

Houšťka Park, Czechoslovakia, 1952

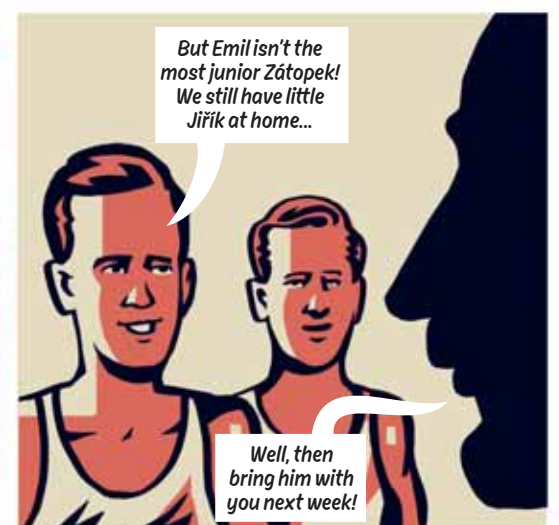


IN THE EARLY 1950'S, THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE'S ARMY OFFERED THE BEST TRAINING CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY IN ALL SPORTS. MOST OF THE TOP TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES COMPETED FOR ITS DUKLA PRAHA TEAM.

DUKLA'S BIGGEST STAR WAS THE LONG-DISTANCE RUNNER EMIL ZÁTOPEK. BEFORE THE HELSINKI OLYMPICS IN 1952, ZÁTOPEK TOOK UNDER HIS WING STANISLAV JUNGWIRTH, A TALENTED MILE-RUNNER.









EMIL ZÁTOPEK HAD SIX BROTHERS AND ONE SISTER. THE FAMILY LIVED IN A TWO-ROOM HOUSE WHICH ALSO SERVED AS HIS FATHER'S TABLE-MAKING WORKSHOP.



Yesterday, Emil ran like a madman across the whole town! I saw him! He was all sweaty and gasping for breath!

IN THOSE DAYS, POOR FAMILIES DREADED INCURABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES SUCH AS TUBERCULOSIS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.



Is that true?

No, it ain't... I mean... Well, kind of...

Well, if it was the teacher's idea... But you slow down the next time! That ham from Majer is stinky already anyway!



How come?! How many times do I have to tell you NOT to strain yourself?!



But my teacher sent me to Majer's butcher shop for three slices of ham... Said I was the fastest kid in the class.



Kopřivnice, 1937



Zlín, 1937



The main thing is never to strain yourself! None of that soccer! Forget about running! So you don't wind up with the TB...

None of them sports better even cross your mind!

THE TABLE-MAKER ZÁTOPEK BECAME A COMMUNIST BEFORE THE WAR. HOWEVER, HE SENT HIS SON EMIL TO APPRENTICE WITH THE BIGGEST CAPITALIST IN THE COUNTRY.

AT THE AGE OF FIFTEEN, ZÁTOPEK BECAME ONE OF "BAŤA'S YOUNG MEN." BAŤA WAS AN INDUSTRIALIST WHO APPLIED AMERICAN MANUFACTURING METHODS TO SHOE MAKING. AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PRODUCERS OF SHOES, HE PRACTICALLY CONTROLLED THE TOWN OF ZLÍN.



ZÁTOPEK SIGNED UP TO STUDY CHEMISTRY. THE CLASSES WERE HELD IN THE EVENING AFTER AN EXHAUSTING SHIFT ON THE PRODUCTION LINE.



What the hell do you think you're doing?

I don't know, somehow it got stuck by the heel, sir.

