

History of sports organization Orel in Bohemia between 1909 – 1948

In 1909, originated in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia sports organization Orel (the Eagle). Unified associations, which for Catholics organized gymnastic activities. Her ancestors were St. Joseph's unity, the Catholic companions and Christian Social gymnastic unions. Czech members of Eagle had a model of the Slovenian Catholic Orel, which was founded in Slovenia on beginning of 20th century by a priest and politician Jan Evangelista Krek.

Organization of Orel established in the times of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, in the times of Czechoslovak republic (1918 – 1938) greatly intensified throughout the country, in 1935 reached over 160,000 members. Lifelong mayor of Orel was Msgr. Jan Šrámek, a Catholic priest and politician. Orel ran physical education for men, women, youth and pupils in the Christian spirit. Exercises organized in local groups and two major rallies: international gymnastic festival in 1922 in Brno and St. Wenceslaus days of Orel in 1929 in Prague.

Orel maintained contacts with foreign gymnastic and sports Christian societies, became a member of FICEP (Catholic International Gymnastics Federation). Organized tours for foreign rallies (f. e. to France, Yugoslavia and Poland).

In times of danger of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany in 1938 Catholic Eagles entered the Confederation of civil emergency as volunteers to defense the Republic. During the Nazi occupation of the Czech lands with Eagles joined the anti-Nazi resistance. The Nazis imprisoned and executed many Eagles for resistance against Nazism. After the liberation of 1945 Eagle resumed its activities. After the Communists took power in 1948 and Orel was banned, for 200 of his leading persons thrown into communist prisons. In 1990, Orel was again restored and currently has 17,000 members.