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Between small everyday practices and glorious symbolic acts: sport-based resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia

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This essay presents a socio-historical interpretation of sport-based resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. It argues that the sphere of sport was never absolutely subordinated to the prevailing political order and it maintains that sport provided a space for expressions of resistance. Such resistance is not just evident in cases of large demonstrations during which Czech and Slovak sport celebrities reinforced public protests with grand symbolic and mass-mediated gestures. The same level of importance to opposition against the dominant power can be attributed to small everyday practices. Hence, while considering glorious acts of resistance and protest with a large-scale impact, the study simultaneously explores subtle and everyday subversive strategies that have appeared in public participation in sport. The study is based on a secondary analysis of documents and on semi-structured interviews with a number of representatives from the Czech sport movement.

Introduction

How were you accepted by his family [family of her husband], as a signatory of the manifest Two Thousand Words? (interviewer)

When I met first his father, he asked me whether I read *Rudé právo*. I told him that I do not. And he has never spoken to me ever again.¹

There are few examples that so saliently express the everyday dimension of sport-based resistance to the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia as the abovementioned quotation by Věra Čáslavská, a successful Czech gymnast from the 1960s. To better explain its significance to those who might not be familiar with the reality of Czechoslovak public life: *Two Thousand Words* is a document that was drawn up during the period of the Prague Spring, initiated by a group of academics and intellectuals, written by the Czech writer Ludvík Vaculík and published in June 1968. The manifesto expressed discontent with Soviet pressure and with reforms based on communist ideology, calling for democratization and liberalization. It was signed by hundreds of personalities from Czechoslovak public life (among whom were such sport representatives as the ski jumper Jíří Raška, the runner Emil Zátopek² and his wife, the javelin thrower Dana Zátopková), as well as by 100,000 Czechoslovak citizens. *Rudé právo*, which literally means ‘The red right’, was the major communist daily newspaper in the country.

In light of these facts, it is clear that Věra Čáslavská was one of the opponents of the communist regime. The quoted statement not only shows her political stance, but also

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demonstrates some of its consequences for her personal life and sport career. These consequences doubled as a reaction to Čáslavská's publicly visible gestures of protest at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, where she twice used the victory podium (once after winning the gold medal in the floor exercise routine and once after winning the silver medal in the balance beam competition) to express her political stance – although her gesture remained slightly overpowered by the 'Black Power' salute of two African-American 200m sprinters, Tommie Smith and John Carlos. She has described her symbolic gesture during the floor exercise final medal ceremony in the following way:

When they started the first chords of the Russian national anthem . . . I ostentatiously turned my head down from the Russian flag. I had a calling to put my hand up and to make a V, for Victory, but I remembered how the African-Americans raised their fists and they were disqualified . . . Therefore, I just made the tenuous, suppressed V . . . on the arms closed to the body lower and I held it in a disciplined way until the end of the Soviet anthem. Some people spotted it and the American journalists wrote that it had been 'silent protest'.³

To illuminate the context of this protest, it is worth noting that it happened three months after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968. Following this incident, Věra Čáslavská risked being arrested for having signed the aforementioned *Two Thousand Words* manifesto and decided to hide in a small village in Northern Moravia. Whereas her Soviet rivals were already in Mexico to acclimate themselves, she continued her training for the upcoming Olympic Games using pine-tree limbs instead of a beam, practicing her floor exercises on a mossy green and loading coal with a shovel to keep her muscles strong. She joined the Czechoslovak Olympic Team only after obtaining the special permission of the Czechoslovak government. Her performance at the Olympic Games fascinated the sporting public: she won four gold and two silver medals. After the Olympic Games, she decided to end her career. Notwithstanding her success, her life remained affected by the communist regime, since she refused to withdraw her signature from the manifesto. As a result, she could not officially participate in sports, nor could she fully take advantage of her success. She was prohibited from collaborating with the American and Japanese production of a film focused on her biography, from participating in advertisements, from being invited to sport events as a guest, and even from coaching abroad. She kept coaching only in secret: 'I could not show up myself, I only could coach small children. When a visitor came, I had immediately to go to the dressing-room.'⁴

The slightly unusual introduction of this essay, dedicated to the detailed description of Věra Čáslavská's case, captures some facets of resistance against the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia. In particular, this example outlines the significance of *glorious symbolic protest acts* and their *resonance in the everyday lives* of sporting heroes. Further into the essay, the emphasis on *everyday bases of resistance*, represented here only partly by Věra Čáslavská's personal life, is expanded upon in consideration of the ordinary practices of common representatives of Czechoslovak sports movements. Therefore, in addition to the category of *glorious symbolic acts*, the notion of *small everyday practices* is introduced as a significant form of sports-based resistance.

