

# THE SPARTAKIADE AS A PHENOMENON IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND SPORTS DIMENSION IN THE TERRITORY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of the article is to provide a description of the emergence and genesis of the Spartakiade in the territory of former Czechoslovakia. In the article, we focused on the origin and development of mass sport in Czechoslovakia since 1918, on the emergence and genesis of the Spartakiade and the definition of the term "Spartakiade". In this paper, we also present a chronological name list and a brief course of individual Spartakiades that were held in the territory of Czechoslovakia within the period 1955 – 1985.*

**Keywords:** *history, physical culture, nation.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the period 1955 – 1985, various group sports exercises were held in Europe, as well as in the world, as outdoor sports activities in the open air. Among these group events, mass physical exercises including different age categories of gymnasts have a very important place in former Czechoslovakia in that period. They were called *the Spartakiade*. They were organized to honor the tradition of mass sports events of the first republic, a communist-oriented sports organization called *Federácia robotníckych telocvičných jednot* (*The Federation of Workers' Gymnastics Units*) that held very similar mass sports events under the same name. These mass performances were called *Nationwide Spartakiades* and later renamed to *sCzechoslovak Spartakiades*. In this paper, we present the general characteristics of these Spartakiades and briefly describe their structure and significance.

We have used standard methods of historical research. We have focused on collecting material related to the issue, searching for primary sources such as diaries, newspapers, books, speeches, historical data, electronic data. The established facts and their relations were categorized and studied on the basis of comparative method. This manuscript is based on our findings.

### ***Mass sports performances in Czechoslovakia***

The development of mass gymnastics in former Czechoslovakia after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 goes back to the period when other *Sokol organizations (Units)* were gradually founded, including in Slovakia (Beňušková, 2012).

The Sokol movement, known as *the Sokol (the Falcon)*, was founded by *Dr. Miroslav Tyrš* and *Dr. Jindřich Fügner* in Prague on 16 February 1862. A part of the

program of the cultural and social education movement was the regular organization of the *Všesokolské Slety* (*Pan-Sokol Slets*) that were attended by large numbers of Sokol members (Sak, 2012).

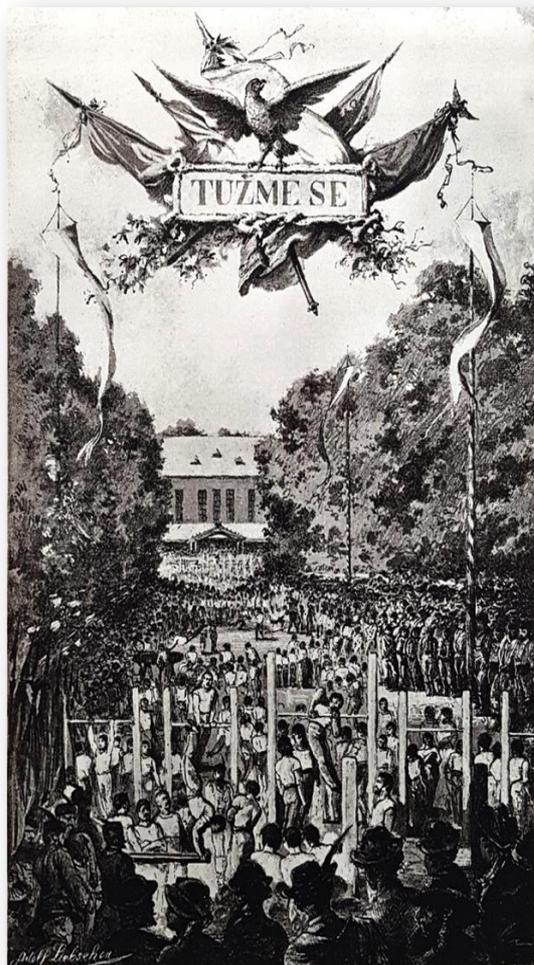


Figure 1. Public mass exercising of the Sokol members at Sřelecký Ostrov, 18.6. 1882. Drawn by A. Liebscher. Source: Československá obec sokolská. Dr. Miroslav Tyrš 1832–1932. K stým narozeninám zakladatele Sokolstva. Československo: Praha III, Tyršův dům

In addition to the Czech gymnasts, there were also gymnasts from Slovakia who regularly participated in the Pan-Sokol Slets in Prague, specifically in years 1920, 1926, 1932, and 1938. In the period 1919 – 1937, the number of Sokol members in Slovakia increased from 12,385 to 49,625 members. More members

meant greater participation in mass gymnastic events (Beňušková, 2012).

