

# THE SOKOL SOCIETY "DUŠAN SILNI" IN ZAJEČAR AND THE MORAVIAN SOKOL PARISH IN NIŠ (INTERRELATIONS AND PERMEATIONS)

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## SUMMARY

The Sokol movement in the Kingdom of Serbia had its roots in many small towns and district centers, and it brought together residents who wished to establish and advance their knowledge in the field of sports. First, interest in sokolism appears among high school students in places like Zajecar, Negotin, Leskovac, Prokuplje, Pirot and other places of the then Moravian Banovina, which was a fertile ground of pan-Slavic, free, and patriotic ideas that manifested through the Sokol movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. With the development of crafts, trade, and small industrial plants, mostly mill-food and brewery plants, young people were also employed. Of course, the emergence and development of Sokol organizations in those, at that time, smaller towns, could not have happened without synergy with enthusiasts and Sokol supporters from Niš, the capital of Moravian Banovina and Sokol Parish, which was created in 1920. It is interesting that sokolism in Zajecar at the beginning of the twentieth century was mainly under the influence of the Belgrade Sokol organization and that contacts with Sokol workers in the town on the Nišava River were not frequent. On the other hand, as early as 1919, the integration of Sokol societies and companies in the northeast of today's Serbia can be observed. More precisely, in the wide area from Požarevac to Kladovo and from Donji Milanovac to Knjaževac, the Sokols associated with Timok Parish, whose central place is in Zajecar.

**Key words:** Sokol movement, Sokol Parish Niš, Niš, Zajecar

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## THE ROOTS OF SOKOL MOVEMENT AND GYMNASTICS IN ZAJEČAR

The Sokol Society in Zaječar was formed on December 16, 1907<sup>1</sup>, at the persuasion of representatives of the Belgrade and Niš Sokol organisations, the Soko Society was founded in Zaječar. On December 16, according to the original document, a meeting was held in the tavern of Mr. I. Jovanovic, for the purpose of establishing the "Zaječar Gymnastics Sokol Society ". Four days before the meeting, gymnastics workers published an announcement entitled "Citizenship of the City of Zaječar" in which they highlighted the goal of this useful society and asked the citizens to come to the meeting at four o'clock in the afternoon on the mentioned day (December 16). Of course, the people of Zaječar responded in quite large numbers, and that half-hour meeting was designed by the future spiritual leaders and elders of "Sokol", doctor Čeda Đurđević<sup>2</sup>, medical lieutenant colonel (later brigadier general), president of the choir and the first man of "Sokol" management, and doctor Milan G. Petrović<sup>3</sup>, the secretary of the spiritual court, who was the secretary of the congregation and a member of the administration. "...Merchant Milutin Stanojević<sup>4</sup> was elected vice president of the board, Andreja Ilić as secretary, and Nikola Stojković<sup>5</sup> as treasurer." Seven more members of the administration were elected, mostly from the ranks of officers, doctors, teachers, merchants, priests, and tax collectors, which in itself depicts the civic consciousness of that time and the image of a society that cared about true values. A three-member supervisory board was also elected. This important gathering in Jovanović's tavern was also attended by two high-ranking guests, doctor Vojislav Rašić<sup>6</sup>, secretary of the Ministry of Finance and secretary of

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the minutes on the founding of the Sokol society in Zaječar, obtained from Nikola M. Disković, an entrepreneur from Zaječar

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Čeda Đurđević (January 25, 1866 - November 24, 1940), belonged to the constellation of Serbian military surgeons, a teacher of military medicine and war surgery ("Vreme" newspaper of November 25, 1940, p. 3), professor of the Faculty of Medicine at Belgrade University, member of the Serbian Medical Association, Medical Chamber, president of the Society for the Protection of Public Health

<sup>3</sup> The newspaper "Prosvetni Glasnik" dated April 1, 1910, p. 232

<sup>4</sup> Milutin Stanojević, was a merchant from Zaječar ("Gazette of the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, book 42, "Zaječar and its surroundings", Dušan Maslovarić, "Farming in the municipality of Zaječar", p. 131, 1978, bearer of the Albanian monument and honorary consul of Japan (RTS Planeta, Tuesday, September 13, 2016, "How to get nationalized property in Dedinje"

<sup>5</sup> S. Ugrinović "Development of physical culture in Zaječar until the Second Soviet War" (Razvitak No. 3/76.) - can be found in the "Svetozar Marković" Registry Library in Zaječar

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Vojislav Rašić was also the bearer of the Albanian Monument (the newspaper "Vreme" dated 13.7.1940, p. 9 <http://istorijskenovine.unilib.rs/view/index.html>) was also engaged in literary work and performed the duties of president of the supervisory board in the Association of former students of French schools (Vreme newspaper of June 29, 1936, p. 6), <http://istorijskenovine.unilib.rs/view/index.html>

Belgrade's "Sokol" and engineer lieutenant Dušan Putniković<sup>7</sup>, representative of Niš "Soko". The assistance was reflected not only in words of praise and support, but also in the fact that the Belgrade-based "Soko" provided the Zaječar society with five state-owned plots with a two percent annual rent in order to fulfill the spiritual and exercise needs of the association's members in Timok County, i.e., in the districts of Timok Krajina and Moravia. Zaječar's "Soko" was founded as an independent organization, but it had the obligation to remain in a spiritual relationship with the Sokols of Belgrade, Niš and other cities in the then Kingdom of Serbia.

Zaječar initially encountered gymnastics in 1882, when the first association devoted to the sport was established at the suggestion of a number of local garrison commanders<sup>8</sup>. On April 16, the "Zaječar Society for Gymnastics and Fencing" was founded, with Major Mateja Optrki elected as its first president. The following year, in 1883, physical education was introduced as a compulsory subject in the Gymnasium in Zaječar. Lieutenant Ilija Blagojević was the first lecturer, and the characteristic of that period was that younger officers mostly practiced in poor conditions and that citizens less often got involved in the work of the gymnastics club, primarily because they did not know the rules of gymnastics.