These two forms of resistance may be characterized in the following way: First, the notion of *glorious symbolic acts* refers to large-scale symbolic protests that are exemplified by sport celebrities' mass-mediated protests (and needless to say, they were mediated in two different ways: the Western and the Communist), which are symbolically grounded and have the potential to reach a large percentage of the population. These strategic acts of resistance are manifest, extraordinary, deliberately designed and aimed to delegitimize communist power.

Second, the notion of *small everyday practices* refers to the common and publicly unknown behaviours of prevalently ordinary sports volunteers. Frequently, these practices do not represent overt and conscious acts of political protest but rather are unintended tactics that are used to cope with oppressive political power. Considering the all-embracing nature of a dominant political order and its interconnectedness with the sphere of everyday life, including leisure, the realm of sport represents a space in which hegemonic power can be contested. These forms of a rather latent resistance might be silent, invisible and ordinary. This study aims to illustrate this resistance using several examples, and simultaneously, to identify its different facets.

The notion of *small everyday practices*, in addition to being supported by secondary documents and stories from sports volunteers, is inspired by a theoretical intuition and, in particular, by De Certeau's writings on the subversive acts of production and consumption⁵ and their development in Edelman's work on the resistance potential of spectator sports under Soviet socialism.⁶ In a more general way, the attention given to everyday resources reflects the recent developments in sociologically and anthropologically driven research on resistance.⁷

The socio-historical analysis of sport-based resistance is primarily based on secondary evidence from newspaper articles; interpretations written by direct actors such as journalists, athletes or politicians; official documents such as Communist Party declarations or resolutions; meeting minutes of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; and on those secondary resources with a historical provenience, such as books and academic papers. Furthermore, in order to describe the everyday nature of resistance, the research capitalizes on some qualitative interviews with representatives of three sport movements (soccer, sailing and handball) in the Czech Republic and their memories of the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia.⁸

In the sections that immediately follow, the essay briefly summarizes contemporary conceptualizations of resistance through sport. In subsequent sections based on empirical evidence, sport-based resistance is presented as a product of large symbolic acts, after which the everyday nature of resistance in sport during Communism is captured. The conclusion summarizes the different means of sport-based resistance against the communist regime.

Sport-based resistance

In a brief overview of the relatively short tradition of sport-based resistance, Rinehart⁹ defines three modes of opposition towards the dominant culture or ideology. He distinguishes between colonial, cultural and political types of resistance, while simultaneously contending that these modes are not mutually exclusive. The history of the protests reflected in academic studies may actually be read through the lens of this categorization.

From this perspective, we can first recognize the importance of sport-based resistance in colonial or post-colonial circumstances. In this vein, Ok shows how football, although being tolerated by Japan, in the curricula of physical education in Korean schools as a Western competitive 'war game' created a platform for Korean resistance to Japanese colonialism. Ok highlights the role of supporting songs that were 'partisan, and obliquely patriotic'.¹⁰ In a similar way, Majumdar demonstrates how cricket was appropriated in India and in rural areas as a tool of resistance against British imperialism.¹¹ A significant body of literature describes the political developments in South Africa and particularly the role of the South African Council on Sport, founded in 1973, which strongly contributed to the more general fight against the apartheid system.¹²

Second, sport-based resistance is oriented against hegemonic features of culture, as it has mainly been implied by the recent studies on resistance. In this sense, sport becomes a platform for resistance against globalization,¹³ gender stereotypes,¹⁴ and class-based¹⁵ and race-based¹⁶ constraints. Furthermore, several subcultures such as those of climbers, surfers, rugby players¹⁷ or bicycle road racers¹⁸ have been conceived of as deliberately contesting dominant cultural patterns. A recent study has even shown how the practice of cricket liberated from its traditional context – the cricket pitch – and played in city streets and squares can challenge established perceptions and uses of urban space.¹⁹

