an annual Sokol day.[72]

The dictatorship for a large part complied with these proposals and the Sokol transformed into a quasi-state institution for strengthening Yugoslav national consciousness. The Ministry of Defence granted significant privileges for Sokol members in the army. Sokol members enjoyed a reduced military service, received priority for promotion and were allowed to take furlough to participate in Sokol events.[73] The Sokol gymnastics system received a prominent place in all school curricula for physical education of the early 1930s. There were no differences in the programme for boys and girls, although curricula stated that 'difficult exercises that were unsuited for girls should be left out'.[74] Students were 'strongly recommended' to become members of the Sokol,[75] Sokol press and movies were disseminated in schools,[76] and the Sokols were allowed to use school gymnastics halls for their exercises.[77]

The institutionalization reached its culmination with the establishment of the Ministry for Physical Education of the People in December 1931. Dr Lavoslav Hanžek, member of the managerial board of the Sokol, came to the head of the ministry in 1932. In January 1934, the

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[70] "Raspis Ministarstva Prosvete o sokolstvu u školi," Sokolski glasnik 2, no. 1 (1920): 55–6; Dolenc, Kulturni boj, 273.

[71] Nielsen, Making Yugoslavs, 115. See also the Sokol's programme of 1931: Putevi i ciljevi, 22–5.

[72] Bogunović, "Sokolsko vaspitanje."

[73] "Vojni rok za članove Sokola," Politika, January 11 (1931): 2.

[74] Curriculum for elementary schools, July 1933. AJ 66–1281-1527.

[75] The Ministry of Education made a first decision in this direction in March 1930 (AJ 66–473- 746). This decision had come about as a direct reaction to a complaint by the leadership of the Yugoslav Sokol that local authorities did not support the Sokol sufficiently, which was reported by Prime Minister Živković to the Council of Ministers (Dimić, Žutić, and Isailović, Zapisnici, 153). On 7 April 1930, the Sokol leadership repeated its complaint (AJ 66–254-497). In response, the Ministry of Education recommended students of all types of school to become members of the Sokol ("Sokolske organizacije – preporuka svim upravama osnovnih, srednjih i stručnih škola da školska omladina stupa u pomenute organizacije," Prosvetni glasnik 46 [1930]: 706).

[76] "Sokolski časopisi: Sokolski glasnik, Soko, Sokolić i Naša radost – preporuka školama za pretplatu," Prosvetni glasnik 47 (1931): 126; "Prikazivanje filma I svesokolskog sleta Sokola Kraljevine Jugoslavije treba da posete učenici sviju škola," Prosvetni glasnik 47 (1931): 125; "Film "Oj letni, sivi sokole" može se prikazivati učenicima pomenutih škola," Prosvetni glasnik 53 (1937): 238.

[77] "Dvorane za gimnastiku osnovnih, građanskih, srednjih i učiteljskih škola – stavljene istih na raspoloženju Sokolu Kraljevine Jugoslavije," Prosvetni glasnik 46 (1930): 406; "Školske dvornice – ustupanje istih Sokolu Kraljevine Jugoslavije za vežbanje članova," Prosvetni glasnik 46 (1930): 407.

ministry introduced compulsory physical education following the Sokol gymnastics system. Throughout the age of compulsory education, physical education was obligatory for boys and girls and was organized in the schools. After the compulsory education age, physical education was restricted to boys and organized in two age groups (15–18 and 18–21) in weekly sessions and summer camps held by accredited teachers in school buildings or in licensed Sokol clubs. The curriculum was not restricted to gymnastics, but also covered hygiene, military training, civil education and national history and geography.[78] Its purpose was enormous:

> 1. To develop national consciousness and love toward the Fatherland, expressed in the preparedness to make all sacrifices for its defence. 2. To stimulate the natural development of the organism, exclude and prevent all harmful influences and their impact. 3. To develop the active skills of the organism, in the first place quickness and agility. 4. To form spiritual skills (values), especially strong will, courage, presence of mind, bravery, self-discipline, aestheticism, friendship and community spirit, and feeling of duty and discipline. 5. To raise awareness for physical education and hygiene as the basis for the health of present and future generations. 6. To raise the general resistance and military zeal of the citizen and future protector of the Fatherland, and prepare him for all difficulties in the strenuous military service.[79]

