



“C.I.S.M. and Sports Science through its 70-years course”

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Dear Secretary General,
Dear President of FEDEME,
Dear Friends of Sports,

It is an honor for me standing here, in front of all of you to conduct my opening speech. Moreover, as a historian, it feels great, not only attending this historic Symposium, but also being a part of CISM history. So, let me express both my sincere gratitude and my deep emotions at the CISM HQ and FEDEME.

I would like to open this presentation with a phrase from Philostratus.

«...καὶ μελέτην ποιούμενοι πολεμικὰ μὲν γυμναστικῶν, γυμναστικὰ δὲ πολεμικῶν ἔργα».

“...and they were studying the practices of war for the sake of sports training, and the training of sports for the sake of war”

(Philostratus, Gymnasticus, 43)

Philostratus in his magnificent work “Gymnasticus” or “On gymnastics” made a thorough report on Olympic Games and athletic contests in general. Additionally, he made a significant philosophical and historical interpretation on the creation of the athletic contests. He argued that every sporting event was equivalent to a war practice. He also argued that both athletic and military virtues were connected to each other and praised the science of sports as a form of wisdom.

Someone could easily suggest that, among others, Philostratus in his Gymnasticus highlighted the inevitable connection among the military, sports and sports science.

Regarding this opening speech, my primary sources were the original archives placed in CISM Headquarters, in Brussels. In order to create a complete visual of the era from 1948-2018, we studied the Minutes of the C.I.S.M. General Assemblies from 1948-2018, magazines and Special Editions published by the C.I.S.M. regarding the 10th, the 20th, the 30th and the 40th Anniversary of the institution, the book of Zechner and Vanmeerbek on the sixtieth anniversary of the institution, photo-albums of scientific events that took place during all those years, and the original country archives that have been found inside the C.I.S.M. HQ.

Due to the lack of specific and thorough research on the topic, the purpose of this presentation was to identify references and the original sources (Archives and other material of the C.I.S.M.) in order to highlight and reveal the historical connection of CISM with Sports Sciences through its 70-years course.

During the research, we retrieved important data which clearly show that Sports Science was cultivated in CISM as a medium for its original purpose, which was to unite all the soldiers of the world under the flag of sports.

First of all, it is significant to note down the historical incidents that lead to the establishment of CISM. There is no doubt that the first major international military athletic event that ever took place was the “Inter Allied” Games or the “Pershing Olympiad”, in Paris in 1919.

After the end of WW I, the American Expeditionary Forces, the YMCA and the French Government co-organized and conducted an international military sporting event, after the initiative of the American General John J. Pershing. 1.500 military athletes from 19 countries competed in 26 disciplines in front of a large audience. Even though those Games were a great success, no other similar event took place until the WWII started.

Nevertheless, the seed of international military sports competitions was planted. A significant example is that of the Kentish Challenge Cup. The Kentish Cup is named after Brigadier General R J Kentish CMG DSO and was first played in 1921 with the purpose of fostering relations between Armed Forces. The tournament was first conducted between the British, the French and the Belgian Army. This triangular tournament was cancelled during the Second World War and when France withdrew in 1986 the Netherlands took over. France came back into the competition in 2005 when Belgium withdrew. This competition is recognised by UEFA and FIFA as the oldest Cup competition in Europe.

For sure, the Kentish Challenge Cup was an ambitious action for promoting military sporting activities. On the other hand, the countries involved were limited and it was focusing only in the promotion of association football.

Having in mind the Inter-allied Games, which took place in France in 1919, after the end of WW II, another American General, Joseph T. McNarney, the Military Governor of the American occupied zone of Germany, wanted to repeat General Pershing’s project. General McNarney ordered his staff to study and propose a course of action, in order to motivate the military authorities of the Allied Forces to be employed with sports. The Special Service department of his HQ proposed the establishment of an inter-allied committee, which would be dealing with the organization of military sporting activities among the allied troops.

On that slide we can see the only copy of the first official proposal of establishing an inter allied athletic council, conducted by the American Forces Headquarter of the European Theatre (Frankfurt). This proposal was also an invitation to the Allied Countries, such as United Kingdom, U.S.S.R., the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Denmark, Norway, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, to send a delegate to the upcoming meeting of the representatives of the Allied Forces.