Third, the last – and, for this study, the most relevant – dimension of sport-based resistance is political. The long history of Olympic boycotts represents a great example in this respect.²⁰ Most often, the role of resistance has been strong in the totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. It seems that the forbidden *colles castellers* (human towers) or trekking excursions represented an important source of Catalonian resistance against Franco's fascist regime.²¹ In the same geographic area, the support of FC Barcelona became an act of resistance against the Fascist nationalists in Spain. Similarly, the support of Spartak Moscow was sometimes an act of political resistance against other clubs linked to the official establishment, such as CSKA, Dinamo, Torpedo or Lokomotiv Moscow.²² Another example of protests that attracted international attention arose from the aggressive water polo match between Hungary and the Soviet Union at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. The match, labelled in Hungarian as a 'Blood Bath', was played in a very aggressive manner and Hungary defeated the Soviet Union 4–0; this all took place against the background of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. Some of the Hungarian athletes decided to wear a black ribbon across the Hungarian flag as a symbol of protest against the Soviet invasion.²³

Notwithstanding these contributions, we can still notice the lack of attention paid to the role of sport-based resistance in the communist reality of Central and Eastern Europe. The aforementioned work by Edelman and his systematic explorations of resistance against Soviet socialism represent an exception. As Edelman noted: '[t]he consumers of Soviet spectator sports did not uncritically accept the political-ideological messages the state and Party sought to ascribe to sports. Rather, as one element of popular culture, sports proved to be an arena of ongoing contention.'²⁴ The irreducible spontaneity of sport, the relatively uncensored descriptions of sporting events in the media, the barely controllable actions of crowds of sports spectators and the links with black and grey markets that sport entails, are all features of sport that created many occasions when the socialist political order was subverted.²⁵

A similar role was attributed to sport in some general studies of resistance in communist Czechoslovakia. Sport was understood as an alternative public space for the articulation of opinions outside the official one-dimensional public sphere.²⁶ To a certain degree, the resistance potential of sport was often underestimated by political proponents of the communist regime. The Department of Complex Modelling, Sportpropag, was officially founded within the ČSTV²⁷ in 1970 to conduct apolitical research on sport and physical education, using social scientific methodologies. However, in practice the research did not remain strictly apolitical. Under the guise of researching an apparently neutral topic such as sport, the Department attracted critical scholars who challenged the ideology of communism. In fact, Sportpropag was abolished in 1983 after its members published a critical monograph that was ideologically unacceptable.²⁸

As mentioned, this essay captures both the large-scale and the mass-mediated type of protest linked with important sporting events and sport celebrities, as well as the resistance of unknown and ordinary sport practitioners.

The aim of the study is to understand resistance in its different modalities and contexts, instead of searching for a categorical definition. From this point of view, sport-based resistance can be collective or individual, more or less intentional,²⁹ recognized or not.³⁰ Also, its impact may vary, as argued by Budd.³¹ According to him, resistance may lead either to a mere critique of a system with no contribution to systematic social or political change, or it may carry the potential to reshape and overthrow the dominant social structure.

The next sections will capture two different types of resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Whereas the next part will focus on the Ice Hockey Protests as an example of an extraordinary and manifest protest, the section that follows will present more subtle and ordinary roots of sport-based resistance against the communist ideology, exploring the everyday resources for resistance.

A glorious symbolic act³²

No sporting event during the era of communist Czechoslovakia was as strongly linked to glorious symbolic protests as the happenings around the two victories of the Czechoslovak ice hockey team against the Soviet Union during the 1969 World Championship in Stockholm. The Czechoslovak team won 2–0 (21 March 1969) and 4–3 (28 March 1969) and these two ice hockey games were more than mere sport matches in which two competing teams struggled for victory. The peculiar atmosphere of the games was a result of the fact that they happened seven months after the Soviet³³ invasion of Prague (21 August 1968), which was followed by the ‘temporary’³⁴ stationing of Soviet armed forces in Czechoslovakia, an act which was labelled in communist newspeak as ‘fraternal assistance’.

The games took place in the period of political instability characterized on the one hand by Soviet efforts to strengthen its influence and control in Czechoslovakia, and on the other hand, by Czechoslovak efforts to resist the normalization pressures initiated after the invasion in August 1968. The sphere of sport represented one of the arenas where political struggle took place. In a sense, the games against the Soviet Union’s team were interpreted as an opportunity for revenge for the occupation, and the ice hockey rink became an important arena of the political battle. Historians analysing the event³⁵ refer to it as the ‘Ice Hockey Protests’. The symbolic importance of the sporting events on the ice spread to Czechoslovak households, city centres, newspapers and political corridors; the celebration that ensued when the second game was won even turned into mass protests.