Pan-Sokol Slets were social events characterized by public exercises with international participation. International participation was based on the idea of *Pan-Slavic reciprocity and patriotism*<sup>1</sup> (Mauerhart, 1930). Therefore, it is possible to talk about the beginnings of mass physical education exercises. In addition to public exercises, the Slets also included various accompanying events, most often marching in traditional costumes (Martínková, Klír & Swierczeková, 2013).

*I. Pan-Sokol Slet* was held 18-19 June 1882 at the Sřelecký ostrov in Prague. 700 men from 79 Sokol units performed exercises under the leadership of their chief Dr. Miroslav Tyrš (Gajdoš, Provazníková, Bednar & Banjak, 2012). A total of 1,572 costumed Sokol members with 57 flags, enthusiastically greeted by patriotic Praguers, marched through the streets of Prague (Česká obec sokolská, 2017).

At the Sřelecký ostrov, Sokol members performed original collective mass gymnastics exercises and a 40-member team demonstrated exercises with gymnastic apparatus. The parade and the public exercises were very well received by the public and this led to a significant expansion of the Sokol organization in the territory of Bohemia and abroad (Sokol Strašnice, 2016).

Thanks to the success and popularity of this mass event, others *Pan-Sokol Slets* were held in 1891, 1895, 1901, 1907, 1912, 1920, 1926 and 1932 (Česká obec sokolská, 2017).

Very important was *the tenth Pan-Sokol Slet* in 1938 that was held at a time

<sup>1</sup> Pan-Slavism, a 19th-century movement that recognized a common ethnic background among the various Slav peoples of eastern and east-central Europe and sought to unite those peoples for the achievement of common cultural and political goals. The Pan-Slav movement originally was formed in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by West and South Slav intellectuals, scholars, and poets, whose peoples were at that time also developing their sense of national identity. The Pan-Slavists engaged in studying folk songs, folklore, and peasant vernaculars of the Slav peoples, in demonstrating the similarities among them, and in trying to stimulate a sense of Slav unity. As such activities were conducted mainly in Prague, that city became the first Pan-Slav center for studying Slav antiquities and philology. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020).

of a growing fascist threat. In addition to its high-quality sports level, the determination to defend democratic principles and the Czechoslovak Republic were on full display at this Slet. In addition, it was preceded by the state funeral of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk<sup>2</sup> (he died on the 14 September 1937) that was held in the spirit of a demonstration against the rising Nazism (Strachová, 2020, p.105). The success of this event was due to a mass floor exercise called "Oath to the Republic" that was performed by more than 29,000 gymnasts and an original aesthetically impressive dance vortex in a circular exercise called "Rej" performed by 30,000 women as the first major organized choreography. All parades had a manifestation character. This *Pan-Sokol Slet* became an encouragement to the Czechoslovak nation before the Munich Agreement was declared. It lasted 5 weeks and included 348,086 gymnasts with 2,300,000 spectators (Sokol Strašnice, 2016). On the basis of the number of tickets sold, Strachová estimates there were about 2,500,000 spectators (Strachová, 2020, pp. 1-2). In terms of organization and number of participants, we can unambiguously describe the Pan-Sokol Slet as a mass sports event.

During the World War II, organizing Pan-Sokol Slets was banned throughout the temporarily disintegrated Czechoslovakia<sup>3</sup> since the Sokol movement promoted ideas of freedom and democratic principles. During the period of the totalitarian regime, the Sokolovna (Sokol House), playgrounds (training grounds) and other Sokol facilities were purposefully liquidated (Sokolská únia Slovenska, n.d.).