So, on the 6th February 1946, the decision of the organization of inter allied sporting events has been taken. The agenda of the first meeting was sent to all allied countries and the US Col. Hoy was appointed as the Officer responsible of this initiative.

In 7 February 1946, the Allied Forces Sports Council (A. F. S.C.) set up in Frankfurt, Germany.

The first countries-members of the Council were: USA, Belgium, France, UK, USSR, Netherlands, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Later, Luxemburg, Sweden, Denmark, Egypt, Norway, and Greece were accepted for participation. Among the members of the first board were the Captain of the French Armed Forces Henri Debrus and Lieutenant Raul Mollet, who happened to be the founders of the C. I. S. M. two years later.

The purposes of the AFSC were to CEMENT further inter-allied relations and to concave, to formulate, and to put into efficient operation plans and rules which would ENCOURAGE, REGULATE and CONTROL contests or any large tournaments between the Allied Forces. At this point, it is easy to perceive that this initiative was dedicated only for the Allied Forces which fought during WWII and excluded other countries from participation. Up to now, there is no evidence indicating that there was a plan for further expansion of that institution.

From 1946 to 1948, 11 competitions were organized by this inter allied sports council. Two (2) competitions of track & field (1946, 1947), two (2) competitions of swimming (1946,1947), two (2) fencing tournaments (1947, 1948), two (2) tournaments of football (1946, 1947), one (1) cross country championship (1947) and one (1) military pentathlon event (1947). The military pentathlon event is the most interesting one. Having in mind that this event was based on the Olympic event of modern pentathlon, one can understand that the council planned also on promoting military sporting events.

Regarding the military pentathlon, please allow me to make a more detailed reference a little bit later on.

Also, it is significant to take a closer look on the picture of this slide, in which someone can notice the presence of Raoul Mollet, Henri Debrus and Michel Chome. We can also can spot a female presence among the officers, which is no one else than

Captain Christian Andre, of the French Army, which was participating at the AFSC as an interpreter of the French delegation. I would like to remind you that the name of Captain Andre is written at the brass plate of the founding members of CISM at the entrance of the CISM HQ in Brussels.

Finally, in this picture we can also spot the American anthropologist Dr. Dudley Edward Degroot, a Navy officer who was serving at the European Theatre at that time. Dr. Degroot, being a reservist of the US Armed Forces was one of the founding members of the CISM Academy.

Despite the coordinating efforts of the members of the Council, in June of 1947, USA and UK withdrew from their membership, due to national and financial restrictions. More specific, the USFET received a direct order that it was not allowed for the US troops to compete in sporting events outside the American occupied German. In August 1947, USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia also withdrew from the AFSC, following their Cold War policies of their respective governments‘.

All those unfortunate events, that compromised the very existence of the AFSC lead to the February of 1948, when the 2nd AFSC Fencing Tournament was taking place in Nice, France. At the same time, the 6th session of the AFSC was about to occur, which had at its agenda the way ahead of the Council.

The only countries-members present at the 6th Session were Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Luxemburg, Norway and France. The then President of the AFSC, Major Henri Debrus depicted the problematic of the AFSC, proposing the establishment of a new institution for military sports.

That led to the establishment of the Conseil International du Sport Militaire (CISM) or International Council of Military Sports. This important event for International Sports took place at the 18th February 1948. At the 1st September 1948, the 1st General Assembly took place in Vichy, France, and CISM took its way. In this picture, we can see from the left to the right hand side, Captain Christiane Andre, Major Boving, Major Henri Debrus, the Mayor of Vichy, Lt. General Chassin of the French General National Defence Staff and Lt. Col. Maurice Chome, of Belgium.

It is worthy to mention that the founding countries were Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland and Luxemburg.

According to Major Debrus’s opening speech in the 1st General Assembly, the main target of the Council was to “advance”.

That advance of the Council would come true by increasing of the number of the member-nations, ensuring the success of the international military sport events by reducing the number of the events and by limiting the number of the participants. Also,

there was a need of managing the current financial difficulties by organizing profitable athletic competitions and by promoting them through the press.

At this point, it is extremely significant to mention the main ideal of the existence of the CISM. During the historical overview, it is quite clear that every effort regarding military sports took place only among allied armies. That's why those initial efforts didn't have universal perspective.