In combining national and patriotic consciousness with bodily vitalism and purity, moral strength and military zeal, the Sokol served as the link between school and army. In that regard, the dictatorship's compulsory Sokol training programme institutionalized the associational traditions of the Sokol and of the banned paramilitary associations of the 1920s.[80] The programme did not explicitly state the different roles of men and women that justified their different places in obligatory physical education, apart from the explicit reference to 'healthy women' and the important role ascribed to the family in national education processes described in the guidelines for elementary education. The implicit message was that the role of women in the 'peaceful' battle of peoples was primarily indirect, as they would raise the 'good soldier, citizen, worker, peasant, scientist' that would lead the Yugoslav nation.[81]

The Sokol between high expectations, indifference and disloyalty

Although the Sokol had established absolute institutional unity and monopoly over gymnastics and physical education, enjoyed strong state support and witnessed a boom in numbers, many clubs complained that the quality of the Sokol's work did not follow this pattern. In the words of a Sokol activist from Osijek in 1932:

> We are experiencing a crisis and a – qualitative! – depression which are the logical consequence of the unhealthy and sharp numerical growth for which we were not ready and which we have not been able to cope with ideologically and even less technically.[82]

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[78] Žutić, Sokoli, 40–2; "Zakon o obaveznom telesnom vaspitanju," Službene novine 16, no. 6 (1934): 77–9.
[79] "Plan i program nastave obaveznog telesnog vaspitanja u prazničnim tečajevima, sokolskim i ostalim društvima telesnog vaspitanja," Službene novine 17, no. 77 (1935): 350–3.
[80] Newman, Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War, 214–6.
[81] "Opšta i posebna metodska uputstva za sve narodne škole u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji," 1933. AJ 66–1281-1527: 90–1.
[82] "Kakove su prilike i potrebe našega Sokolstva," Sokolski glasnik 3, no. 48 (1932): 12.

The Sokol claimed to lack the financial and material capacities to cope with the increase in membership and competences, especially against the background of the economic crisis, which meant that voluntary contributions from members and sympathizers dropped sharply and that the Sokol became almost exclusively dependent on state aid.[83]

In addition, Sokol representatives noticed a form of apathy resulting from the omnipresence of the Sokol movement. The leaders of the Sokol districts of Užice and Zagreb warned that Sokol clubs organized too many activities and that the population became indifferent.[84] It was also remarked that many new members joined the Sokol 'out of some sort of opportunism or other motives'.[85] Many members barely participated in Sokol exercises and preferred to walk through town, or play cards or billiards in local cafés. However, when the Sokol club organized a public event, precisely these people were sitting in the front row in their Sokol uniforms.[86]

The great discrepancies between the high expectations of the state authorities and the leadership of the Yugoslav Sokol about the nation-building role of the Sokol movement and the often opportunistic, insincere or indifferent reactions are particularly evident in the involvement of teachers in the Sokol. Teachers were expected to participate actively and take a leading position in local clubs. They were required to popularize the movement among the school-going youth and village population, to establish Sokol clubs and to disseminate the basics of the Sokol gymnastics system and ideology. Annual inspections of the Sokol activism of teachers were taken into account for eventual promotion.[87] The local authorities in Drava Governorate (concurring with present-day Slovenia) even went so far as to keep a detailed record of the Sokol engagement of all teachers and reasons for lack of activism.[88] The state authorities took firm action against teachers who opposed the Sokol movement or did not sufficiently support it, initially through transfers.

The result of these measures was that a large number of teachers joined the Sokol movement. In 1934, 15,849 teachers were members of the Sokol, accounting for 8.9% of the total membership.[89] The total number of teachers in the school year 1933–1934 was 36,155, which means that more than four teachers out of 10 were in the Sokol.[90] In September 1934, as many