The ice hockey games were linked to a moment in Czechoslovak history, called ‘fraternal assistance’, which was in fact an occupation that provoked the final rupture of the last so-called period of the Prague Spring, a period which has been characterized in Czechoslovak history by reinforced intellectual and civil life and a set of actions that expressed resistance to Soviet domination. The media played a specific role in reinforcing resistance, publishing reports laden with hidden meanings, irony and metaphors. In particular, sport pages with less developed mechanisms of censorship and political control offered a great opportunity for this kind of subversive writing.³⁶

The first game was already full of emotions and strong motivation for a Czechoslovak victory, whose players were pushed ahead by an audience displaying banners that referred to the Soviet occupation in August 1968. Among others, slogans such as ‘Not even with tanks, today!’ or ‘August was yours, today is ours’ fuelled the game’s atmosphere of conflict which ended in the intense eruption of the crowds as they shouted the name of the reformist Czechoslovak politician: ‘Dubček, Dubček!’ The Czechoslovak team won the

first game 2–0 on 21 March 1969, and the final result was not the only expression of revenge and national satisfaction. Immediately after the winning team's national anthem finished, the players from the Czechoslovakian team returned directly to their dressing rooms without shaking hands with their rivals.³⁷ The team captain, Jozef Golonka, commented on the symbolical character of that day of the month, the 21st, which represents both the day when the first game was played and the day when the Soviet invasion started: 'This is our 21st. The Russians had theirs in August.'³⁸

The animosity that was already expressed during the first game was to be doubled after the second match that took place one week later, on 28 March 1969, when the Czechoslovak players repeated their success. The tension before the match and the particular atmosphere of revenge and national feeling invaded both public and private spaces. Even if the official media tried to keep the comments before the match limited purely to sport, the infiltration of political topics into public discourse was unavoidable. Hundreds of thousands of people followed the match at home in front of their TVs and the audience share in Czechoslovakia stood at 93%.³⁹

Particular symbolic gestures happened on the ice. Five of the Czechoslovakian players covered the red star on their jerseys, part of the national sign symbolizing the communist ideology, with black tape. This courageous gesture was well-hidden in the live television broadcast.⁴⁰ Another clear gesture was made by Jozef Golonka, who held his hockey stick as a rifle and pointed it at the Soviet players.⁴¹

When the referee's final whistle concluded the dramatic battle, in which the Czechoslovak team had beat the Big Red Machine⁴² 4–3, the stadium exploded – and so did streets and squares in the whole of Czechoslovakia. Even if it was just a partial victory in an ongoing tournament which, in the end, did not result in an overall victory,⁴³ it did not change anything about the intensity of enthusiasm shared by Czechoslovak fans. The political importance of the victory had a stronger value than a mere sport success.

Celebrations in the streets accompanied by anti-Soviet slogans after the first match⁴⁴ seemed negligible in comparison with the range and intensity of the celebrations that spontaneously appeared after the second game. The town centres, normally calm and empty at that hour, were unrecognizable. Half an hour after the end of the match, at 10.30 p.m., more than 150,000⁴⁵ came to Wenceslas' Square in Prague to celebrate the victory and to share in the satisfaction of beating the political enemy, if only on the ice. The celebrations were not limited only to Prague. There were massive celebrations during which more than half a million people in different towns took to the streets and squares. The town centres were spontaneously filled by crowds of celebrating fans expressing their satisfaction at this successful act of revenge.⁴⁶

Many of these celebrations soon turned into protests against the Soviet occupation. These acts of resistance were not limited only to verbal attacks against the Soviet Union; in some cases, they led to the physical demolition of Soviet objects, namely military headquarters, cars and memorials. In different places, slogans such as, 'This is for August!', 'Brežněv is a hooligan!', 'Czechoslovakia 4 – Occupation forces 3!'⁴⁷ were seen on the walls and heard. Czechoslovakia witnessed the biggest demonstration since the Soviet invasion in August 1968.

The symbolism of the protests remained connected with the destruction of Soviet airline Aeroflot's office in Wenceslas' Square in Prague. Demonstrators smashed the windows with cobblestones, invaded the offices, and threw out the furniture and set it on fire. According to some historical interpretations, the demolition of the Aeroflot office was deliberately encouraged by the State Security under Soviet control,⁴⁸ whose primary aim

was to provoke evidence of political instability in Czechoslovakia and thus to destroy the persistent efforts at resistance against the so-called normalisation process.