In 1948, the C.I.S.M. was created in order to operate as a medium for the Armies of the World to establish friendly contacts among them in the sporting fields.

That's how the "Friendship through Sport" doctrine came up.

During our research in the CISM HQ, we discovered that the current emblem of CISM was the same like the emblem of the AFSC. Also, the early flag of CISM was the same as the flag of the AFSC. After 1950, CISM changed its flag by removing the pigeon of peace and replacing it with its emblem.

According to this slide, during the following ten years of its existence, many countries responded the calling from the CISM for friendship through sport. This table shows that until 1957, 22 countries from four continents joined CISM.

At 1948, seven championships were organized by the CISM. At the end of 1958, 14 championships were been organized annually by member-countries of CISM. The Press at that time was displaying a lot of interest for those championships, based on the news-papers and magazines we found at the CISM Headquarters. So, it is easy for us to conclude that the first decade of the institution was rather successful.

At this point, it is essential to make a short mention on the creation of the three military, multidisciplinary sporting events, invented by the CISM members.

The Aeronautical Pentathlon was first introduced at Vichy, at 1948 by Captain Edmond PETIT (FRANCE). Earlier, the Military Pentathlon (1946) was introduced by Commandant Henri DEBRUS, (FRANCE), but the first CISM Military Pentathlon took place at 1950. Later, the Naval Pentathlon made its first appearance in Venice, at 1952, by Commander Giuseppe VOCATURO- (ITALY). The first CISM Naval Pentathlon Championship took place at 1954.

During the first decade of its existence, the CISM was guided and inspired by its founder Henri Debrus. The French officer and sportsman had two duties as CISM President, the first from 1948 to 1953. He was succeeded for three years by the Swedish Major Arne Thorburn until 1956. Finally, he took over presidency again, for the period 1956-1961. During his presidency, he created the solid foundations, which made CISM what it is nowadays.

In 1948, the duty of the General Secretary was appointed to Col. Maurice CHOME of Belgium, as permanent. In 1954, Commander Raul MOLLET of Belgium took over this position, who kept this title until 1986, being the longest serving Secretary General in CISM history. The “man with the 1000 ideas”, as his colleagues used to call him, was the perfect support not only for every President of the CISM, but for every member-country. Both DEBRUS and MOLLET put their signatures in the success of the CISM and the promotion of its ideals. As we found out during our research, Raoul MOLLET was not only spending his time using his exceptional organizational skills. He was a dedicated researcher of Sports Science, who was studying new methods of sports and military training. One of his achievements was the writing of the series of books “Total Training”, with training protocols for both amateur and professional athletes.

Aiming at the promotion of the physical education in the Armed Forces, MOLLET and PETIT proposed a series of actions through the 5th GA in Cairo, at 1951. Those two young officers used the 5th paragraph of the first statutes of CISM, which clearly declared that CISM was scoping on the promotion of physical education and sports science among its member countries. Despite the fact that up to now the first statutes of CISM weren't retrieved, the reference in the minutes of the GA makes it clear, that the involvement of the Council in Sports Science was one of its initial goals.

The GA approved their ideas and the following years they developed the program “Physical Training for Aircrews”. They presented their training program in several airbases in Europe, noting down the results of their interventions. The results were outstanding, according their official reports. Both of them motivated more and more officers to take action and propose new training programs for all branches.

Another critical step was the foundation of the CISM Academy, during the 11th GA, in 1957. The CISM Academy was mend to be a scientific committee, which had as researching fields: Combat Physical Training (1st section), Sports Medicine (2nd Sector) and Sports Training & Techniques (3rd Section). The head of each sector was a distinguished scientist with a lot of experience in its respective field of research.

During the same GA, the delegates of the member-countries of the CISM approved the first periodical edition of the CISM, the “CISM Magazine”. The contents of this magazine were articles, whose topics were related with the three directions of the CISM Program (Doctrines, techniques and training, medicine), news information and photos regarding athletic events, and, finally, sports related bibliography.

The CISM Magazine would be for the CISM, not only a medium to inform its audience about its actions, but also to serve as a platform for cooperation among military and civilian sports specialists. So, it wouldn't be too bald to presume that CISM with its magazine made an opening for civilian personalities, authorities and institutions on the field of sport science.

