

Houšťka Park, Czechoslovakia, 1952

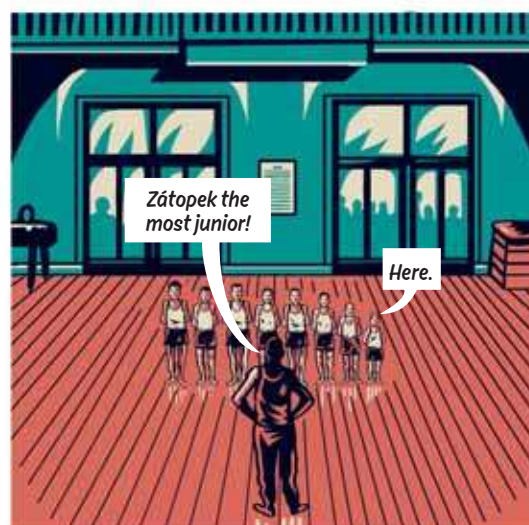


IN THE EARLY 1950'S, THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE'S ARMY OFFERED THE BEST TRAINING CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY IN ALL SPORTS. MOST OF THE TOP TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES COMPETED FOR ITS DUKLA PRAHA TEAM.

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.

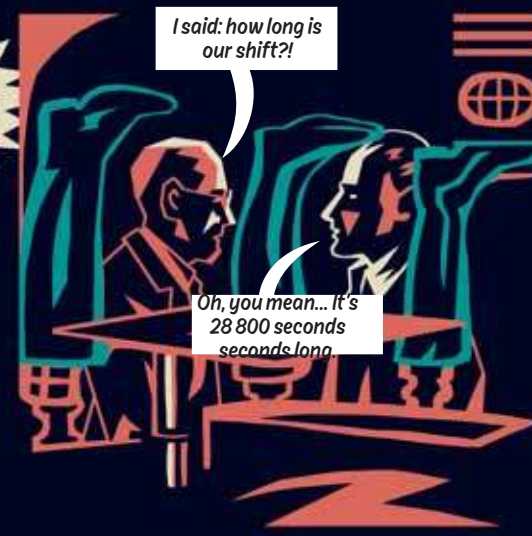


IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE WORST PLACE TO WORK IN THE GIGANTIC PLANT WAS THE RUBBER SHOP.



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...





HAPPILY INTO THE NEW DAY

EM MYŠLENÍ-STROJŮM DŘIN



ŠETŘETE SLOVY!



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.



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





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...



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...



THE ZLÍN RUN, 1941



On your marks!
Get set!



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





So I AM going to survive this, after all! I'm not going to die! Might as well give it all I got if it isn't going to kill me.

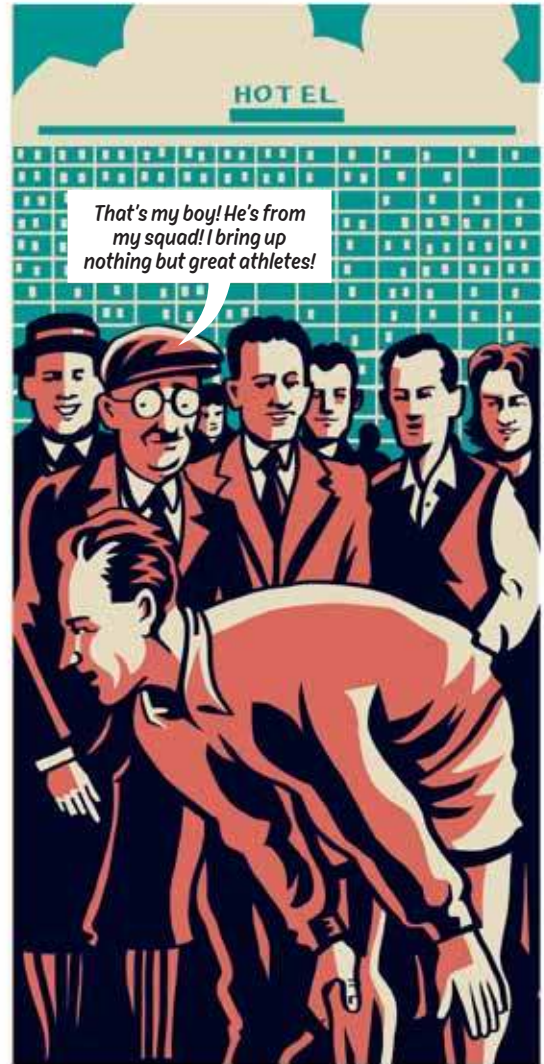


I really can't anymore. So step on it!



I'm such a moron! If this race were only ten meters longer, I'd beat him!

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



That's my boy! He's from my squad! I bring up nothing but great athletes!



Congratulations, Emil! Wish I'd sent you to that doctor last year!

Congratulations for what?? I lost this race...



Listen, how would you like to come to the track tomorrow? How about giving it a try?

Oh, but he's lame in one leg, doctor Haluza! For real!



Which knee did you have the company doctor look at, Emil? Tell him, don't be bashful!

Gee, I don't know, I'd gladly come, but I got my hands full at Batas... What with the full-time job and all the classes on top of it...



You don't even know who you're talking to, do you? There isn't a better long-distance man in this country! Doctor Haluza, you can count on this cripple coming tomorrow!