In 1945, after the World War II, the Sokol movement was reactivated in liberated Czechoslovakia. (Gajdoš, Provoznicova, Bednar & Banjak, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> T. G. Masaryk co-founded Czechoslovakia together with Milan Rastislav Štefánik and Edvard Beneš and served as its first president, and so he is called by some Czechs the "President Liberator" (Preclík, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was established in the territory of the Czech and an independent state called the Slovak Republic was established in the territory of the Slovakia (Oborný, 2020).



Figure 2. Jiří František Chaloupecký – a Czech social democrat, a railway worker, the founder of the left-wing Federation of FRTJ (Workers' Gymnastics Units) and the initiator of the I. robotnícka spartakiáda (I. Workers' Spartakiade) in Prague in 1921. Source: Wikipedia.org. Retrieved from [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jiří\\_František\\_Chaloupecký](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jiří_František_Chaloupecký)

However, from February 1948 onward, communist totalitarian ideology and the government of a single political party called Komunistická strana Československa – KSČ (The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) prevailed, even though other political parties existed and participated marginally in the government. From the political point of view, it was a process of transition from a pluralist democracy to a totalitarian democracy. This change affected all areas of social life, including sports life. Political events were reflected in the last, XI. *Pan-Sokol Slet* in 1948 that was organized immediately after the end of the World War II. The Slet was held after political events in February 1948. As a part of it, a relay-race was held in the autumn 1947. The race consisted of 11 routes leading from the border to

Prague and was attended by about 46,000 runners. A floor exercise called "We will remain faithful" was performed to commemorate the members of the Sokol tortured and killed during the World War II. A modern exercise composition with cones was performed by women and it was so successful that it had to be repeated. Another unique performance included 2,500 campers. A total of 500,000 gymnasts performed mass exercises at the Slet. The communist regime considered the event appropriate propaganda, but the Sokol members were pro-democratic and therefore during the youth parade they demonstrated against the totalitarian communist regime. After this parade, more than 11,000 members were expelled from the Sokol by communist action committees (Česká obec sokolská, 2017).

Subsequently, the Sokol was integrated into the system of unified physical education and ceased to carry out its independent activities for the next 41 years. Thus, the Sokol was forced to stop organizing Pan-Sokol Slets (Kozáková, p. 47).

During the communist regime (1948-1989), very similar mass events were held under the name *Spartakiade* (Život, 2017).

### **The History of Spartakiades**

The author of the name "*Spartakiáda*" ("*Spartakiade*") is Jiří František Chaloupecký<sup>4</sup>. The author of the term was inspired by the historical figure of *Spartacus*. Spartacus was a gladiator who led an uprising of Roman slaves (gladiators) against their exploiters, tyrants. Later, Spartacus led his army to war against the Roman troops (Morkes, 2010).

This concept was based on revolutionary ideas that combine the progress of revolutionary traditions with physical education. The concept was to

acquire an international character with easy transposition and application to foreign languages (Šímanová, 2013).

The first mention of the name "*Spartakiade*" in the context of physical education comes from 1921 when the *FRTJ (Federation of Workers' Physical Education Units)* was established in Czechoslovakia. In this year, the FRTJ held a public exercise performance in Prague, in the city part called Manín, under the name *I. robotnícka spartakiáda (I. Workers' Spartakiade)* (Šímanová, 2013, pp. 13-14).

The FRTJ was a direct branch of the KSC (The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) and did not identify with an apolitical principle of physical education associations. For this reason, it was persecuted. Therefore, the second *Workers' Spartakiade*, which was to take place in 1928, was banned (Grexa, 2018, p. 32).