The Gymnastics Society was established in 1890. On the initiative of veterinarian Toma Milošević, as the newspaper "Timočanin" wrote in the issue of April 5, 1890, a meeting was held in the editorial office of that newspaper, which brought together representatives of all classes of society. The proposal of starting a gymnastics club was accepted at that time, and a three-member board with Toma Milošević as president, lecturer Pero Kerečki<sup>9</sup>, and businessman Milutin Stanojević was formed<sup>10</sup>. The Board of Directors was elected soon after the election assembly, but the society's members experienced issues with sports facilities and exercise equipment from the very beginning.

The period that coincides with the fall of the last Obrenović and the arrival of King Petar I Karađorđević was not the most suitable for the work of the gymnastics club in Zaječar. The membership dwindled until 1907. And before that,

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<sup>7</sup> Dušan Putniković, was an engineering colonel, bearer of the Albanian monument (<http://славним-прецима.срб/ен/NosiociSpomenice/Detalji/6796,и> <https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-ec>

<sup>8</sup> The newspaper "Timočanin" December 1890. - can be found in the Historical Archive "Timočka Krajina" in Zaječar

<sup>9</sup> Pera Kerečki, was a professor candidate for a lecturer at the gymnasium in Zaječar ("Prosvetni glasnik" newspaper of 1.1.1888, p. 713) and then he was also a lecturer at the Pozarevac gymnasium ("Prosvetni glasnik" newspaper from 1.4.1893 p. 200), <http://istorijskenovine.unilib.rs/view/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> The newspaper "Timočanin" December 1890. - can be found in the Historical Archive "Timočka Krajina" in Zaječar

the name was changed in 1892 to the "Dušan Silni" Zaječar Society. According to the writings of contemporaries, we can find the reasons for the great decrease in the work of the Zaječar gymnastics group in the conflict between the civil society "Dušan Silni" and the society "Soko" in Belgrade. Nevertheless, gymnastic workers overcame problems during 1906. However, the founding of the Zaječar Gymnastics Society "Soko" did not, in the same way, mark the end of the existence of the "Dušan Silni" society. These frictions lasted until around 1910, when relations normalized, and then the unification into a society called the "Dušan Silni" Sokol Society followed<sup>11</sup>. "...The work in the Sokol society until 1910 and after was on an amateur basis, characterized by great enthusiasm of the practitioners and the willingness of young people to study and devote themselves to gymnastics. The first professional amateurs are appearing, and they work in modest conditions and with scarce equipment."<sup>12</sup>

### **SOKOL MOVEMENT IN ZAJEČAR IN THE PERIOD 1907-1914.**

Great attention was paid to going out into nature, especially camping on the banks of the Beli Timok and Kraljevica Rivers. This helped students learn how to swim, adapt to the outdoors, set up and take down tents, and pay attention to recreational activities and sporting events. Thus, the spirit of camaraderie and mutual trust prevailed, suppressing the feelings of social inequality and poverty that society was facing. The first significant successes were already noticeable in 1912. The hard work during 1911 and 1912 paid off. At the All-Sokol Convention in Prague in 1912, in strong international competition, the Zaječar Sokols won 11th place among 30 societies. In the individual competition, Živojin Nikolić won 12th place, Jovan Marković 51st, Miodrag Marković 53rd, Svetislav Ducić 66th, and Dragutin Petrović 71st among 218 competitors<sup>13</sup>. This success was won by the people of Zaječar because, in addition to their great desire to prove themselves, they had the desire to repay their city, which provided them with very capable gymnastics teachers, such as arts and gymnastics teachers Jaroslav Vošta and Jovan Ferba. From 1912, until the outbreak of the First Balkan War, in Zaječar, thanks to the enthusiasm and insight of Vošta and Ferba, the professional journal "Soko" was published as an organ of the Leading Committee of the Soko Society. It is simple to see the methodological didactic approach of the authors of the texts

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<sup>11</sup> S. Ugrinović "Development of physical culture in Zaječar until the Second Soviet War" (Development no. 3/76. ) - can be found in the "Svetozar Marković" Registry Library in Zaječar

<sup>12</sup> Srdjan M. Tomić "From the history of sport-Sokolstvo" newsletter Glas sporta of the Association of the City of Zaječar in 2016.

<sup>13</sup> "Soko" newspaper no. 6 and 7, 1912. - can be found in the Historical Archive "Timočka Krajina" in Zaječar

from parts of numbers 1, 6, and 7, which we found preserved in the library of the Historical Archive in Zaječar. These authors, aware of the significance of the sokol movement in Serbian society, the sociopolitical and historical position in which Serbia found itself, and the place of Zaječar in the overall events of that era, conveyed to the youth the most important accents regarding the role of the sokol movement in that era.

The Zaječar sokols were dispersed by the wind of war between 1912 and 1918 from Cer to Kolubara, the Albanian canyon, Vid, Corfu, Kajmakčalan, and back to Karavanki, ruthlessly putting an end to the life of the Serbian youth. The sokols of Zaječar and Timočka Krajina passed that "leading exam" in history, as well as many previous and later ones.

### **THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DISAPPEARANCE OF TIMOČKA SOKOL PARISH (DEVELOPMENT OF SOKOLISM IN ZAJEČAR FROM 1918-1927)**

After the end of the First World War, the Zaječar Sokols were counted again. Although decimated, the Zaječar Sokols started working again. Lenka Dvoržak-Tomašić<sup>14</sup> and Ivan Tomašić, a married couple of gymnastics teachers in Zaječar's high school, quickly, with the help of members of the management board, animated the youth to take up sokolism. The Timok Sokol parish was formed in 1920, which, in addition to societies from the surrounding area—Bor, Negotin, Prahovo, and Knjaževac, also gathered sokol societies from Svilajnac, Požarevac and Paraćin." There is also other data, in terms of "Timok Parish was founded in 1919. (6 societies, 318 members). Starosta Božidar Derić, chief: Ivan Tomašić." From the same source, we learned that the Zaječar society had "78 members, 112 members, and 120 children"<sup>15</sup>. It seems as though the Tomašićs family "made a deep rut" of sokolism in Zaječar and the surrounding areas. A large number of high school students in the confined exercise hall, (a room on the corner of the current Pašićeva and Dositejeva Streets, in the current elementary school "Ljuba Nešić", until 1964, the Gymnasium was located in that building, it was turned into a slightly larger hall only after 2006) were "thirsty" for new gymnastics knowledge, which talented gymnastics teachers did not lack.