Immediately after the protest in Prague, the government of Czechoslovakia called an extraordinary assembly at which its members criticized the behaviour of the public. They also expressed this in a special resolution.⁴⁹ According to reactions arriving from Moscow, the Czechoslovak government's standpoint had not been strong enough. The Russian daily *Pravda* published an editorial on 31 March 1969 which critiqued the Czechoslovak government's declaration from 28 March 1969. According to this editorial article, the protests were the result of a counterrevolution which was organized and managed from abroad and happened with the direct participation or passive observation of some of the functionaries of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.⁵⁰

The protests were used as an excuse for stronger intervention by the Soviet Union and as a motive for breaking up Czechoslovak resistance and eliminating the reformist efforts of Alexander Dubček, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. A delegation led by Marshall Andrei Grechko from the Soviet Politburo was sent to Prague, and Dubček was forced to resign on 17 April 1969 and the position of First Secretary was assigned to the ideologically acceptable and loyal politician Gustav Husák.⁵¹ The oscillation of Czechoslovak politics caused by two ice hockey games reached its end and socio-political life remained trapped under the pressures of normalization.

The ice-hockey protests represent a typical example of resistance which might be called a *glorious manifest protest*. As has been emphasized, these symbolic acts were not unique sources of sport resistance against the communist regime. In support of this idea, the next section explores, in detail, various layers of the resistance that stem from everyday practices.

Small everyday practices

Returning to the example of Věra Čáslavská, she again found herself in conflict with the official Czechoslovak political authorities due to the fact that she got married just one day after her victory, in Mexico, in a cathedral: a place that was absolutely unacceptable for the strongly secular communist ideology. Such a step suggests the notion of the *resonance of the glorious symbolic protests in the personal life* of sport celebrities. Similarly oppressive situations were met by 10 of the ice-hockey world champions from 1949. Before leaving for the world championship in 1950, they were arrested and accused of seditious activities against the communist regime.⁵² This aspect of the politicization of sport approaches the first layer of everyday resistance which can be defined as *personal resistance*.

A similar form of resistance can be seen in the decision to opt for political emigration. Tennis players Jaroslav Drobný and Vladimír Černík, figure skaters Ája Vrzáňová and Jiřina Nekolová, and swimmers Jiří Kovář and Jiří Linhart were among the first wave of emigrations after February 1948, when the Communist Party took control of the government of Czechoslovakia. The history of emigration is long and the many other examples of émigrés include tennis players Martina Navrátilová and Ivan Lendl⁵³ and such ice hockey players as the Šťastný brothers.

Considering the interrelatedness all of these acts with the personal lives of the sports celebrities and their public invisibility in the former Czechoslovakia in the years after they emigrated, these steps approach everyday resistance practices. In addition to considering *personal resistance*, this essay identifies other layers of everyday resistance that can be defined as follows: *organizational, legal, material* and *cultural*.

Second, the notion of *organizational resistance* is linked to the political potential of sports volunteering and, in particular, to the activities of the members of those sports associations that were banned or radically transformed according to the rules of the communist regime. This form of resistance can be identified among the members of the traditional sports associations founded on the ideas of democracy and Catholicism, such as Sokol and Orel, respectively. Various acts of resistance were observed after 1948, when the communist regime was initiated, and after 1968, when it was reinforced. Roubal reflected upon the resistance potential of the Sokol Slet, a mass gymnastic display, in 1948 in Czechoslovakia. He wrote that ‘the 1948 Slet was the last massive protest against recently established communist rule, resulting in mass persecution and the banning of the movement’.⁵⁴ These persecutions also forced some of the Sokol members to leave their country in two different waves of emigration after 1948⁵⁵ and 1968.⁵⁶ Political engagement became one of the principal activities employed by Sokol unions in exile. They contributed to disseminating democratic values in opposition to the oppressive communist regime.⁵⁷ There exists evidence about Sokol unions and clubs operating in exile and economically supporting the activities of anti-communist dissenters within Czechoslovakia.⁵⁸

The example of Sokol demonstrates the fact that resistance not only includes extraordinary large-scale events and sport celebrities, but also ordinary sport activity and common athletes. From this point of view, engaging in some of the sports forbidden or limited by the communist regime can *per se* be understood in some contexts as an act of resistance. This organizational layer of everyday resistance does not just include selected multisports associations but also encompasses sports-specific associations. This, in particular, concerns sports that were labelled as ‘bourgeois’ such as sailing, tennis or golf.⁵⁹ According to the memories of various sailors, as they presented them during interviews with representatives of the Czech sailing association, the strategic building of apolitical social networks with local functionaries of the Communist Party served as an important tactic to ensure tolerance for sailing, which was less tolerated by the official ideology.