[83] See, for example, the reports from the Sokol districts for the year 1930–1931. "Reč braće župskih starešina o stanju i razvoju Sokolstva u našim župama," Sokolski glasnik 2, no. 49 (1931): 8–13.
[84] "Kakove su prilike i potrebe našega Sokolstva," Sokolski glasnik 3, no. 48 (1932): 16–17.
[85] From a report of the Sokol district of Maribor, Sokolski glasnik 2, no. 49 (1931): 10. Similar complaints were made by leaders of Sokol districts in reports on the progress made by the movement until 1932. "Kakove su prilike i potrebe našega Sokolstva," Sokolski glasnik 3, no. 48 (1932): 5–19. The leader of the Sokol district of Split for example spoke of members who had entered the Sokol 'not to serve it, but to benefit from it', ibid.: 14. Sokol members enjoyed a reduction of their military service and had priority when applying for a job as public servant "Dopuna čl. 10 zakona o osnivanju Sokola kraljevine Jugoslavije," Sokolski glasnik 4, no. 10 (1933): 2.
[86] Paraphrased from the report on the work in the Sokol district of Kragujevac, "Kakove su prilike i potrebe našega Sokolstva," Sokolski glasnik 3, no. 48 (1932): 8.
[87] "Školski nadzornici, upravitelji i nastanici-ce građanskih i narodnih škola imaju učestvovati i pomagati rad Sokola Kraljevine Jugoslavije," Prosvetni glasnik 46 (1930): 1332–5.
[88] Reports from local authorities in Drava Governorate to the Ministry of Education, 16 August 1932. AJ 66–2288-2153.
[89] Pavlin, "Razvoj sokolstva," 140–1.
[90] Mayer, Elementarbildung, 98, 108, 111, 113.

as 3746 of the 3912 elementary school teachers in Drava Governorate were members of the Sokol and 1606 of them were actively involved in clubs.[91]

Still, the results were often disappointing. In the Derventa district, in north-eastern Bosnia, Sokol clubs were active in 31 of the 34 elementary schools and in all cases, led by teachers. However, most teachers were not familiar with the Sokol ideology and gymnastics method and many Sokol clubs lacked a proper hall, apparatuses or qualified coaches. Many villagers could not pay the membership fee for the Sokol. The work of the Sokol was further complicated by the fact that 'the population of this district [was] religiously and nationally very heterogeneous, and still quite addicted to alcohol'.[92] Similarly, in the district of Benkovac in central Dalmatia, teachers were not trained in the Sokol ideology and gymnastics method, villages were dispersed and the people were economically and culturally backward, 'making it difficult to enthuse them'.[93]

Sokol clubs frequently complained about teachers who opposed the Sokol movement or participated only superficially and formally.[94] The district authorities of Novi Marof in northern Croatia praised and rewarded two teachers for their patriotic work in the Sokol by proposing them as candidates for the job of school inspector. Their activism and patriotism was clearly an exception: 'Whereas practically all or a majority of the teachers participates in Sokol activities more or less out of a feeling for their professional duties, for these two we could say that they participate in this work out of love toward the Sokol and national idea.'[95]

In some cases, teachers actively opposed the Sokol movement, reminiscent of the sharp political and ideological opposition against the Sokol of the first half of the 1920s. In a village on the island of Krk, local authorities reported that none of the teachers was a member of the Sokol, even after the local authorities had urged them to be. According to the authorities, the instigator behind this resistance was Vladimir Vukovac, the principal of the school, who was an active supporter of the extreme nationalist Croatian Party of Rights. He had given bad grades to and even expelled some students who were members of the Yugoslav Sokol and had insulted Yugoslav Sokols at a public parade through the village. The Ministry of Education therefore transferred Vukovac to a school in Vojvodina.[96]

In many cases, however, it is difficult to locate the boundary between enthusiasm, opportunism and active resistance. The local school inspector for Novi Sad and Subotica, for example, denied the accusation from the local Sokol leadership about the limited engagement of teachers. He argued that teachers who had not joined the Sokol had not done this out of opposition against the movement, but simply because they could not afford to pay the

[91] Report from the authorities of Drava Governorate to the Ministry of Education, September 27, 1934. AJ 66–266-509.
[92] Report from the district authorities in Derventa to the authorities of Vrbas Governorate, July 10, 1931. AJ 66–2288-2153.
[93] Report from the district Benkovac to the authorities of Littoral Governorate, July 18, 1931. AJ 66–2288-2153.
[94] Prosvetni glasnik 47 (1931): 524–6.
[95] Report from the district authorities of Novi Marof to the Ministry of Education, June 30, 1935. AJ 66(pov)-16–41.
[96] Report from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Education, February 17, 1931; decision of the Ministry of Education, April 21, 1931. AJ 66 (pov)-16–41.

membership fee (185 dinars annually) and the costs for participation in Sokol events (*c.*300 dinars annually).[97]