The skill is also passed on to the youngest members - children up to 12 years old and generations up to the age of high school graduation. The Zaječar Sokols

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<sup>14</sup> Lenka Dvoržak-Tomašić was the head of the Sokol parish in Niš in 1931 ("Vreme" newspaper dated March 2, 1931, page 5), <http://istorijskenovine.unilib.rs/view/index.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Almanac of the Kingdom of SHS 1927/28. year, volume III, part 7, 8 and 9 p. 223 - IA "Timočka krajina" in Zaječar

performed at the rallies in 1922 in Kragujevac, 1923 in Ljubljana, and 1924, in Sarajevo in 1926<sup>16</sup>. Also in Prague, 1926. In 2008, the Zaječar Sokol society "Dušan Silni" had its representatives at the 8th All-Sokol Rally. The event was attended by: "Ivan Tomašić<sup>17</sup> - team leader, Aleksandar Vaković - Aca Fitter, Stanoje - (Stanković) apothecary at Tuner's pharmacy, Second Lieutenant Mirko Petković, Stanoje Marković - owner of the knitwear store next to Radul-bey's Inn<sup>18</sup>. The period from 1926 to 1929 belongs to the period in which hazena, a Czech game with a ball, similar to handball, was introduced to young female people in the Gymnasium. Hazena was practically brought to life in Zaječar by Zulejka Zoja Tatareva, who taught physical education and gymnastics at the Zaječar Gymnasium and who joined the work of the Sokol Society. According to the writings of Vladislav Hiršl, a Sokol from that time, in the newspaper "Timok" and Slavoljub Ugrinović in "Razvitak" from 1976, Tatareva was less devoted to sokolism compared to the married couple Tomašić, which was felt in the quality of work in the sokol society. What Ivan and Lenka Tomašić started after the First World War, as pedagogues, was in fact upgraded by Aleksandar Šceglov, a contract teacher of physical education and gymnastics at the Zaječar Gymnasium from 1930 to 1945. Whether it was sokol gatherings, public lessons for high school youth (which became traditional since 1931) on the occasion of the end of the school year, or the formation of Sokol companies in the area, Šceglov made an immeasurable contribution to the rise of the Sokol organization in Zaječar. As a chief, he worked tirelessly on the education of new avanguard, through courses in Zaječar (spring and late autumn 1932) and Niš. Also in 1931, new gymnastic equipment was bought in the Czech Republic, which greatly helped the competitors to practice more properly. Aleksandar Šceglov improved himself in terms of Tirš's training system, which counts him among the leading propagators and implementers of sokolism in the Moravian parish. The Timočka Sokol Parish was disbanded in 1927, when the Zaječar Sokols came under the aegis of the Moravian Sokol Parish in Niš.

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<sup>16</sup> See Zvezdan M. Savić "Sokolism and the Moravian Sokol District of Nis 1920-1941" p. 163 - can be found in the "Stevan Sremac" National Library in Niš and the "Svetozar Marković" National Library in Zaječar

<sup>17</sup> Ivan Tomašić was the head of the Moravian Sokol Parish in Niš from 1940. (newspaper "Vreme" dated 27.1.1930"), was a member of the Yugoslav Professors' Association (newspaper "Vreme" dated 11.3.1940, p. 11) a teacher at the Dolnograd boys' school in Zagreb (newspaper "Zenski svet" dated 1.1.1896) and school superintendent in 1926. (Jew newspaper dated June 11, 1926, p. 4)<http://istorijskenovine.unilib.rs/view/index.html>. He was also engaged in literary work, and his works are: "Gymnastic Games" (1896) and the magazine "Croatian Teacher" (1925) <https://www.google.com/search?q=Иван+Томашич&client> He was awarded the Order of Saint Sava, IV Order in 1930. (newspaper "Vreme" dated July 8, 1930, p. 3)

<sup>18</sup> Vladislav Hiršl, "Timok" newspaper from December 18, 1998 - can be found in the "Svetozar Marković" Registry Library and the "Timočka Krajina" Historical Archive in Zaječar

## KNIGHT ORGANIZATION "SOKO OF THE KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA"

At the end of 1929, the "Soko of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia" knight organization was formed. In December (5.12.) 1929, the King (Aleksandar the First Karađorđević, The Unifier) prescribed and proclaimed the Law on the Foundation of the Sokols of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, where he emphasized in the first point that it was founded for the purpose of physical and moral education of citizens. Sokol units are also described in the law, which includes sokol societies, parishes, and the Federation. The law established that existing societies, such as Yugoslav Soko, Hrvatski Soko, Orao, and Serbian Soko, have the duty to unite, or it will be abolished. More detailed provisions on the organization and operations of the SKJ were only later prescribed by the Statute, which was adopted by the Minister of Education and the Minister of the Army and Navy in agreement with the President of the Ministerial Council (Brozović, 1930)<sup>19</sup>.

However, when it comes to sokolism in Zaječar already in the following 1930, there are radical changes on the scene. The gymnastic greatness and virtuosity on the apparatus of Aleksandar Šceglov, contract teacher of gymnastics at the Zaječar Gymnasium from 1930 to 1945, are still in the memories of the increasingly rare surviving witnesses and descendants of the once numerous Russian families in Zaječar. Anecdotes, which we learned from older residents of Zaječar and the surrounding area, are related to Professor Šceglov's ability: "swinging on circles (links) he could achieve such speed that he was able to jump through an open window, do somersaults, and land on a grass belt in front of the outer wall of the gymnasium, sokolana<sup>20</sup>". If that fact is to be believed, it was not difficult for this, otherwise excellent practitioner, to deal with his students and correct any possible irregularities in the work on the apparatus. In short, Aleksandar Šceglov, who, like most Russians, did not speak Serbian very well (the testimony of his surviving pupils), is the most creditable of the two areas of work of the Sokol organization in Zaječar. He did a lot through the courses for pioneers, starting in 1932, in terms of training a lot of personnel for better quality work of Sokols. That directly affected the quantitative growth of the society and the expansion took place in another field. That second front was the villages where the first roots of the Sokol movement were made and where the help of local forces was necessary, precisely the new vanguards from the villages whose goal was to persuade the village youth more quickly and simply to, in the transition between agricultural