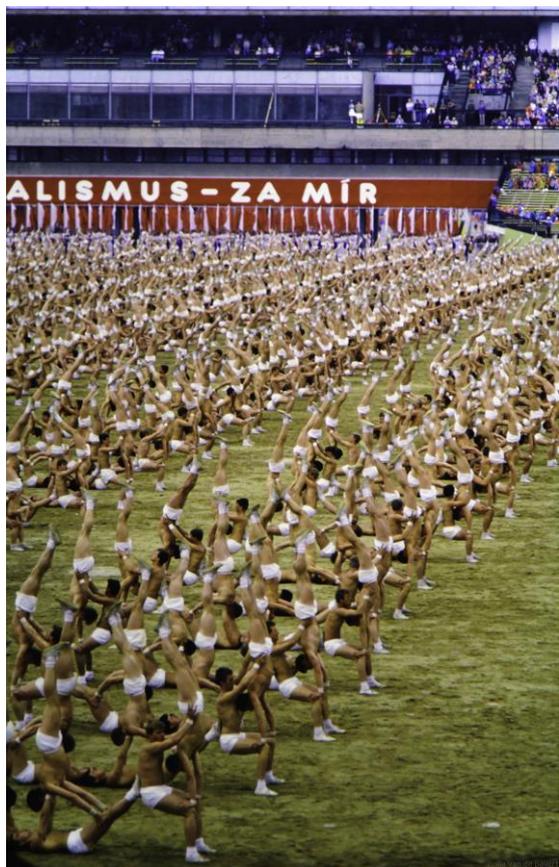
Six years after the last, XI. Pan-Sokol Slet in 1948, a mass physical education event was held under the name *I. Krajská spartakiáda DŠO Slávia (I. Regional Spartakiade Voluntary Sports organization<sup>5</sup> Slávia)* in Pilsen on 12 May 1954. The gymnastic level of a great number of gymnasts was displayed at this event. The event comprised public exercises and the main part were floor exercises. After the Regional Spartakiade in Pilsen, gymnasts from Moravia and Slovakia performed floor exercises. Women's floor exercises with cones and men's exercises with poles and fencing with bayonets were the most popular.

Regional Spartakiades comprised two parts: *Junior Days* and *Senior Days*. These Spartakiades were held in Slovakia in six

<sup>5</sup> The Voluntary Sports Organization (DSO) was a designation for sports clubs used in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s. After the communist coup in February 1948, physical education was united, so all existing sports associations and organizations with all their property had to join the Sokol. In 1952, another reorganization took place - on December 12, Act No. 71/1952 Coll. on the organization of physical education and sport was adopted according to which the State Committee for Physical Education and Sport (SVTVS) was established as a tool for the central management of all sports activities in the country. All existing divisions were included in voluntary sports organizations, newly created after the Soviet model. The DSO system was a part of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (ROH) (Slovenská numizmatická spoločnosť, n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> Jiří František Chaloupecký was a Czech social democrat, a railway worker, the founder of the left-wing Federation of FRTJ (Workers' Gymnastics Units), and the initiator of the *I. robotnícka spartakiáda (I. Workers' Spartakiade)* in Prague in 1921 (Internetová encyklopedie dějin Brna, 2018).

regional settlements: Prešov, Bratislava, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica and Košice. A total of 27,410 gymnasts performed at the Regional Spartakiades at *Senior Days* held in Slovakia and 41,333 gymnasts performed at *Junior Days*, i.e., a total of 68,743 Slovak practitioners actively participated in Regional Spartakiades in 1954. A total of 68,743 Slovak gymnasts were selected to take part in the *I. Nationwide Spartakiade*. Junior Days and Senior Days had a high attendance of 120,000 spectators.



*Figure 3.* Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1985, Strahov stadium in Prague. Czechoslovak People's Army performed collective gymnastics composition with musical accompaniment. Source: Ilja Van de Pavert (1985). *Personal photo from Spartakiade 1985.* Československá republika, Praha. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilvic/albums/72157625792004861>

In addition to Regional Spartakiades, *District Spartakiades* were also held. *The District Spartakiades* were full-featured trainings for gymnasts and worked as a selection process for participation in *Nationwide Spartakiades*. In 1955, a total of 94 District Spartakiades were held in the territory of Slovakia with 174,234 performing gymnasts (137,217 youth and 37,017 adults) and 323,700 spectators (Kšišňan & Kováčik, 1955).

Therefore, Regional Spartakiades and District Spartakiades can be understood as an important part of the preparations and the organizational process for the largest mass sports event in the history of Czechoslovakia called *the Nationwide Spartakiade*.