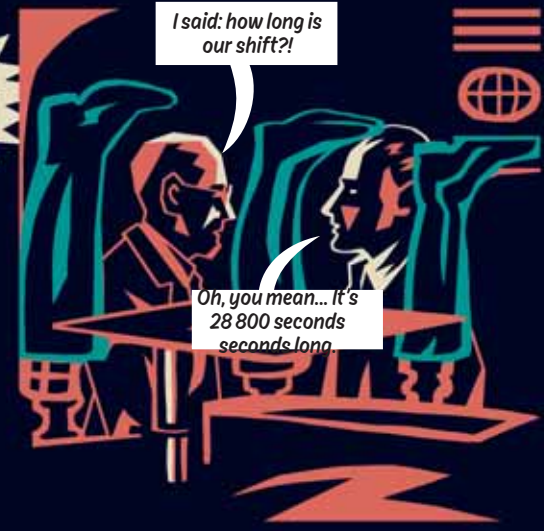


IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE WORST PLACE TO WORK IN THE GIGANTIC PLANT WAS THE RUBBER SHOP.



How long is our shift?

Eight hours.



I said: how long is our shift?!

Oh, you mean... It's 28 800 seconds seconds long.



And how many pairs of shoes are we supposed to make?

2 400 pairs of shoes.



And therefore, what is the norm?!

6 seconds a piece, and I am trying to do that, sir, but when it gets stuck like this, then I...



Even if we all shit blood,
we'll never catch up today!

Why don't YOU just shit
your drawers, sir...





EM MYŠLENÍ-STROJŮM DŘIN



BAŤA KEPT ZÁTOPEK SO BUSY THAT FOR FOUR YEARS, HE NEVER THOUGHT OF SPORTS AT ALL.

IN MARCH OF 1939, HITLER INVADED THE REMNANTS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.



AND LIFE IN THE GERMAN PROTECTORATE OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA CHANGED DRASTICALLY.



So Emil, Saturday's another Zlin Run! I'm putting you down on the list.

Oh, but I can't go, sir. I have this horrible stabbing pain in the knee, it's real bad!

That's how you got out of it for the past three years! This Saturday, you're running and that's that.



But I'm barely walking by the time I get to punch out at night...

This year you'd have to show me a note from the doctor!



I have good news for you!
This knee is back in perfect
repair! If there ever was anything
wrong with it in the first place...



THE ZLÍN RUN, 1941



HAPPILY INTO
THE NEW DAY

What's the worst thing
they can do to me?



What the hell is the
meaning of this? Are
you making fun of me?!



Get your lazy behind on
that starting line right
now, you quitter! You're
not faking your way out
of this, you coward!



Did he somehow find out
how fast I used to be as a
kid? But how? Nah, that
can't be...



On your marks!
Get set!