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<sup>19</sup> MSc Velimir D. Šešum The Sokol movement in Vojvodina from 1869 to 1945 (doctoral dissertation) University of Novi Sad Faculty of Sports and Physical Education  
<https://www.cris.uns.ac.rs/DownloadFileServlet/Disertacija>

<sup>20</sup> The stories of some of the deceased residents of Grljan, Veliki Izvor and Zaječar, who at that time attended the lower gymnasium in Zaječar

work, artisanal duties and schoolwork, finds time to strengthen the spirit and shape the body. Thanks to the strong connection between Tuner, as a pharmacist and a respectable man and the president of the rural municipality at the time, responsible people in the village cooperatives and respected householders who were supplied with medicines from Tuner, the authority of Šceglov and the opportunism of the village's Sokol leaders, this movement quickly covered all the villages around Zaječar. With the direct help and cooperation of the town society, companies were formed in Gamzigrad, Veliki Izvor, Vržogrnac, Koprivnica, Zvezdan, Lenovac, Grliš, Vratarnica, Lubnica and other villages. There were also Sokols in Prlita, Gornja Bela Reka and Leskovac, where there are smaller companies, composed mainly of children from wealthier families, high school students and students, although the interest of older citizens was not unnoticeable.

If we exclude the meeting of the Moravian parish on June 2, 1929, in Zaječar, which was held at the time when Zoja Tatareva was the professional manager of the Zaječar Sokols, all the more significant gatherings were held precisely at the time when the Tuner-Šceglov tandem was functioning brilliantly, although it is about Czechs and Russians (it is known that the members of these two nations, especially in the period between the two world wars on the territory of the Yugoslav Kingdom, did not put up with much). Sokol rallies were held, from 1932 to 1939, in the yard of the infantry barracks on the day of the city's liberation from the Turks (May 10), in which members of the society from Zaječar, Vražogrnec, Rgotina, Zvezdan, Veliki Izvor, Vratarnice and Zagrađe and the most trophy-winning Grljan (successful appearances in Slet: Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Belgrade, Kruševac, Sofia, Prague) as part of the Moravian Sokol Parish team from Niš. In that period, exercise equipment was also acquired (in 1931 from the Czech Republic), and Professor Šceglov made a selfless contribution to the development of other sports. On the White Timok and Black Rivers, Sokols were trained to swim, since 1931, volleyball has been present in Zaječar, and four years later, a tennis court was built on the old Timok playground near the hospital.

In addition, boxing, fencing, athletics, along with archery, football, and equestrian sports, which were already present before, made up the sports milieu of the town on two Timoks, which served as a source of pride for all the citizens of Zaječar at that time. In that time, for example, in 1933, when the centenary of the liberation of the Timočka Krajina from the Turks was marked..." Zaječar had: a state high school; a district school supervision; a women's artisan school; a lower agricultural school; a lower private trade school; two elementary schools; a nursery school; a district and county court, state attorney's office; a county headquarters; a town court; a hospital; a technical department; tax administration; main financial control department; district and county nursery; traffic inspectorate; railway station with workshop; post office; from private associations, there are: National Defense, Red Cross, Adriatic Guard, Invalids,



Reserve Officers, Association of Horse Riders, Yugoslav and Russian Sokols, Hunting, Steg of Scouts, and Society of Friends of France. Also, the Women's Club, the Circle of Serbian Sisters, the Women's Christian Movement, the Serbian Mother, and beyond: an association of industrialists, merchants, merchant youth, artisans, workers, and several sports associations. The economic institutions are: eight money institutes, a sewing factory, a brickyard, factories (3), knitwear, wooden heels, steam mills, electrical power stations (2), a clerk's cooperative, an agricultural cooperative, and about 400 trade and craft shops<sup>21</sup>." The partly depicted conditions in which the Sokol movement developed gave guarantees that it was an environment that held to itself certain social values, which served to the pride of the citizens of Zaječar at that time. " In those years, boys and girls could practice only in the Sokol club, where there were good conditions—the equipped sports hall in the Gymnasium building. The high school students had an advantage over the students of the other schools, because during the lessons, as part of the physical education and gymnastics classes, they worked on Sokol exercises, while the students of the other schools were not allowed to climb the rings and the pole and practiced only on the parallel bars and uneven parallel bars, and they came to the hall twice a week.<sup>22</sup>" However, every dream comes to an end, and every bright period in history is overshadowed by gray and troubled times. The darkness of fascism loomed over the Yugoslav nation, and the period from 1939, when Germany first occupied the Czech Republic, and then entered Poland with its troops on September 1st, foreshadowed the great four-year fire of the war. In such an environment, there were no major lessons in the Zaječar Sokol society, apart from, of course, regular activities such as competitions and camping at Kraljevica, practice in the Sokol's exercise hall, rallies at Timok's playground, and first the December festive event, i.e., the Sokol academy, in the Guild House, such as those of 1.12.1939. In the Second World War, the Sokols took up arms and divided into several armies, sharing the fate of the people they belonged to. Almost 90 percent of the members of the Royal Guard in the former Yugoslav army are from the ranks of the Sokol societies, because they are stout and well-trained guys, ready for any effort and any temptation, because the Sokols at that time represented the pillars of both the outgoing order and of the newly formed system after 1944. The cultural-educational and educational-pedagogical role of the Sokol movement in these areas was reflected, among other things, in the broadcasting of films such as "the tone film "Oj letni sivi sokole" in 1938, which was shown in all major cities of

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<sup>21</sup> Centenary of Timočka Diocese 1834/1934" Zaječar 1934 - can be found in the Historical Archive "Timočka Krajina" in Zaječar