The study of the archives in CISM revealed that CISM and its Academy promoted actively the scientific research of sports science. Many officers from different member-countries presented their researches through the magazine and were inspired to write books.

Military doctors with athletic back ground started conducting wide scientific researches using military athletes and presented their findings in the Academy and the CISM Magazine. It has become clear that military doctors, such as Papareskos of Greece, Tatareli of Italy and Lartigue of France were orientated in promoting the scientific field of sports medicine. In some articles of the CISM Magazine, we found references regarding “military sports medicine”.

Having in mind that sports medicine began to be a researching interest in the mid-fifties, we could suppose that the military doctors of CISM were among the pioneers who were involved with this particular scientific field of research.

The CISM Magazine wasn't dedicated only to military contributors. Many civilian coaches, trainers and scientists were published their researches in the magazine. One of the most intriguing findings of the research in the CISM HQ is that there are many scientific articles from sports scientists and technicians from countries of the Eastern bloc. Due to the fact that Raoul Mollet was also member, and later on, the President of the Belgian Olympic Committee, he managed to establish a good communication with sports personalities from the other side of the curtain. Thus, he promoted CISM and its ideals to them and they were sending him their articles. And, of course, CISM never hesitated to publish those articles, showing to the world that everybody could be accepted, regardless their political or strategic alliances. The two articles on right hand side of the slide are from scientists coming from the then USSR and Poland and they were been published in 1961.

CISM, in 1959, promoted a swimming clinic in Toledo Spain, in which training methods and sports medicine issues were examined. The CISM Academy organized this clinic in the training grounds of the Infantry Academy of Spain.

For example, there were a wide comparative study between interval training, circuit training and cross promenade training methods of 11 countries. There were combat swimming coaching classes, as long as swimming and diving coaching sessions. All the participants were more or less distinguished scholars in their respective fields of research and they contributed in an innovative scientific action.

At the end of the clinic, CISM published the book “Le Livre de Toledé” in which all the conclusions of the researchers were presented to the international scientific society.

Among the interesting results of this clinic was the presentation of the International Code of Water by Col. Lartigue, who created a set of rules regarding the prevention of drowning, the rescuing and the reanimation of the victims which would prevent the deaths of hundreds of swimmers every year.

Col. Georges Lartigue was born in 1906. He was accepted in the Military Medicine School of Lyon in 1925 and in 1926 he was transferred in Paris, in the Val de Grass military hospital. After 1932 he was an instructor at the French Military Sports School of Joinville. During WWII, he fought at the front lines of Alsace as an infantry commander. He was arrested and served as doctor in POW camps. He also provided significant help in the network of escape of POWs to Spain.

After the war, he continued his contribution in researching medical methods for the physical education of the French Armed Forces. He dedicated his life in the artificial respiration methods and the prevention of hydrocution for swimmers, both military and civilian. He was honored for his work from the French government and he died in 1991.

The year 1960 was a milestone in the history of the Academy. The C.I.S.M. Academy was invited at the most prestigious Scientific Congresses as an entity, which proves the acknowledgement of the institution by the international scientific society.

Moreover, CISM and the Italian Sports Medicine Federation sponsored an International Congress of Sports Medicine, in Rome, on the occasion of the 17th Summer Olympic Games. It was completed in three sessions regarding: interval training, athlete's cardio respiratory evaluation and athlete's diet. This was a significant step on behalf of CISM, paving the path of the cooperation with civilian institutes and establishments. That's why at the same year, the National Medicine Academy of France adopted the proposal of the CISM Academy of teaching the emergency artificial respiration to all young people who are getting involved with physical education and sports, as a remarking result of the clinic of Toledo. This proposal was presented by Col. Lartigue and immediately was implemented by the French Ministry of Public Health.

The same year, Col. Lartigue, representing CISM, and Col. Tatareli, representing both the Italian Lifesaving Federation and CISM Academy, presented the famous "International Code of Water" at the International Congress of Reanimation in Paris. The spontaneous adoption of the "International Code of Water" by the international lifesaving community led the president of CISM, Col. Debrus, to declare that: we contributed to the progress of sports to the world of today, thanks to the work of our Academy and to the creation of our technicians and we are proud to write CISM is Progress in Sports.