In 1955, in preparation for the *I. Nationwide Spartakiade*, 311 District Spartakiades were held with a total of 755,000 gymnasts and 23 Regional Spartakiades with 390,684 gymnasts. (Perútka, 1975). The number of spectators at the District and Regional Spartakiades totalled 1,298,000 spectators (Dobrovodský, 1966, p. 7.)

All Spartakiades comprised 3 main sections: *mass sports performances*, *sports competitions*, and *tourist events* (Swierczeková, 2007).

The program also included a *Festival of Folk Art Creativity* and *Večery Družby* (*Friendship Evenings*), small cultural and sports performances with international participation at the Strahov Sports Stadium in Prague. There were participants from the Soviet Union, China, Mongolia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. (Šterc, 1975, p. 51).

Dr. Jaroslav Šterc (1975) states the basic concept of the *Nationwide Spartakiade* in points:

1. *Spartakiades are nationwide, and they are held every 5 years in honor of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army during World War II.*

2. *Spartakiades have the character of a popular manifestation.*

3. *The Spartakiade is a common action of the whole physical education movement and all its sections, i.e. Základná a rekreačná telovýchova – ZRTV (Basic and recreational physical education), sports and tourism.*

4. *The main program of each Spartakiade will be mass sports performances.*

5. *The Spartakiade is not just a central event and must involve both republics (the Czech and the Slovak people), all regions, districts and cities at the same time.*

The phenomenon of mass exercises at Spartakiades in the period from 1955 to 1985 was, in a sense, a manifestation of the continuity of great and common gymnastic exercises of almost entire age spectrum. From the personnel, organizational, but also ideological point of view, the Spartakiades followed up the tradition of the Sokol Slets that were inspired by the German Turnerschaft (Roubal, 2016).

A total of six Spartakiades were held on the territory of former Czechoslovakia between 1955 and 1985 (Swierczeková, 2007).

*The I. Nationwide Spartakiade* started on 23 June and finished on 5 July 1955 in Prague at the Strahov Stadium (Metro, 2015). The Nationwide Spartakiade was the culmination of the celebrations of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army (Mucha, 1956). The budget for the I. Nationwide Spartakiade was 64 million Czechoslovak crowns with an expected profit of 26.5 million (Mikulecká, 2009, p. 48).

The slogan *"Ready to work and defend the homeland!"* dominated the Strahov stadium, and the editorial of the daily paper Rudé právo (The Red Law) stated: *"The Spartakiade will show the whole world that our people are guarding the peace and tranquility of their homeland and they are determined to protect the security and inviolability of the Republic"*,

that was thematically reflected in the content of the Spartakiade's main program.

The preparation of the composition itself took about two years. The training started in autumn, i.e., at the time of the year when the program had to be ready - compositions, music, methodology, trainers. The compositions were spatially and physically drawn, then broken down and planned as smaller formations that complemented each other over a large space. The complete choreography and visual effects that were achieved by seemingly insignificant movements were manifested only when several groups performed their exercises together. Many schools were not equipped with gyms during the preparations, so gymnasts practiced in makeshift conditions. In winter, girls practiced "in the hall" and boys "in the hallway." In summer, the preparations moved to school playgrounds. Gymnasts also practiced exercises on playgrounds or in open areas provided with temporary markings made with preserve lids. (Bordášová, 2010, p. 19).

The main program of the Spartakiade, i.e., a mass sports performance, took place at the Strahov Stadium in Prague covering an area of 63,000 m<sup>2</sup> (approximately nine soccer fields) where thousands of gymnasts performed individual compositions in the same uniform outfits and shoes. Typical were white canvas shoes with elastic band popularly called *"jarmilky"*. In the stadium area, special marks were systematically placed on a square matrix that represented orientation points for the gymnasts. From here comes the Czech proverb *„Zpět na značky!“* (*"Back to the marks!"*) signaling a start of something from scratch again (Doležalová, 2018).