Archival records on lacklustre Sokol activism overwhelmingly concern the former Austro-Hungarian parts of the country, indicating the continued self-representation of the Yugoslav Sokol as the protector of Yugoslav national unity against enemies from without and within and the perceived weakness of Yugoslav consciousness in these parts of the country. The chief of the Dubrovnik district presented the Ministry of Education with a list of 15 teachers who were not suited for teaching in an important border area like Dubrovnik, where the enemies of the Yugoslav state (Italy, clerics and separatists) stood strong. The chief explicitly stressed that the work of the teachers in school was satisfactory and that there was no other reason for transferring them apart from lacklustre Sokol activism. Zorka Vlahović, for example, was teacher in the village of Pohomje, which was divided into two camps: the 'nationally correct' camp was organized in the local Sokol club, while the 'separatist' camp obstructed the Sokol. The previous teacher had been a fervent supporter of the Sokol and had greatly contributed to the progress of the local Sokol bloc. Vlahović, on the other hand, was rather passive, leading to the decay of the Sokol. Another example was of Nikica Arbanas, who worked in a village on Mljet. Her work as a teacher was evaluated positively and she was active in the local Sokol. However, it was not clear whether or not she had joined Sokol for the sake of appearances: the local police were investigating a complaint against her for not celebrating a state holiday properly. In any case, it would be better if Arbanas was transferred, because, as the chief argued, female teachers could not lead the Sokol by themselves in this area and should be supported by young male teachers.[98]

In a similar report, the chief of the Sušak district, located on the border with Italy, complained that the teachers in his district were not sufficiently active in popular education. Teachers who did not show sufficient activism in the local Sokol club or were suspicious in any way should be transferred to a less sensitive area. This was the case with Vila Molnar-Srića, because her husband was an Italian state citizen who worked in Rijeka, across the Italian border. A possible reason for the limited activism was that of the 35 teachers in the district, only nine were men. The district chief urged the authorities to send young, nationally correct and male teachers.[99] Such gendered comments collide with the nominal promotion of gender equality and confirm the dominant position of men in the movement. It also attests to the masculine understanding of the Yugoslav national body more generally. Especially in sensitive border areas, women were considered not capable of taking the lead in revitalizing the Yugoslav nation.

Conclusion: the changing social position of the interwar Yugoslav Sokol

The consequences of the overexpansion and state incorporation of the Sokol movement became clear after the death of King Alexander and the relaxation of the dictatorship under the government of Milan Stojadinović. Although the Sokol took the lead in mourning the dead King and initiated an ambitious five-year plan to develop into a true national institution by the

[97] Report from Radomir Vujić, school inspector in Subotica, to the education department of Danube Governorate, March 4, 1931. AJ 66–2288-2153.
[98] Report from the district chief of Dubrovnik to the Ministry of Education, July 7, 1933. AJ 66(pov)-12–32.
[99] Report from the chief of the Sušak district to the Ministry of Education, February 2, 1933.
AJ 66 (pov)-12–32.

time the new King Peter II came of age,[100] the Sokol's membership dropped dramatically and its privileged position came to an end. Whereas the Law on Obligatory Physical Education had intended that Sokol clubs would play a prominent role in the organization of compulsory physical education, the new 1937 decree on compulsory physical education and the revised physical education programme of 1939 reduced the Sokol to a marginal element.[101]

Especially in the Slovenian and Croatian parts of the country, the privileged position of the Sokol ended. Local political adversaries used their increasing power to obstruct the work of Sokol clubs. Sokol meetings and happenings were closely observed by police, Sokol clubs had to ask for permission to organize public events, Sokol teachers were transferred, Sokol clubs could no longer use public buildings, Sokol events were disturbed and their halls were vandalized.[102] Indicatively, after the Yugoslav Teachers Association adopted a resolution in March 1936 which criticized the arbitrary, asocial and inhuman transfer of Sokol teachers in Drava Governorate, the governor sanctioned the teachers who had signed the resolution.[103]