The forefathers of the CISM Academy had a huge spectrum of researching activities. Due to the fact that almost 20% of the athletes who competed in the XVI and

XVII Olympic Games were military athletes coming from CISM members, the members of the CISM Academy were deeply involved in finding methods to interpret and support the efforts of those military athletes. For instance, in 1965, the chief of the 3rd Section of the CISM Academy initiated a project regarding the impact of the altitude of Mexico City in sports performance for the upcoming Olympic Games of 1968.

Long story short, the “answer” to this question came the very next year by the Brazilian Captain Lamartine Da Costa, who presented his research in the CISM Academy. The Academy, after a thorough examination of his results, adopted his method and approved the publication the technical brochure: “Sports Activities in Tropical Climates and an experimental Solution: the Altitude Training.” In the minutes of the General Assemblies and the issues of the CISM Magazine it is quite clear that the training method of this young officer had a huge impact in the athletic world.

This achievement inspired the historical Secretary General of CISM Raul Mollet to declare: “Sport-Research-Friendship, the three keywords of CISM”

The Academy was the hospitable common ground, if I may say, for new researchers to propose and discuss their views regarding physical training, both in the military and the civilian environment. Many researchers from CISM member countries (such as Kenneth Cooper, of the famous “Cooper test”) or non CISM member countries, published their scientific efforts in the CISM Magazine, under the auspices of the Academy. The ambition of CISM was to be constantly updated and to contribute in every aspect possible of the scientific research and trends.

There is solid historical proof that the Academy also served as a significant medium for CISM to approach and cooperate with civilian institutions, in order to exchange ideas and promote sports science globally. CISM never hesitated to cooperate with international institutions such as the IOC, NOCs, international sports organizations and regional or national organizations, in order to declare its ideals and contribute to the international scientific community.

The study of the archives in CISM HQ revealed a wide variety of researchers from civilian institutions, such as universities, international scientific associations, etc, who chose the CISM Magazine (or Sports International, which was its most recent title) to publish their work.

The awkward duty of a historian is to present, not only the glorious moments, but also the inconvenient ones. It is proven that from the late '80s, the Academy had lost its fame. In 1998, several severe reasons lead the BoD to decide the finish of the CISM Academy activities. According to our research, this decision hadn't been taken lightly. But, as it was proved, there was a plan. 11 years later, the CISM Academy was reborn in Prague.

At this point, it is better for everyone to end my presentation. When someone is discussing facts and data from a recent time period, the thin line between history and journalism is blurred.

Nevertheless, the research of the preparation of this presentation led to some conclusions.

Firstly, after the two devastating World Wars of the 20th century, sports, among others, were used as a means building interpersonal relationships among soldiers coming from different countries. This aspect led to the initial efforts by some enlightened personalities to promote organized military sporting activities.

As a consequence, in order to organize and conduct military sporting events, there was a vast need of an institution or an organization, which would be in charge to oversee such activities in an international scale.

Judging from the outcome of the initial efforts, it became quite clear that the only model that would flourish in a progressive way was that of CISM. An institution which would be addressing its calling all over the world regardless alliances.

The research proved that the initial use of Sports Science in CISM was the improvement of military training as combat fitness for soldiers. Taking in account the impact of the research conducted by the members of the Academy, CISM used Sports Science as a pillar for extroversion, by approaching a wider audience through clinics, symposia and congresses. By creating the CISM Magazine, CISM also created a common ground in which both military and civilian researchers could easily exchange ideas, data and methods, advancing the Sports science itself. Therefore, as it was mentioned before, researchers from different alliances or just outside CISM could communicate their work through the magazine. Finally, CISM used Sports Science in order to show true and viable Solidarity to its less privileged member countries.

Knowing that Sports Science is multidisciplinary, its benefits for CISM are multidimensional. The most interesting part is that there is an equation which comes up. Having a common ground in which extroverting people can communicate efficiently, the bases of friendship are created.

Sports science in CISM is the wish of its founder, Henri Debrus coming true!

Closing my speech, I seize the opportunity to dedicate my research effort to the loving memory of my Elementary teacher, Mrs. Anthi Sgourou-Tselepi from Doxato Drama, who recently passed away.

Thank you for your attention and I am waiting happily for your questions.