Another modification of the same proverb was *„Na značky!“*, (*"On your marks!"*) as a signal to take a specific position as a starting position for the next action in the communication between members of each group (Oborný, 2020)



*Figure 4.* Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1985, Strahov stadium in Prague. Czechoslovak People's Army performed collective gymnastics composition with musical accompaniment. Source: Ilja Van de Pavert (1985). Personal photo from Spartakiade 1985. Československá republika, Praha. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilvic/albums/72157625792004861>

Gymnasts were choreographed in square units. One square unit usually consisted of 36 gymnasts. By moving the individual gymnasts inside the unit or moving the units around, formations were created that could be observed by spectators from the elevated seats of the grandstands and from a bird's eye view. The gymnasts themselves did not see these formations (Jezzina, 2018). From the experience and memories of many gymnasts performing at Spartakiades, we learn that they were mostly pleasantly surprised by the impressiveness of the compositions performed at the Strahov stadium. (Oborný, 2020). These

compositions were visually very attractive for the spectators. (Jezzina, 2018). It should be emphasized that the authors of compositions sought to bring the ancient Greek idea of 'Kalokagathia' into practice. The impressiveness of Spartakiade compositions evoked uplifting feelings in most spectators (Oborný, 2020).

The mass performances also included musical accompaniment that contributed to the success and attractiveness of Spartakiades. It started with a counting exercise, that is, simple rhythms and setting the tempo during public performances (exercises) already present during the I. Pan-Sokol Slet in 1882. Musical accompaniment became an inseparable part of all Spartakiades. At the *I. Nationwide Spartakiade*, the gymnasts exercised to live music (Šterc, 1975). Some songs, especially by and for children and young people, became musical hits. These musical scores could also be purchased on gramophone records in specialized music shops. All Spartakiades were also recorded and archived on film. (Oborný, 2020).

#### ***An overview of the mass compositions performed in the main program of the Spartakiade 1955***

***Junior Days.*** The youngest school children (5-7 years) practiced a composition to a musical score called "Zlatá brána" ("Golden Gate"). The composition was practiced twice by 6,888 children (Šterc, 1975, pp. 48-49). It was only children from Prague and its immediate surroundings who performed in this age category at the Strahov Stadium as it would be organizationally demanding to provide accommodation for so many children and their parents for a few days away from home. (Oborný, 2020).

***Younger school students (8-11 years)*** performed a composition to music that involved a special hand apparatus – dices. The composition was practiced by 24,192 students.

*Older school students (12-14 years)* - a total of 64,800 students practiced a floor exercise.

*Youth common formation.* A total of 40,000 gymnasts created the letters "ČSR-SSSR" at the Strahov stadium.

*School teenagers – Girls (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade).* A total of 46,080 girls practiced an exercise with ribbons.

*School teenagers – Boys (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade).* A total of 48,000 boys practiced a floor exercise.

*Juveniles of ROH* included 30,400 gymnasts.

*Juveniles DSO Sokol* included 30,400 gymnasts.

*Juveniles from state labour reserves* included 19,200 gymnasts.

A total of 333,468 gymnasts performed Spartakiade compositions during the Junior Days over 4 days (Šterc, 1975, pp. 48-49).

*Senior Days.* The program for Senior Days started with a folklore performance called "*Veselica krojovaných skupín*" ("*Festivity of costumed groups*"). 6,000 dancers from 500 folklore ensembles from different regions of Czechoslovakia participated. (Harasimowicz, 2017, pp. 107-108)

*Women from concerns and offices (ROH).* A total of 32,640 women performed a gymnastic exercise with one cone.

*Men from concerns and offices (ROH).* A total of 32,076 men performed a floor exercise.

*Men and women from villages (DSO Sokol)* - 31,720 gymnasts performed a composition including practicing a floor exercise.

*Physical education schools and SŠD.* Students at the *Institute of Physical Education and Sport, pedagogical schools, Tyrš Institute of Physical Education and Sport* and *students of the Sports Schools for Adolescents* performed a joint composition that included 4,800 gymnasts. (Mucha, 1956).