Yet, the drop in Sokol membership numbers in the second half of the 1930s throughout Yugoslavia indicates more than just another change in government policy. It also accounts for the increasingly divisive social position of the Sokol movement against the background of interwar Yugoslav state- and nation-building. In the 1920s, the social position of the Sokol was redefined as it came to serve as a proxy for the broader political struggle over the centralist or decentralist organization of the state and the connected issue of Yugoslav nationhood. Under the dictatorship, the Sokol movement was institutionalized as a quasi-state institution for physical and national education. The compulsory character of the Sokol and the privileges membership brought with it implied that many people joined the Sokol for pragmatic and opportunistic reasons. Such a superficial expansion of the Sokol movement was especially salient in former Ottoman regions of the state, where the tradition of the Sokol as a voluntary gymnastics association was not rooted and where its expansion was concomitant with Yugoslav state-building. In these regions, the Sokol did not serve the social role of a voluntary association, which allowed for public activism outside and possibly in opposition to the official sphere. It rather served as a vehicle for access to the state-dominated public sphere.

In the former Austro-Hungarian parts of the country, the Sokol had a stronger tradition as a voluntary and pan-Slav gymnastics association as part of a more pluralist associational milieu. Although the Sokol was formally unified under the dictatorship, the divisive social position of the association further strengthened. The institutionalization of the Sokol in the centralist and integral Yugoslav political camp considerably narrowed the social appeal of the Sokol movement, as it transformed from a voluntary association into a marker of loyalty to the regime. The South Slav Sokol's role as a voluntary association outside of the state-controlled public sphere was taken over by an increasingly dense network of alternative voluntary

[100] "Iz naših župa, društava i četa," Sokolski glasnik 5, nos 43–44 (1934): 6–8; "Kako će se izvesti sokolski petgodišnji plan," Sokolski glasnik 7, no. 37 (1936): 1; "Sokolski petogodišnji plan rada," Sokolski glasnik 8, no. 12 (1937): 1.
[101] Žutić, Sokoli, 145–60.
[102] Jakir, Dalmatien, 378–80; Pavlin, "Razvoj sokolstva," 125–34, 161–2, 204–11; "Za pomoć progonjenoj braći," Sokolski glasnik 10, no. 4 (1939): 1.
[103] Report from the governor of Drava Governorate to the Ministry of Education, March 14, 1936. AJ 66(pov)-46–85.

associations, especially the youth movements under the auspices of the Catholic Church and the voluntary associations run by the Croatian Peasant Party.[104] Characteristic for the Austro-Hungarian parts of the country is that these associational divisions were accompanied by an exclusionary understanding of Yugoslav nationhood. Under the dictatorship, the Sokol monopolized Yugoslav nationhood and in fact stripped the concept of multifarious meanings and interests.[105] Whereas in the early 1920s, prominent voices in the Croatian Sokol challenged the Yugoslavism of the Yugoslav Sokol and claimed to represent the correct understanding of South Slav unity, in the 1930s, opposition against the Sokol was by default framed as Croat or Slovene opposition against Yugoslavism.

The actor-driven approach of this article has clarified that the politicization and state incorporation of associational culture was not a one-directional development imposed by the state on associations. To be sure, in line with a broader turn to an authoritarian and integral nationalist style of government that appeared all over Europe, the interwar Yugoslav state placed itself at the forefront of collective patriotic action and strengthened state control over associational culture. However, the politicization of the Sokol originated within the association's leadership. In their institutional rivalry, the Croatian and Yugoslav Sokol made use of changing political constellations at the central, regional and local level and generated political division in the very process. Under the Dictatorship, the Sokol movement itself made use of the central state's predisposition towards state control over associational culture and integral nationalism to establish institutional monopoly over gymnastics' associative culture and the South Slav tradition of the Sokol. This strengthened the exclusive character of the Sokol as a marker of loyalty to state and nation and delegitimized its potential and – at least in the former Austro-Hungarian parts of the country – tradition as a player in the pluralist public milieu.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Fabio Giomi and Stefano Petrungaro, as well as the anonymous reviewers, for careful reading and constructive remarks. The research and writing of the article was facilitated through funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 700759. The article is based on initial research carried out with the support of the Research Foundation – Flanders.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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[104] For the former, see Jakir, Dalmatien, 114–6; Prlenda, "Croat Catholic Youth Organisations." For the latter, see Leček and Petrović Leš, Znanost i svjetonazor.
[105] Troch, Nationalism and Yugoslavia, esp. 230–235.