This organizational resistance also presents a creative means of coping with complicated formalized and ideologically driven procedures. In this vein, offshore sailors from the country, which is situated far from the seaside, contributed to ‘etching the regime’.⁶⁰ They had to render their hobby official in order to enjoy the possibility of travelling to Western countries. In other words, they had to rationalize and bureaucratize their activities to display agreement with the regime. In the book published by the Czech Sailing Association in celebration of the one hundred year anniversary of sailing in the Czech Republic, this tactic was described in the following way:

To render it [offshore sailing] recognisable, it had to produce results that were subsumed under ‘a unified sports classification’ of the former ČSTV. Therefore we had to found an organisation which would somehow legalize the foolishness and, at the same time, set up clear criteria for competition.⁶¹

The apparent adherence to official rules, albeit done without adopting their ideological background, suggests another, third form of small everyday practices: that of *legal resistance*. A more symptomatic example of *legal resistance*, and one that is linked narrowly to the (fourth) notion of *material resistance*, can be identified in the sailors’ quest for high-quality equipment and facilities from Western countries. Some sailors challenged the communist regime by violating the law in order to attain Western equipment and facilities. The sailors shared ideas on how to avoid payment regulations on import duty, how

to smuggle gasoline and how to obtain Western currency, which was officially accessible only with great difficulty.⁶² These subtle tactics had the more or less intentional objective of political resistance, which also contributed to undermining the communist regime.

Unavailability of sports equipment and training facilities also reinforced other means of rather invisible resistance. Representatives of the football clubs remember how they helped themselves and their clubs by producing training equipment from the state-owned factory material produced during official working hours. Similar comments might be heard from representatives of Czech sailing movements, as it is well documented by the following quotation of a sailor: 'Being hard up taught us . . . The factories [where they worked] were well-furnished with material and you could sometimes steal something . . . It was all about looking for a way to find it, how to make it.'

The material resistance was not necessarily linked to travel abroad. Stories from physical education classes of the youngest volunteers discuss purchasing Converse-like, completely white shoes imported from China. It was quite common to decorate them with a felt pen; for example, by drawing three stripes to make them resemble the Adidas brand – a brand missing in the state-owned communist shops but known from the television broadcasts of sport matches of the socialist heroes against their Western rivals.

This symbolic 'Westernisation' of sports products suggests, finally, the notion of *cultural resistance*. This category refers to the production of signs and the circulation and consumption of cultural products, as well as the attribution of particular meanings to sporting events. The very limited possibility of travelling to Western countries was slightly increased among athletes, and in particular among high-level practitioners, with the impending downfall of the communist regime approaching. Their journeys abroad, therefore, permitted a circulation of cultural products such as books or audio discs with popular music scarcely available in communist countries. Moreover, these few athletes who travelled abroad had the unique opportunity to interact with so-called Western life and Western culture and, therefore, they could have gained a different perspective on life in communist Czechoslovakia.

Another facet of cultural resistance (and, in a sense, also of organizational resistance) was represented by a specific approach towards participation in official sports governance meetings. Notwithstanding the ideological appearance of these meetings imprinted into the language used, the style of the discussion, and the overt respect displayed for hierarchical divisions among sports officials, some sports volunteers retrospectively attributed to their participation itself a kind of passive resistance. They considered their participation in the sport governance activities as a legitimate excuse for their absence, or even escape, from compulsory political meetings. Even though the official ideology labelled civic volunteering in sport as 'a socialism building activity', its impact was often damaging to the political system. This might also include some politically subtle jokes that sometimes appeared during the official meetings dealing with sport governance and irony regarding the ideological manner in which the decisions were made. In some cases the element of cultural resistance was even more apparent, as in the circumstances surrounding a Czech golf challenge trophy named after Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, whose democratic ideas were incongruous with communist ideology. Despite this fact, the trophy with his name on it was courageously awarded to the golf champion of Czechoslovakia even in 1949, when the first symptoms of communist pressures appeared.⁶³

Conclusion

The case of Věra Čáslavská, the Ice Hockey Protests of 1969, and the stories remembered by common sport practitioners do not provide an exhaustive enumeration of the

expressions of resistance that became manifest during the communist regime. Under the shadow of communism, other examples undoubtedly appeared which could potentially enrich such a characterization.