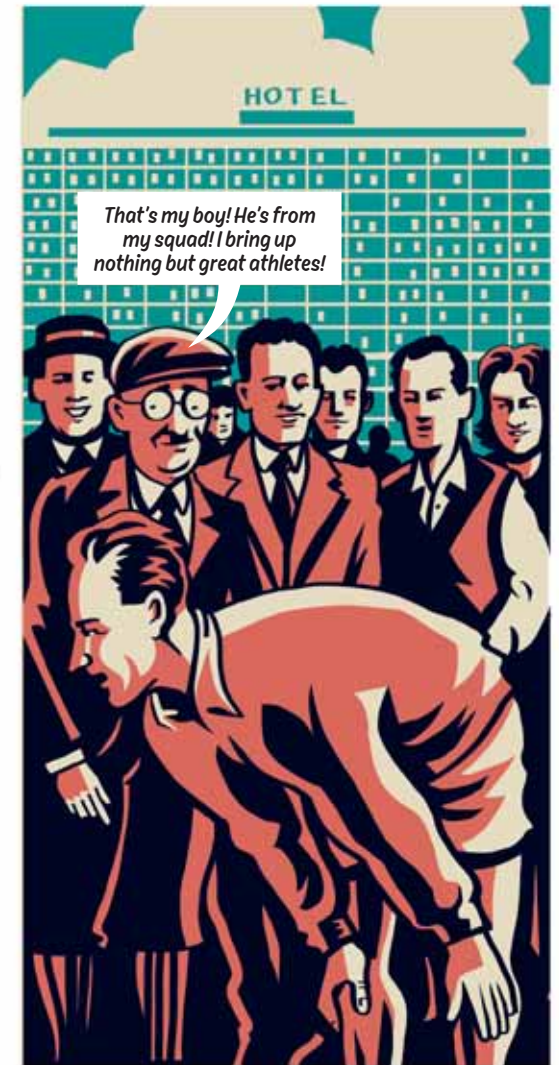


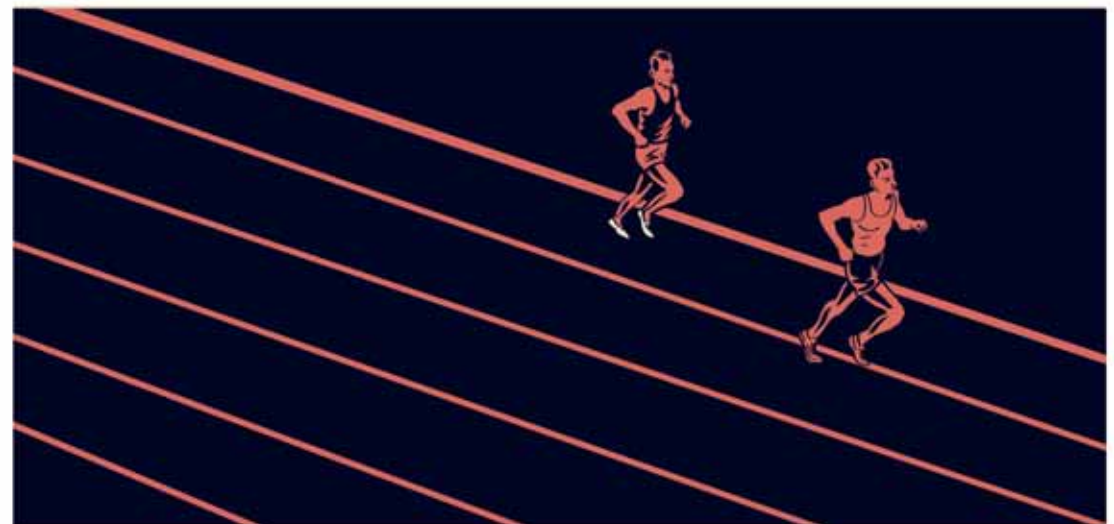
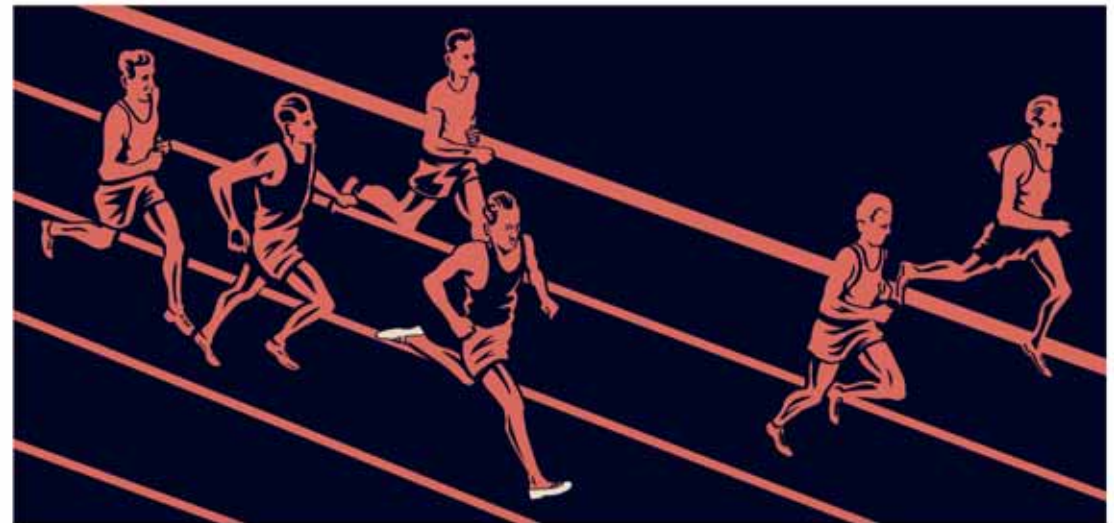
Suppose
I win this thing somehow,
wouldn't that piss you off, huh,
you damn geezer?!