northern Kosovo. He obtained a PhD in East-European Languages and Cultures from Ghent University in 2012 with a study on Yugoslav nation-building in the domain of education in interwar Yugoslavia. A thoroughly revised version of the dissertation was published by IB Tauris in 2015 as *Nationalism and Yugoslavia: Education, Yugoslavism and the Balkans before World War II*. Other important publications include 'From "and" to "either/or": Nationhood in Montenegro during the Yugoslav Twentieth Century,' *East European Politics and Societies* 28, no. 1 (2014): 25–48; "Interactive Nationhood: The Relation between Yugoslav and Croatian National Identity in the Interwar Period," *Nations and Nationalism* 19, no. 4 (2013): 781–798; "The Intertwining of Religion and Nationhood in Interwar Yugoslavia: The School Celebrations of St Sava's Day," *Slavonic and East-European Review* 91, no. 2 (2013): 135–161; 'Between Yugoslavism and Serbianism: Reshaping Collective Identity in Serbian textbooks between the World Wars,' *History of Education* 41, no. 2 (2012): 175–194. Troch has also worked in civil-society organizations in the Western Balkans, including the European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo and the Humanitarian Law Center in Belgrade.

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Figures

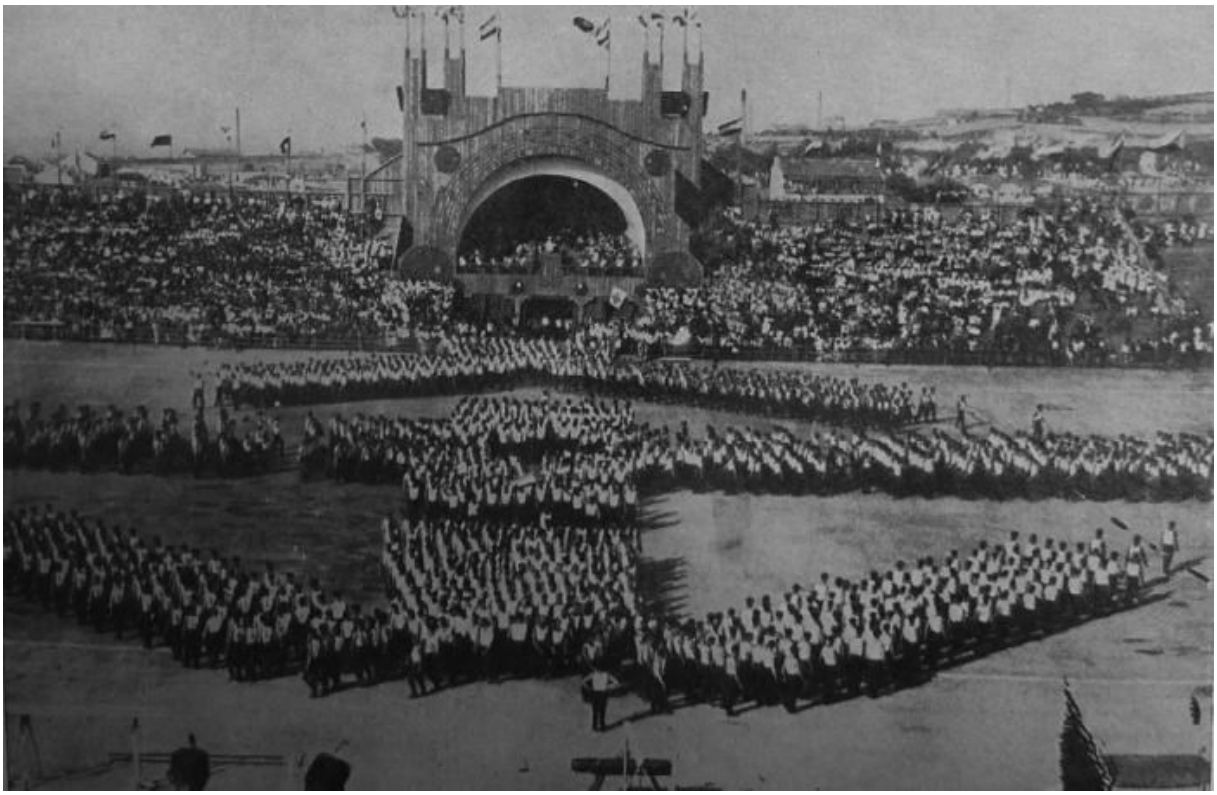

Figure 1. Group performance at the All-Slavic Rally of 1930 in Belgrade. Source: *Sveslavensko sokolstvo*, 312.