Performances by the Armed Forces of Czechoslovakia were held on a special day called *The Armed Forces Day*. They were very popular. An interesting composition was performed by soldiers on parallel bars and with rifles. At the end of the program, there was a mass jump of paratroopers to the stadium area (Jancura, 2015).

Additionally, the soldiers' program also included a group demonstration of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army, exercises with children, exercises on beams, floor exercises and exercises on parallel bars (Šterc, 1975).

The first performance by the Armed Forces in 1955 was accompanied by 15,000 pigeons that circled over the Strahov Stadium for three minutes. *Zvázarm Day* was also a part of the main Spartakiade program. Members of *Zvázarm*<sup>6</sup> brought in hundreds motorcycles and tractors in and formed circular assemblies.

During the final performance, aerolites in swarms flew over the stadium. The pilots created the word "MIER" ("PEACE") and the letters "I. CS" in the sky in honor of the *I. Nationwide Spartakiade* (Vtedy, 2015).

At the *I. Nationwide Spartakiade*, a total of 567,506 gymnasts performed 29 group compositions (Plní elánu, 2020). It was watched by 1,800,000 spectators (Šterc, 1975, pp. 50-51).

In addition to the main program, various sports competitions and tourist events were held in Czechoslovakia during the event. For example, the famous Armenian gymnast Albert Azarjan performed an exercise on still rings and the Soviet gymnast Ludmila Yegorova performed an exercise on parallel bars in the gymnastics competitions. Emil Zátopek, a phenomenal Czechoslovak long-distance runner, also participated in

<sup>6</sup> *Zvázarm* - abbreviation for *Union for Cooperation with the Army*. The Union dealt primarily with military training, especially of the young male population in Czechoslovakia. *Zvázarm* performed some tasks of state defense. The Union covered military sports and technical hobby activities, as well as aviation, cynology, aeromodelling, motoring, orienteering, skydiving, diving, etc. (Retrománia, 2019).

athletic competitions (Česká televize, 2011).

From the perspective of program compositions and exercises, it can be noted that the event was held in the spirit of liberating ideas, the promotion of unity, the cohesion of the Czechoslovak nation and the demonstration of military readiness and defense of the nation. Thus, the *I. Nationwide Spartakiade* was a full-fledged successor to the Pan-Sokol Slets.

This Spartakiade, as well as the others, had strong political undertones. From the political perspective, the advantages of "socialist" general physical education and sport were promoted. However, the political aspect of the Spartakiades is not the goal of this article, so we will not deal with this more deeply. Roubal (2020) asked several research questions in a comprehensive evaluation of the Czechoslovak Spartakiades: "*To what extent did the Spartakiades from 1955 to 1985 follow the tradition of Pan-Sokol Slets, whether and to what extent was participation spontaneous and voluntary and were Spartakiades generally popular among gymnasts?*" These questions were in principle answered in the affirmative. Thus, the sports, cultural and social effects events were prevalent.

*The II. Nationwide Spartakiade* was held from 23 June to 3 July in 1960 (Šterc, 1975, p. 53).

It was held in honor of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army. The Spartakiade reflected the peaceful message of coexistence with other nations and according to the then official terminology, the Spartakiade was an expression of the political and moral unity of the Czechoslovak people (Oktábec & Novák, 1960).

The main organiser was ČSTV (The Czechoslovak Association of Physical Education) (Swierczeková, 2007).

Preparations began in September 1958 and were divided into two cycles. The first half of the compositions were performed at

*District Spartakiades* in 1959 and rehearsals with music were held in March 1960. A total of 290 District Spartakiades were held with 1,149,879 gymnasts and they were watched by 1,937,000 spectators. A total of 47 Regional and County Spartakiades were held with the attendance of 847,923 gymnasts and participation of 1,024,670 spectators. Compared to the I. Nationwide Spartakiade, 457,259 more gymnasts took part in the preparations which was also reflected in greater participation in the main program (Oktábec & Novák, 1960).

The preparations were mainly focused on the creation and practice of new concepts of gymnast's arrivals in the stadium and departures from it. There was some pressure to develop more difficult compositions, especially in spatial orientation (Šindelářová, 2011, p. 65).