Making the distinction between glorious symbolic acts and small everyday practices captures the plurality of forms of resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and allow sport-based resistance to be explored in all its complexity. Although these two forms of resistance are contrasting in their nature, they represent complementary expressions of resistance and both could assist in weakening the communist ideology.

In the first case, descriptive analytical attention was directed towards the logic of symbolic events and the interconnectedness between specific sporting events, stands, politics, public spaces and the media. In the second case, a rather interpretative analysis was focused on five different facets of everyday resistance, defined as personal, organizational, legal, material and cultural.

Whereas the protest-oriented nature of the glorious symbolic acts is apparent, the resistant nature of small everyday practices needs to be cautiously interpreted. The examples presented here cannot be generalized. Their resistance potential must be addressed contextually, respecting the meaning attributed, often retrospectively, to everyday practices by sports actors. Consequently, one can discuss the impact of the enumerated types of resistance in ways that might differ greatly and that 'going Western' does not necessarily possess the same power to resist as an open criticism of the system made during a general assembly meeting.

Therefore, existing counter-evidence must be taken into consideration. Perhaps there were members of Sokol exile clubs who explicitly refused to mix sports with politics. By the same token, stealing or smuggling could occur as a manifestation of resourcefulness in a time of need, rather than as a politically driven tactic. What unifies the enumerated examples of everyday resistance is the fact that resistant potential was attributed to the actions by the sports volunteers themselves.

Summarizing, the various modes of resistance differ in their frequency, intensity, visibility and impact, but all of them have their important place in the complex and robust architecture of sport-based resistance. More or less collective, coordinated and intended acts that were born in the sport environment played a small role in the collapse of the communist regime. Obviously, sport-based resistance has to be understood in congruence with other forms of resistance expressed in the realms of politics and international relations, economics, research and education, culture or religion.

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Notes

¹ Vačkář, 'Nezkrácená verze rozhovoru s Čáslavskou'.

² Emil Zátopek was politically active after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968 when he asked for the exclusion of the Soviet athletes from the upcoming Olympic Games in Mexico City. Giuntini, *Pugni chiusi*, 70.

³ Vačkář, 'Nezkrácená verze rozhovoru s Čáslavskou'.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*.

- ⁶ Edelman, *Serious Fun*.
- ⁷ Hollander and Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing Resistance'; Marada, *Kultura protestu*; Reed-Danahay, 'Talking about Resistance'; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*; Shaw, 'Conceptualizing Resistance'; Sivaramakrishnan, 'Some Intellectual Genealogies'.
- ⁸ The selection of three sport disciplines was primarily driven by the aims of a larger project 'Sport and Social Capital in the European Union'. This project was realized as a multi-sited ethnographic study and was focused on sport governance and its social impact in four specific countries of the European Union (Denmark, France, Italy and the Czech Republic).
- ⁹ Rinehart, 'Fists Flew'.
- ¹⁰ Ok, 'The Political Significance'.
- ¹¹ Majumdar, 'Cultural Resistance'.
- ¹² Keech, 'Contest, Conflict and Resistance'.
- ¹³ Duke, 'Local Tradition'; Horne, 'The Politics of Sport'; Thomson and Soós, 'Research Note Youth Sport'.
- ¹⁴ Broad, 'The Gendered Unapologetic'; Elling, de Knop and Knoppers, 'Gay/Lesbian Sport Clubs'; Iannotta and Kane, 'Sexual Stories'.
- ¹⁵ Jamison, 'The Sandgate Handicap Riot'.
- ¹⁶ Pelak, 'Negotiating Gender/Race/Class Constraints'.
- ¹⁷ Donnelly, 'Resistance Through Sports'.
- ¹⁸ Williams, 'Sport, Hegemony'.
- ¹⁹ Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 'The (Sub)politics of Sport'.
- ²⁰ Lennartz, 'Olympic Boycotts'.
- ²¹ Conversi, 'Immigration and Statelessness'.
- ²² Edelman, 'A Small Way of Saying "No"'
- ²³ Rinehart, 'Fists Flew'.
- ²⁴ Edelman, *Serious Fun*, 24.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.
- ²⁶ Marada, *Kultura protestu*; Thorne, 'Ideologies and Realities'.
- ²⁷ ČSTV – Czechoslovak Association of Physical Education, the only officially recognized state-driven umbrella association.
- ²⁸ Round Table, 'Kulatý Stůl', 738.
- ²⁹ Shaw, 'Conceptualizing Resistance'.
- ³⁰ Hollander and Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing Resistance'.
- ³¹ Budd, 'Capitalism, Sport and Resistance'.
- ³² This section is based on the paper 'Sport as Resistance: "Ice Hockey Protests" in Czechoslovakia in 1969s' presented at the XIth International CESH-Congress in Vienna in 2006 and published in the proceedings of the event. See Numerato, 'Sport as Resistance'.
- ³³ In fact, the invasion was effected under the Russian captainship, but the army was comprised of soldiers from five countries belonging to the Warsaw Pact: the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. Balík et al., 'Politický systém českých zemí 1848–1989', 140.
- ³⁴ The term 'temporary' is used here in the same way that it was used in expressions of key political actors.
- ³⁵ Felcman, 'Počátky ostré etapy normalizace', 52; Williams, *The Prague Spring*; Agnew, *The Czechs*, 269.
- ³⁶ The tension of the games and their political significance was already anticipated before they started. In fact, some Czech journalists, particularly those from dailies such as the *Reportér*, *Svobodné slovo*, *Mladá fronta*, *Zemědělské noviny* and *Práce* were later accused in the official statement of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia of provoking tension and negative emotion in connection with the game. *Rudé právo*, 'Ještě k hokejovému zápasu ČSSR-SSSR', 13.
- ³⁷ Pacina, 'Hokejová pomsta za okupaci', 32.
- ³⁸ L. Brostrom, 'Cold as Ice: The Triumph in 1969: Seven Months after Russia Invaded, Tension Filled Stockholm Arena'. *The Prague Post*, April 22, 2004)
- ³⁹ Národní muzeum exhibition, '... a přijely tanky. 1968', Prague, 2008.
- ⁴⁰ M. Jenšík and T. Večeřa, 'Jak na Rusy? Rozhodit je'. *Mladá fronta Dnes*, February 15, 2008, Sport, 32.
- ⁴¹ Pelletier, 'Czechoslovakian Victory'; Jokisipilä, 'Cold War on Ice'.
- ⁴² This was the nickname of the Soviet Union's team referring to its domination in international games, which had lasted for years.