Hi, there! I'm Emil! Emil Zátopek! And congratulations! You sure showed me how it's done!







Track isn't that complicated...
Only one thing to remember here:
speed is the basis of all running.

And I thought the basis of all
sports is bread! Seems like
I'm hungry all the time!



None of the other coaches agrees with me on
this, but I think it's better to do two hundred
meters ten times at full speed than to trot
those two kilometers in one stretch.

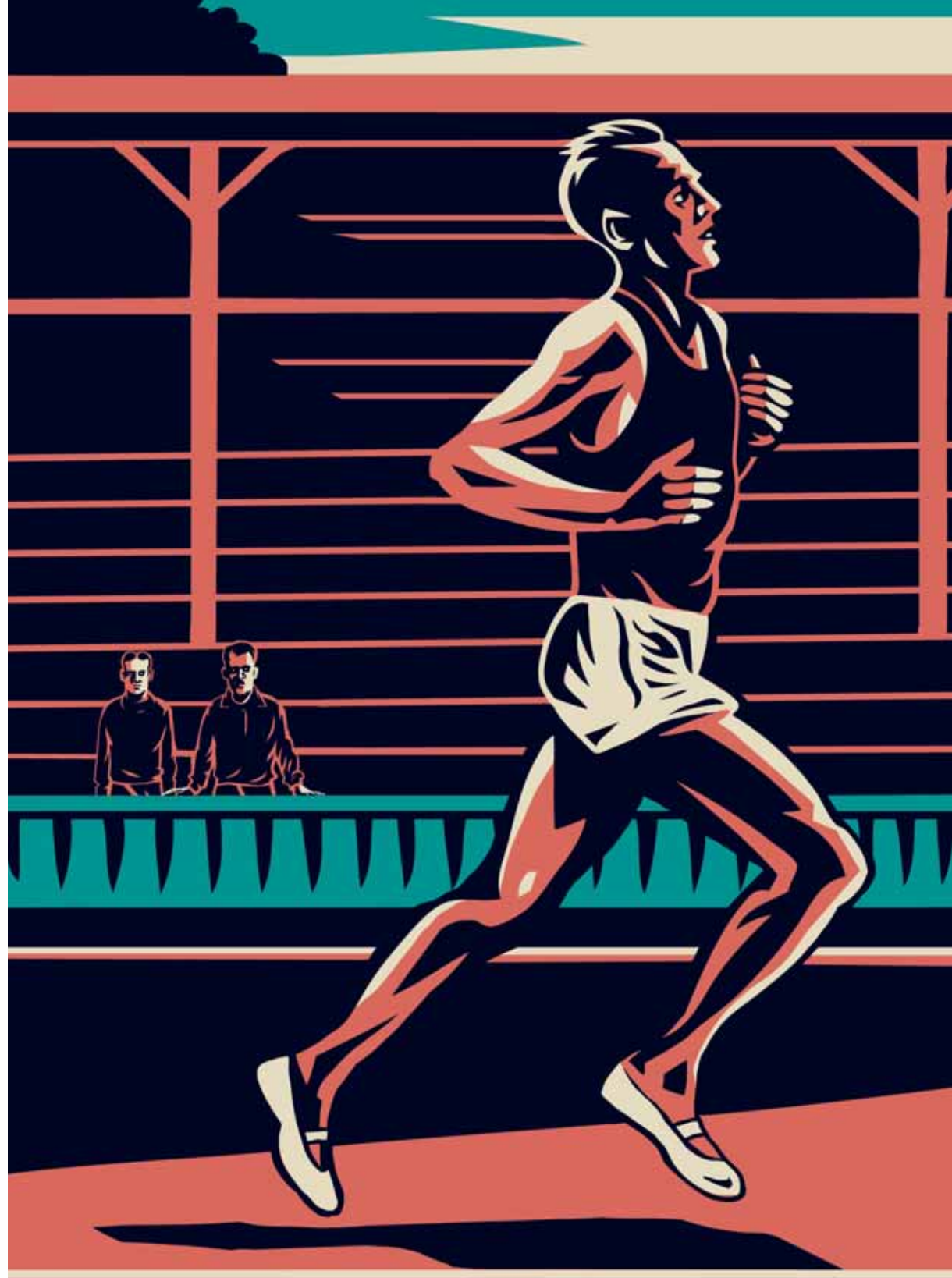


It's the same distance,