<sup>22</sup> S. Ugrinović "Development of physical culture in Zaječar until the Second Soviet War" (Development no. 3/76. .) - can be found in the "Svetozar Marković" Registry Library in Zaječar

the Kingdom, including in Zaječar<sup>23</sup>. In the same year, according to the same source, two more films from Sokol's opus, namely "Belgrade Rally 1937" and "Sokol Rally in Skopje," were broadcast, among other places, in the Bor mine (Bor), the meeting place of Timok Sokols. This is not the first film about the Sokol movement broadcast in Zaječar, because on June 3, 1929, at the time of the 5th rally of the Moravian parish, two films were broadcast, the first from the 8th All-Slovenian Sokols in Prague and the second from the 4th rally in Pirot (from 1928). However, there were also omissions in the work of the Sokols in this part of Serbia. Namely, the same report from April 23, 1939, says that the companies from Veliki Izvor, Halovo and Vražoigrnec from the Zaječar society did not submit to the federal Sokol administration from Niška parish for the previous year 1938, which in a way slightly hints that precisely in this period begins the shedding of Sokols and heralds the problems that the Sokol movement, in the late thirties of the last century, faced. If, as it seemed, it was the beginning of the end of the Sokol movement in the areas where it started to develop intensively, then these data do not surprise us. Because the Sokol movement endured a lot, the Sokols overcame "fire and water" and managed to write the pages of cultural, sports, and political history from the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century with their own sweat and effort.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MORAVIAN SOKOL PARISH IN NIŠ**

The Moravian Sokol parish was founded in Niš on June 20, 1920. It consisted of Sokol societies: Niš, Vranje, Leskovac, Pirot, Vlasotince, Bela Palanka and Aleksinac. It was a well-organized parish that started working right away, as well as its societies. The first elder of the Moravian Sokol parish was Jaša Nenadović<sup>24</sup>, and the chief was Bogdan Koutek<sup>25</sup>.

## **PARISH RALLIES IN ZAJEČAR**

However, in the period from 1920 to 1927, the Zaječar Sokol Society did not belong to the Moravian Sokol Parish in Niš, but to the Timok Sokol Parish, whose seat was in Zaječar, but due to the cooperation of these two parishes, since 1920,

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<sup>23</sup> "Report on the work of the administration of the Association of Sokols of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia for the year 1938" adopted at the 9th regular general assembly of the Association of Sokols of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on April 23, 1939 (original owner Boban Valović, collector from Zaječar)

<sup>24</sup> Jaša Nenadović was a Serbian politician

<sup>25</sup> Bogdan Koutek, was a skills teacher in the boys' gymnasium in Niš ("Prosvetni glasnik" p. 20, dated 1 October 1924)

it has been part of the Timok Sokol Parish, and it was honored to be the organizer of a parish meeting of the Moravian Sokol parish. Thus, in 1923, the Timok and Moravian parishes held their first meeting in Zaječar, on the playground of the "Timok" Sports Club, near the hospital. On that occasion, the Sokol societies from Veliki Izvor, Rgotina and Ljubičevo held, among other things, a large horse race<sup>26</sup>.

On two more occasions, Zaječar hosted the participants of parish festivals, during the period when it belonged to the Moravian parish in Niš. Namely, on June 2, 1929, the 5th parish meeting was held in Zaječar. The rally was held at the location of the yard of the barracks of the 20th Infantry Regiment "Crown Petar II", below Kraljevica. During the rally, dozens of Sokols performed a drill called "Buchi, buchi, Adriatic Sea". During the program ceremony, the Sokols attended the unveiling and consecration of the monument to the people of the Timok region who died in the wars from 1912 to 1918. In the afternoon of the same day, rally exercises were held in the barracks of the 20th Infantry Regiment in Zaječar. In the evening after the rally, a ceremonial academy with torchlight was held.<sup>27</sup> On King Peter's square in front of the monument itself, ceremonial tribunes were erected for representatives and guests as well as for the clergy, and the space in front of the monument was occupied by the people, corporations and persons who could not get seats in the church according to the established schedule. After the liturgy, the archbishop came to the monument with the clergy and everyone present and performed the consecration. After the act of consecration, the envoy of his royal majesty unveiled the monument, and the Most Reverend Bishop, avenging it, spoke lesson, sson glorifying the fallen heroes for the King and the Fatherland. After the act of consecration, Mr. Vlada Milojković, general as an envoy of his royal majesty, Mr. Predrag Lukić, grand prefect, as a representative of the Prime Minister, Mr. Jeremija Živanović, representative of the Timočan Association, Mr. Nik. Colović, representative of the National Defense, and others. In the afternoon of the same day, Sokol exercises were performed in the barracks area (barracks of the XX Infantry Regiment "Crown Petar II" in Zaječar)... On the second day, in the morning, a lecture was held by Mr. Marinko Stanojević on the topic "Zaječar in the present and the past" and in afternoon the races of the Association of Horse Riders...<sup>28</sup>

The last parish meeting in Zaječar was held in 1932. This eighth parish gathering was held on the day of liberation from the Turks, in the courtyard of the

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<sup>26</sup> Zvezdan Savić, Nebojša Radelović, Nenad Stojilković, Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, University of Niš, Sokol rallies of the Moravian Sokol Parish of Niš from 1920 to 1941 as forms of public manifestations, International Scientific Conference Niš 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Vladislav Hiršl, "Timok" newspaper from December 18, 1998 - can be found in the "Svetozar Marković" Registry Library and the "Timočka Krajina" Historical Archive in Zaječar

<sup>28</sup> "Herald of the Diocese of Timočka" can be found in the Historical Archive "Timočka Krajina" in Zaječar

Zaječar high school. Societies from: Niš, Pirot, Prokuplje, Paraćin, Knjaževac, Bor, Negotin and Prahovo and other cities of southern Serbia participated. In addition to the mass performance in the rally exercises, equestrian skills were also demonstrated, performed by the members of the village societies from Rgotina and Veliko Izvor, as well as gymnastic exercises on apparatus and bicycle races<sup>29</sup>.