- ⁴³ Notwithstanding the victory against the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak team came away from Stockholm with the bronze medal, since it lost twice against Sweden and even if it reached the same number of points as did both Sweden and the Soviet Union, the better score determined that the World Cup was awarded to the Soviet team and the silver medal to the Swedish players. IIHF, 'Nothing Equals the Rivalry of the Spring of 69', 2.
- ⁴⁴ According to some estimates, there were about 2,000 people gathered at Prague's Wenceslas Square. Casper, 'The Ice Hockey Crisis of 1969'.
- ⁴⁵ Národní muzeum, '... a přijely tanky. 1968'.
- ⁴⁶ Agnew, *The Czechs*, 269; *Rudé právo*, 'Ministerstvo vnitra ČSR k událostem z 28. a 29. března', 1–2.
- ⁴⁷ Casper, 'The Ice Hockey Crisis of 1969'.
- ⁴⁸ The pile of cobblestones had been brought in front of the Aeroflot office only the night before the match happened. See Pacina, 'Hokejová pomsta za okupaci'; Casper, 'The Ice Hockey Crisis of 1969'.
- ⁴⁹ *Rudé právo*, 'Vláda ČSR k událostem v noci ze dne 28. na 29. března 1969', 1–2.
- ⁵⁰ *Rudé právo*, 'Ještě k hokejovému zápasu ČSSR-SSSR', 13.
- ⁵¹ Agnew, 'The Czechs'.
- ⁵² These activities, among others, included attempts at emigration or public criticism of communism. Macků, *Utajené stránky hokejové historie*, 2.
- ⁵³ Děkanovský, *Sport, média a mýty*, 156.
- ⁵⁴ Roubal, 'Politics of Gymnastics', 6.
- ⁵⁵ Uhlíř and Waic, *Sokol proti totalitě 1938–1952*.
- ⁵⁶ Vašíčková, 'Sokolské hnutí'.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Bäumeltová, 'Jednota Sokol Bern'.
- ⁵⁹ ČSJ, *100 let jachtingu 1893–1993*, 41; Sedlák, 'Historie golfu v Českých zemích'.
- ⁶⁰ ČSJ, *100 let jachtingu 1893–1993*, 41.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Numerato, 'Revisiting Weber's Concept'.
- ⁶³ The trophy has not actually been awarded since 1950, most probably in order to prevent accusations of political provocation. Sedlák, 'Historie golfu v Českých zemích'.

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