but the sprints will give
you so much more...

Okay, I'll try that!
Sounds logical...

But maybe you'd better
not even mention this
to the club coach.

So why don't you be my
coach, doctor Haluza! Then
I don't have to discuss this
with anybody.





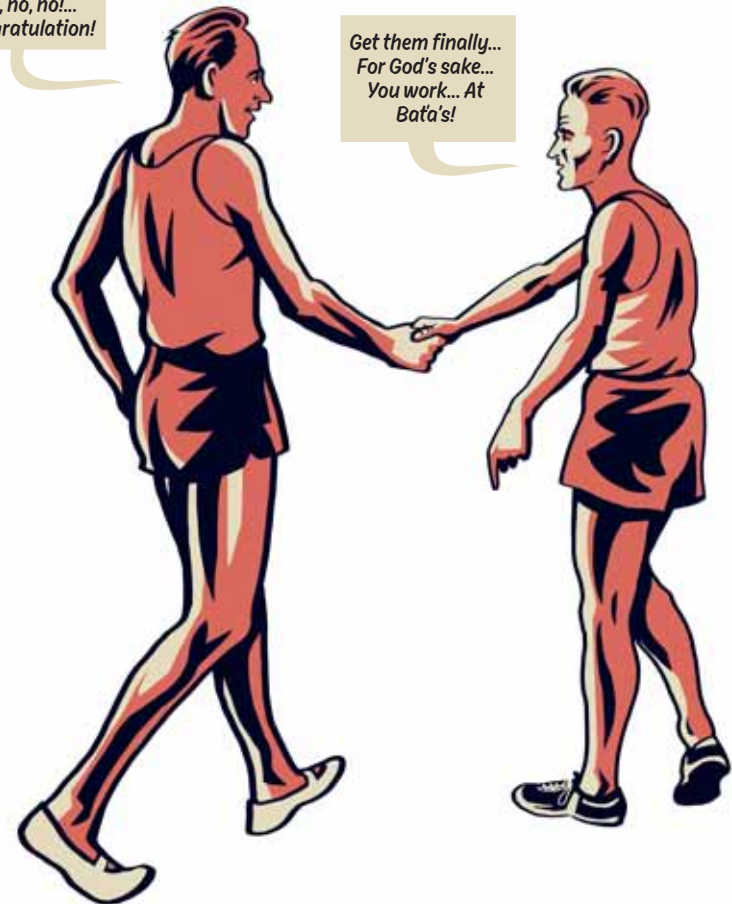
Ladies and gentlemen! Now we come to the three kilometer race. Representing our club is doctor Haluza and a Bařaman by the name of Emil Zátapek!





Oh, no, no!...
Congratulation!

Get them finally...
For God's sake...
You work... At
Baťa's!