## PERIOD FROM 1927 TO 1941.

The departure of the Tomašić couple from Zaječar and their transfer to Prokuplje left no trace at the level of Sokol parish, but Zaječar Sokols lost a lot. Among others, the transfer of officials from Zaječar left consequences for Sokols. Namely, "... the hardworking and enterprising member and head of Sokol, dr Toma Tolaci, was transferred to Bitola. And yet, it is to be hoped that the Society will be maintained at its current level, because it is headed by the respected Mr. Đoka Vidojković, brigadier general.<sup>30</sup>" By the way, dr Toma Tolaci, Sokol hard worker, spent about two years in the police service in Zaječar, as he was previously activated from the reserve to the status of an active officer. According to his rank, Doctor Tolaci progressed from a reserve court lieutenant to a legal officer in the Timok region and an inspector in the Ministry of Internal Affairs<sup>31</sup>.

The following year, 1928, was characterized by the fact that the Zaječar Sokols celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the existence and work of the "Dušan Silni" Society. Of course, the representatives of the Sokol parish in Niš also had their role and place in the celebration of that important date. In this sense, the Niš press recorded the departure of the Sokols from Niš on their way to Zaječar, and that quite enthusiastically: "...a song will be sung to a goal, and the shirts of our Sokols will turn red, which will remind us of the wounds and spilled blood of our grandfathers, fathers, and sons, who fought gigantically and fell gloriously for posterity to admire. Their glorious deaths in Kosovo, Čegar and Kajmakčalan and in other famous places such as Leonidas in Thermopylae, will also encourage the Sokols to guard the nest that their ancestors built...<sup>32</sup>" The program of the celebration, as part of a public performance, as we learn from the same source,

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<sup>29</sup> Zvezdan Savić, Nebojša Randelović, Nenad Stojiljković, Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, University of Niš, Sokol rallies of the Moravian Sokol Parish of Niš from 1920 to 1941 as forms of public manifestations, International Scientific Conference Niš 2011.

<sup>30</sup> The newspaper "Niški glasnik" dated June 27, 1927 /webnibis/switch.do?pag.

<sup>31</sup> The newspaper "Pravda" dated July 1, 1932, the newspaper "Vreme" dated July 1, 1932, the "Official Military Gazette" dated March 6, 1920, the newspaper "Vreme" dated May 18, 1927. <http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine>

<sup>32</sup> Лист "Niški glasnik" from June 17, 1928. webnibis/switch.do?pag.

was scheduled to present to the audience, the trainees who will perform at the rally in Skopje on Vidovdan.

At the beginning of June in Zaječar, the townspeople, their descendants and the local self-government erected a monument on the main town square to the people of Timok who died in the wars from 1878 to 1918. The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Sokol movement, among other representatives of the organizers, high-ranking guests and other dignitaries. In honor of a great and significant event for the city and its surroundings, Timočka Krajina and the whole Kingdom, the "Dušan Silni" Sokol society, supported by rural groups from its surroundings, but also by the Moravian Sokol parish in Niš, held a Sokol rally<sup>33</sup>.

Of course, in this period, not only practitioners were active, but also sports workers in Sokol movement, more precisely propagators and organizers who translated Sokol ideas into everyday life. In the following year, 1931, Mihailo Tuner, pharmacist from Zaječar and president of the "Dušan Silni" society, participated in the election session of the assembly of the Moravian Sokol parish in Niš, where Sotir Čohadžić<sup>34</sup> had the honor of notarizing the records<sup>35</sup>.

The Sokol organization was an important link in the chain of institutions and other social subjects, without whose participation manifestations of public importance could not be realized in real life. Thus, in 1932, the Committee for the celebration of the centenary of the liberation of Timočka Krajina included the Zaječar Sokol club among the participants, who performed a festive concert in Zaječar, on December 7, 1932. "The Zaječar Singing Society "Timok", the Mixed Russian Choir, the Military Music Orchestra, the Girls' Committee of the Circle of Serbian Sisters, the Mixed Choir of the Zaječar Gymnasium and the Trade School participated in the performance of the concert.<sup>36"</sup>

## **CELEBRATION OF UNIFICATION IN ZAJEČAR 1932.**

"Unification Day found Zaječar in a very solemn mood. All the houses were decorated with national flags, and the streets were full of people in formal clothes. The ceremonial thanksgiving, which began at 9 a.m., was attended by the division commander, General Petar Ljubičić with the entire officer corps of this garrison, district inspector Mr. Milan Petković, accompanied by his secretary, the president of the municipality, Mr. Nikola Nikolić, with serfs

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<sup>33</sup> The newspaper "Pravda" dated June 3, 1929.

<sup>34</sup> Sotir Čohadžić was a lawyer, a judge ("Pravda" newspaper of February 9, 1927, p.4), secretary of the Niš court, a member of the Sokol society in Niš and a member of the administration of the Moravian Sokol Parish.

<sup>35</sup> The newspaper "Vreme" dated March 2, 1931.

<sup>36</sup> The newspaper "Pravda" dated December 8, 1932.

and municipal officials, Mr. Nikola Stajković, head of section, pres. District Court, Mr. Milošević, state prosecutor Mr. Arandelović, representatives of other military and civil authorities, Sokols, all humanitarian, national, and cultural societies, and a huge number of citizens. The liturgy was led by Bishop Dr Emilian of Timok and the clergy. The litany was followed by the choir of the Russian Sokols. After the service, Bishop Mr. Emilian gave a very nice speech about the importance of Reunification Day. In the afternoon, the local Sokol Society organized a festive academy, and in the evening there was a torchlight with military music. The very beautifully lit King Peter Square looked magnificent.<sup>37</sup>"

December 1932 was full of Sokol activities. "The first major concert in favor of the celebration was organized by the celebration committee on Sunday, the 4th of this month, in the " Guildhall".... Just as beautifully, the members of the board of the Circle of Serbian Sisters performed the rhythmic dance "Life of Timočanka" and the members of the Sokol Society performed the symbolic gymnastic exercise "Long live Yugoslavia!<sup>38</sup>" The end of 1932 was marked by a six-day pioneering course in Zaječar. This multi-day education for the area of Zaječar district was designed primarily for leaders and leaders of rural societies. "The course started on the 25th of this month, and there were 20 candidates present, all of them good and strong young men full of enthusiasm and love for sokolism. The course covers all important branches of sokolism, that are absolutely necessary for the proper operation and development. Taking into account that sokolism is very developed in this area, especially in the countryside, the society will make all the sacrifices for the preparation of the forerunners, and thus make the candidates' preparation a pleasant activity. For the most successful work and success in the countryside, lectures were also arranged in the fields of economy and cooperatives. In this way, young men will gain even greater enthusiasm and will, and through sokolism, if possible, they will raise the culture of the village.