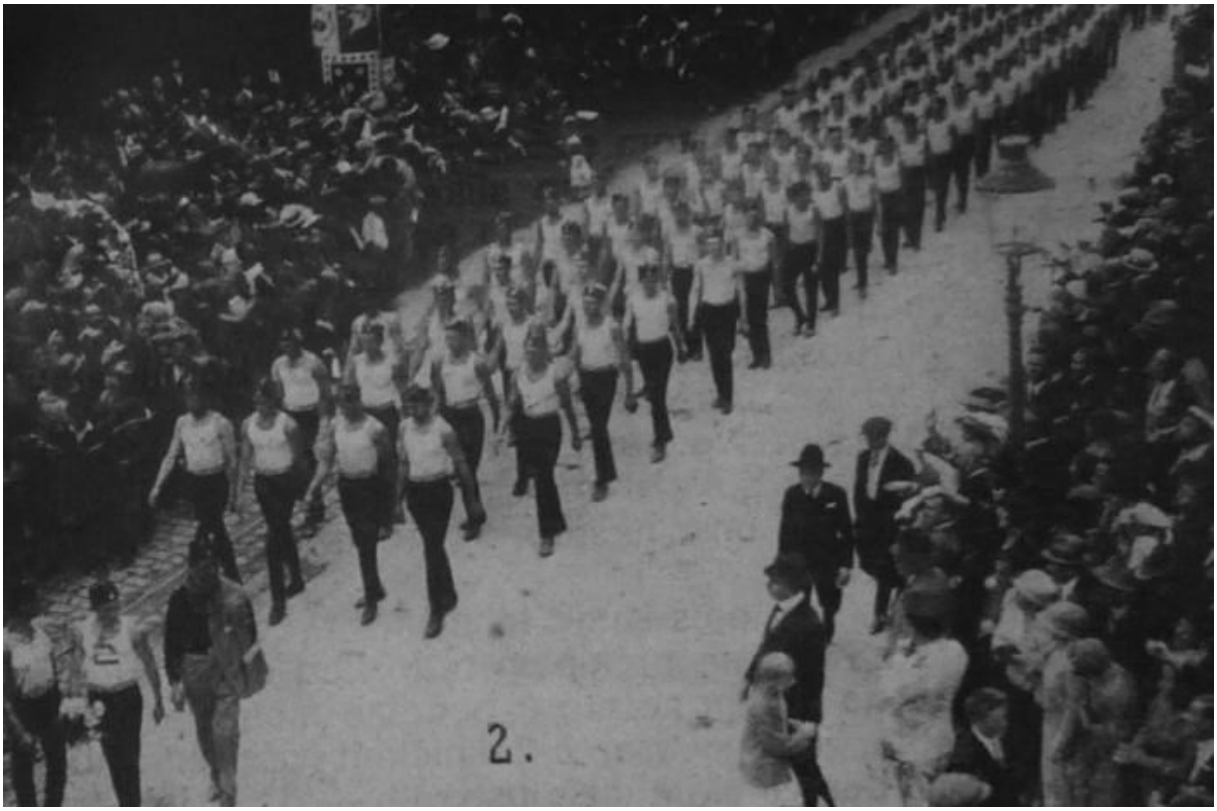

Figure 2. Sokols in training uniform at a rally in Zagreb in 1925. Source: Brozović, *Sokolski slet*, 149.

Figure 3. Croatian Sokols at a rally in Sarajevo in 1928. Source: *Hrvatski Sokol* 11, no. 8 (1929): 375.

Figure 4. Prince Peter in Sokol uniform. source: Brozović, *Soko*, n.p.

Figure 5. Sokol uniform for girls. Source: Brozović, *Soko*, 77.

Figure 6. Sokol girls performing a simple exercise. Source: *Sveslavensko sokolstvo*, 315.

Figure 7. Attendants at an advanced-level course in Osijek, 1932. Note the gender mix in particular. Source: *Sokolski glasnik* 2, no. 33 (1932): 5.

Figure 8. Public Sokol event on Prince Peter's birthday in Sarajevo, 1933. Note in particular the gender mix. Source: Brozović, *Sokolski zbornik*, 130.