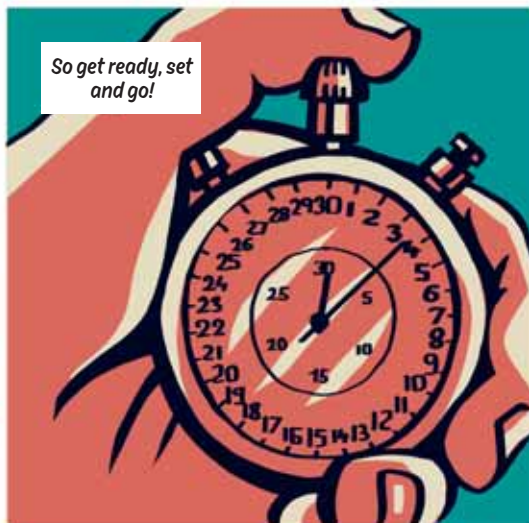
AS A GOOD STUDENT, ZÁTOPEK PROGRESSED TO ADVANCED COURSES. NOW HE ONLY HAD TO WORK IN THE FACTORY FOR FIVE HOURS IN THE MORNING. HE THEN HAD FIVE HOURS OF CLASSES IN THE AFTERNOON. AS A PROMISING CHEMIST, HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT.

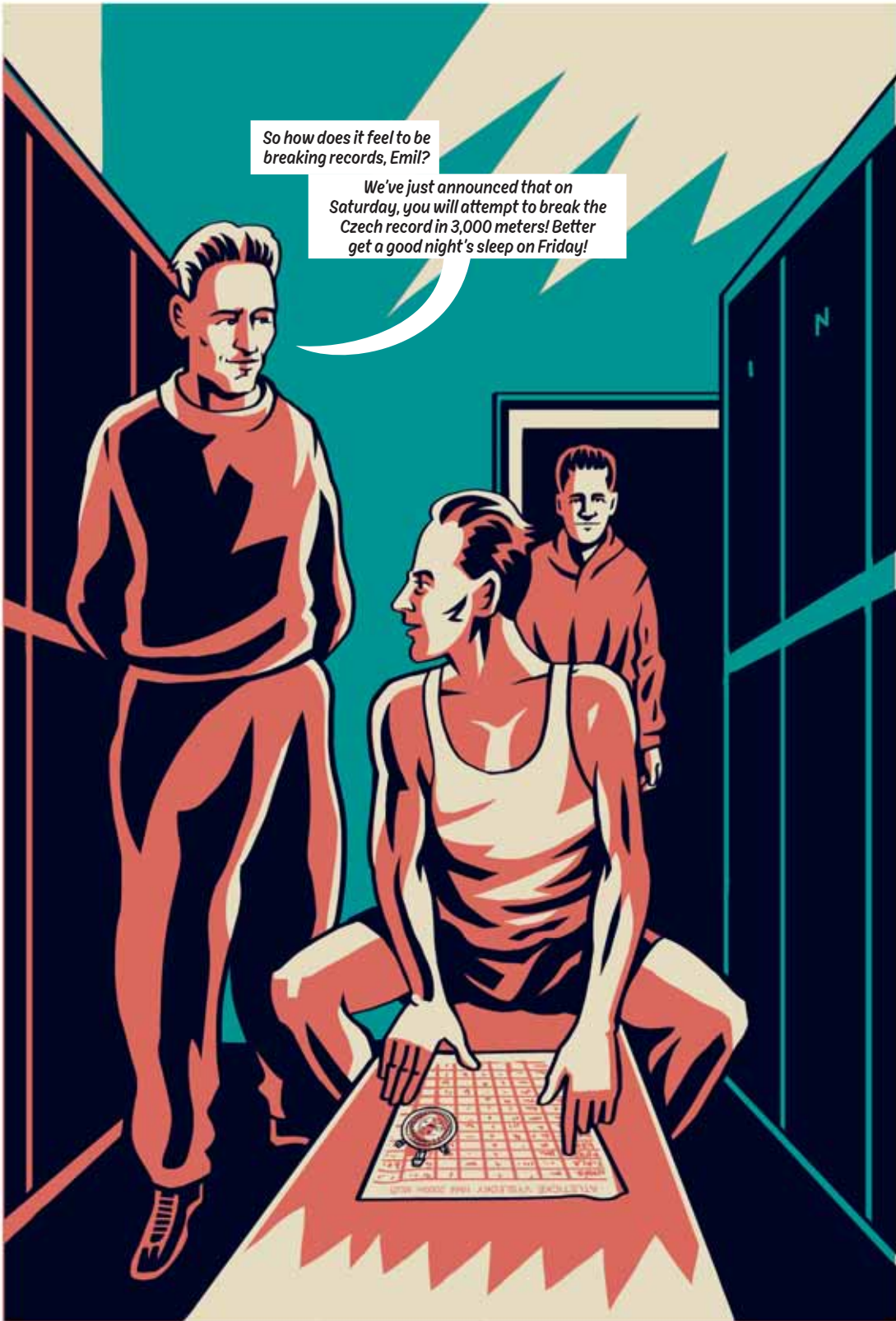


So what do you research here?

Nothing! We grind up quartz here is all...

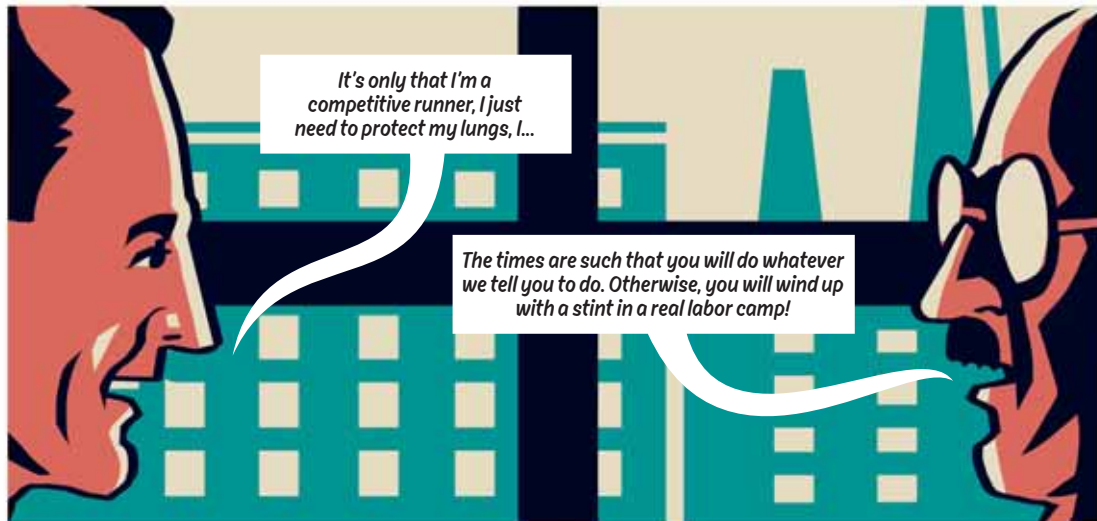








Where do you get the gall to refuse to grind minerals? Who do you think you are?



It's only that I'm a competitive runner, I just need to protect my lungs, I...

The times are such that you will do whatever we tell you to do. Otherwise, you will wind up with a stint in a real labor camp!



It says here you're running in track meets and even breaking records! Is this true?



I guess it is true if it's in the paper...



So look here! Mother and I are really worried about your health! That's why we decided that you will stop doing this.



But.. Father, please...



Hang up them track shoes and that's that.

Well, all right. So I'm not going to race anymore.



Do you promise?



Yes, father, I promise I will not race any longer.

I'm so glad about that, Emil! Just look at yourself, you're skinny as a rail...

Forgive me, mama, I will never lie to you again...



It being wintertime, there aren't any races now anyway.

I never promised my folks that I'd stop training, did I?

You're such a conman!



Say, Maria, you ever kissed a record holder?



I don't kiss anybody



I see... So has a record holder ever stolen a kiss from you?



What a sneak!



So they didn't! Come here, you're a real looker, you know that?

IN MAY OF 1945, THE WAR ENDED AND, IN THE LIBERATED CZECHOSLOVAKIA, LIFE CHANGED DRASTICALLY AGAIN.