Lectures on agriculture were held by Mr. S. Stanković, agricultural school teacher, from dairy farming, Mr. Ilić and teacher Veljko Petrović from cooperatives. Other subjects in the field of sokolism brothers: Alić, Stojanović, Milojević teachers, brother Ivošević priest, brother Ščeglov practical exercises and hygiene; brother Milić spa doctor....<sup>39</sup>"

The course ended on December 31. The central paper dedicated to sokolism and its development on the territory of the Yugoslav Kingdom, "Sokolski Glasnik", conveyed to its readers some accents in connection with the mentioned course.

"The sudden development of sokolism, apart from the town, is noticeable in the villages in the number of rural societies. This extraordinary growth gave the Zaječar society a reason to prepare well-educated and learned vanguards, thereby wanting the youth, who are brought up according to the Sokol system, to be properly taught in this sense. For this reason,

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<sup>37</sup> Cultural and economic newspaper, "Timok" year 1, number 2, p. 1 Saturday, December 10, 1932. - IA "Timočke krajina" Zaječar

<sup>38</sup> Cultural and economic newspaper, "Timok" year 1, number 2, p. 1 Saturday, December 10, 1932. - IA "Timočke krajina" Zaječar

<sup>39</sup> The newspaper "Niške Novine" dated January 1, 1933. - Historical archive of Nis

a course for the pioneers was opened, which started on the 25th and ended on the 31st of December. In this course, in addition to technical subjects, the following were taught: Methodology of Sokol Education, History of Sokolism, Sokol Thought, Organization, and in addition to this, lectures were held in the fields of cooperatives, agriculture, and dairying, thereby supplementing their knowledge, and as educators of the youth, they acted in this sense, strengthened the work of the sokolism in the cultural sense, and emphasized the importance of the village. There were 20 participants in the course, and they all qualified themselves in the presence of the commission by displaying exceptional performance in a short period of time. The committee was composed of brother Cvetinčanin, Alić, Stojanović, Milojević, Ščeglov, who were also teaching at the same time. The elder of the society, Brother Tuner, and the head of the parish, Putniković<sup>40</sup>, were present at the exam.

At the beginning of 1933, there was an echo in the press about the leadership course in Zaječar, which trained the best staff from the Zaječar Sokol region. In this sense, an article in the "Niške novine" newspaper attracted our research attention. Thus, the village leader course on the premises of the Zaječar high school, "...ended its work on December 31, when they took the exam in front of the social committee composed of brother Milan Cvetinčanin, professor, Alić the teacher, Stojanović and Milojević the teachers; Ščeglo chief of society. The exam was also attended by brother parish chief Putniković who, after finishing the exam and feeling especially satisfied, greeted the pioneers. On that occasion, he gave a short speech directing them to the tasks in sokolism and wishing them success in their work, he touched on the development of sokolism in this area, including it among the first<sup>41</sup>", the reporter of "Niške novine" Predrag Alić<sup>42</sup>, then a teacher in Zaječar, notes.

In a positive context, the Zaječar Sokol society is responsible for the development of skiing in the town under Kraljevica Mountain. In this sense, the highest representatives of Zaječar Sokol, president Mihailo Tuner and chief Aleksandar Ščeglov, initiated, in January 1933, the establishment of a ski section and maintenance of a ski course. " An assembly was held, and Colonel Mr. Radovanović gave speech on the importance of skiing. The administration was elected, which included colonel Mr. Radovanović, lieutenant Mr. Mladić, lieutenant Mr. Lalović, lieutenant Mr. Boički and Sergeant Mr. Raiš<sup>43</sup>.

The celebration of the centenary of the liberation of Timočka Krajina in Zaječar, Knjaževac and Negotin in 1933 was one of the most important manifestations of the state and people in this part of the then Yugoslav Kingdom. This tripartite effort by the local government, the Sokols, and equestrian organizations, as well as other constituents of the social and national life of that era, began in Zaječar on May 14, with a grand ceremony that

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<sup>40</sup> "Sokolski glasnik" from January 27, 1933.

<sup>41</sup> The newspaper "Niške Novine" dated January 7, 1933. - IA Niš

<sup>42</sup> Predrag Alić, was a professor at the Zaječar grammar school, and previously the manager of the school in Rudna glavi - the newspaper "Prosvetni glasnik" from April 1, 1913.

<sup>43</sup> The newspaper "Pravda" dated January 21, 1933.

included an exhibition of livestock and agricultural products, knightly games, and a Sokol rally. The effort of the Zaječar Sokols was supported by the active participation of the Sokols from Niš in this festive gathering<sup>44</sup>.

The tireless reporters of that time, in "Niške novine" from 11.6. 1933, note in the text on the occasion of the 9th Rally of the Sokol Parish Niš organized on a church holiday Duhovi ..: "Sokol cavalry with detachments: Niš, Zaječar, Knjaževac, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Aleksinac and the Veliki Izvor company (near Zaječar, ed. author), performed their exercises uniquely, well, and easily. "The hurdles were jumped one after another. All the horses under their certain riders showed the greatest liveliness and gallantly jumped over the high obstacles...<sup>45</sup>"

And in 1934, the year when the Yugoslav "Sokol" the Knight King Alexander the First Karađorđević "The Unifier", violently lost his life, the Zaječar society "Dušan Silni" had notable actions that left an impression on the leadership of the Moravian Sokol Parish in Niš. "Ski section of Sokol Society Zaječar held its first ski competition on January 21. The competition was held exactly as planned. The start of the match was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. and proceeded in this order: start of members, length of the track (12 km), departure at 8:45 a.m. 17 competitors registered, 15 performed, 3 were disqualified, and 12 crossed the finish line. The first to arrive was Svetlin Bernhard (Sokol Society Negotin) in a time of 1 hour and 2 minutes; second was Kožuh Mirko; third was Nikšić Zajim (both from the Zaječar Sokol Society). The start of the women's group is at 9 a.m., the length of the course is 6 km, and departure is at 9 a.m. In total, 5 members registered, started, and crossed the finish line 5. — First sister Crnković (Sokol Society Rtanj) arrived in 1 hour, 25 minutes, and 59 seconds; second sister Ana Tunerova, Zaječar Sokol Society, third sister Čander (Rtanj Sokol Society). Start of generation, length of internship 6 km, departure at 9:15 a.m., 7 generations registered, 7 competed, and 7 crossed the finish line. First was Motehes Đuro (Sokol Society Zaječar), arrived in 45 minutes; second was Macek Fran (Sokol Society Rtanj); and third was Tuner Vladeta (Sokol Society Zaječar). There was great interest in these games. Kraljevica was full of people, mostly children. The weather was excellent, but the snow was hard. Military music was playing during the competition.<sup>46</sup>"

The news about the tragic death of the Yugoslav monarch Alexander the First Karađorđević "The Unifier", also the head of the Sokols in Yugoslavia, on October 10, 1934 in the French port of Marseille, resonated among the members of the Sokol organization as "a bolt from the blue". Almost every sokol unit in the country tried to compose the text of the telegram with as many choice words as possible and send it to Prince Peter the Second and the leadership of the Yugoslav "Sokol".

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<sup>44</sup> See the newspaper "Politika" dated May 15, 1933.

<sup>45</sup> The newspaper "Niške Novine" from November 1933. - IA Niš

<sup>46</sup> "Sokolski glasnik" from February 2, 1934.



"The sokol society of Zaječar held on October 14, 1934, at 4 p.m. in the full hall of the Guild House, a commemorative session in honor of the blessedly reposed King Alexander I the Unifier. The elder of the society, brother Mihailo Tuner, opens the session with a few words at 4 p.m. The elder asks brother Cvetinčanin, as an educator, to give a speech about the Great King. Brother Cvetinčanin's speech was listened to with great attention. He ended his speech by exclaiming: Glory to the King Alexander the Unifier, which was unanimously accepted by all. When the brother elder asked if anyone else had anything to say about the King, brother Radoslav Jovanović gave a very temperamental speech about the circumstances and the development of events during the war and condemned the events in Marseille and its initiators. Then brother Dragan Stojanović read the following: as an eternal memory of our King Alexander I the Unifier, the Sokol Society of the city of Zaječar decided that the fund of this Society, which is intended for the building of the Sokol Home in Zaječar, is called the "Fund of the King Alexander I the Unifier", and when the home is finished, it should be called: "Sokol Home of the King Alexander I the Unifier". The elder asks the Sokols to swear: "We will protect Yugoslavia!" Everyone present swears. Brother Secretary Milanović read the telegram, which was sent to the Union of SKJ.<sup>47</sup>"

"Aleksandar Šceglov and Desa Stojanović, representatives of the Sokol society in Zaječar, attended the plenary session of the elders of the Sokol parish of Niš on March 21, 1937, in Niš<sup>48</sup>. In the same year, but on December 23, as the newspaper "Sokolski život" confirms, another activity of sokols from Zaječar and Knjaževac, more precisely those societies, was observed, which is related to the education of vanguards at the level of the Moravian Sokol Parish. The course was attended by 29 members and 6 female members, from December 23, 1937, to January 2, 1938.<sup>49</sup>"

On April 17 and 18, 1937, the annual assembly of the Sokol Parish of Nis was held in Niš. As a delegate, the Sokol society "Dušan Silni" from Zaječar was represented by Stanoje Marković. By the way, we learn from the same source that the Zaječar sokols had three representatives in the parish leadership: Mihajlo Tuner, Aleksandar Šceglov and Desa Stojanović<sup>50</sup>.

On the occasion of the 550th anniversary of the the Kosovo field battle, a large sokol rally was held in Kruševac on May 30, 1939, which was jointly organized by the Kragujevac and Moravian parishes from Niš. In the presence of 10,000 sokols from the mentioned parishes, the Sokol society "Dušan Silni" had representatives, the team of the Sokol Company from Grljan.

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<sup>47</sup> "Sokolski glasnik" from November 2, 1934.

<sup>48</sup> The newspaper "Sokolski život" no. May 4, 1937. - can be found in the "Stevan Sremac" National Library in Niš

<sup>49</sup> The newspaper "Sokolski život" - can be found in the "Stevan Sremac" National Library in Niš

<sup>50</sup> "Sokolski glasnik" from September 6, 1938.

The flag of the Moravian Sokol Parish of Niš for winning first place from 1936 to 1938 at the parish competitions was permanently owned by the sokols of Grljan in Kruševac. During the Second World War, the flag was kept in the house of Stojan N. Jovanović, and then, according to the testimonies of the older citizens of Grljan, the trace of her is lost (according to the memories of Jovan R. Sandić, a descendant of Radisav V. Vitanović, Racko Šildak and Sima Nedeljkić - members of the competition team of the Sokol company from Grljan)

## CONCLUSION

The Zaječar Sokol society "Dušan Silni" owes most of its existence to membership in the Moravian Sokol Parish, whose seat was in Niš. In those fourteen years (1927-1941), there were a lot of joint events: meetings, parish and district events, public manifestations and professional gatherings organized by Zaječar Sokols and Sokol workers with the help and support, suggestions and expert supervision of the administration of the Moravian Sokol Parish in Niš. Niš was the gathering place for all the Sokols of the area of the former parish, i.e. the Moravian Banovina, a place for competitions and education. With that, Niš became a part of them, and they, at the same time, became a part of Niš and its sokolism and sports history. This research is just an attempt to paint a part of a significant time, the official and unofficial Sokol association of Zaječar and Niš, when the people of Timok and the people of Niš came together in unanimous work for the betterment of the then Moravian Banovina and the Kingdom. It is also a confirmation of the creation of a new quality that exemplified healthy lifestyles, which should be nurtured and inherited even today.

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