*The II. Nationwide Spartakiade* begun on the 23 June 1960 with a cannon shot at the Strahov Stadium, followed by mass performances. (Šterc, 1975, p. 53). The main program consisted of 19 group compositions (Oktábec & Novák, 1960).

### ***An overview of the group compositions performed in the main program of the Spartakiade 1960***

***Junior Days.*** *The youngest school children (6-8 years)* performed their composition to music called "Pohádka" ("Fairy-tale"). Children practiced a group exercise with a special hand apparatus called "Májka" ("Waver").

*Younger school students (8-11 years)* performed their composition to a music score called "Radostná jar" ("Joyful Spring").

*Older students – Girls (12-14 years)* performed their composition to a music score called "Červené míčky" ("Red Balls" and with rubbery red balls.

*Older students – Boys (12-14 years)* performed their composition to music called „Bud' připraven k práci a obraně

vlasti!“ (“Be ready to work and defend your homeland!”).

*School teenagers – Girls* performed their composition to music called „Radostné mládí“ („Joyful Infancy) and with white rhythmic gymnastics hoops.

*School teenagers – Boys* performed their floor exercise to music called „Mládí – krása – síla“ (“Youth - beauty - strength”).

*Adult juveniles* performed their group gymnastic exercises to music called „Zapalte ohně na horách!“ (“Light the fires in the mountains!”).

*Apprentice juveniles.* A total of 14,120 gymnasts performed their composition to music called „Do nových zítřků“ (“To the new tomorrows“).

#### *Senior Days. Folk artistic creativity.*

At the beginning of the Senior Days program, a total of 6,000 artists presented a musical composition called „Píseň rodné země“ (“Song of the Homeland”).

*Women* performed two compositions: the first composition was called „Rozsévačka“ (“Seeder“) and included 15,360 women performing a floor exercise. The second composition was called „Za mír, přátelství a spolupráci“ (“For peace, friendship and cooperation”). A total of 3,456 women participated in the mass gymnastic exercise with cones.

*Men* performed two compositions: in the first one, called „Za vítězstvím“ (For the Victory“), a total of 15,000 men practiced a floor exercise using short bars. The second one included 3,000 men performing an exercise with medicine-balls. (Šterc, 1975).

The *performance of soldiers* was also admirable. Soldiers performed a demanding acrobatic exercise on 160 springboard tables (also called ‘rib tables’ - tables with a covered area for somersaults) with jumping boards. The composition was called „Odvahou ke kázni, obratnosti a vytrvalosti“ (“With Courage to Discipline, Dexterity and Endurance”).

The Spartakiade program ended with a composition to music called „Život vítězí nad smrtí“ (“Life Wins Over Death”) that was performed by a total of 29,000 women.



*Figure 5.* Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1985, Strahov stadium in Prague. Czechoslovak People's Army performed collective gymnastics composition with musical accompaniment. Source: Ilja Van de Pavert (1985). Personal photo from Spartakiade 1985. Československá republika, Praha. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilvic/albums/72157625792004861>.

During the Spartakiade, a parade was held with attendance of 180,000 gymnasts from Czechoslovakia and foreign countries.

An interesting part of the *II. Nationwide Spartakiade* was an innovation in sound technology. Music for group performances was reproduced with magneto phones and radio. The sound system consisted of 112 terrestrial speakers and 3,500 speakers located around the stadium (Oktábec & Novák, 1960, p. 40).

A total of 349,662 adult gymnasts and 371,947 young gymnasts took part in the collective performances in the main program. The total number of gymnasts was 721,603, watched by 2,023,000 spectators. (Oktábec & Novák, 1960, pp. 16-21). A total of 68,129 Slovak gymnasts performed in the main program (Slovenský zväz rekreačnej telesnej výchovy a športu, n.d.)

In addition to mass exercises, there were also *Večery Družby* (*Friendship Evenings*) held during the event, where 410 gymnasts from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR), Hungary, Bulgaria, the People's Republic of China, the German Democratic Republic, Poland and France performed gymnastics and dance exercises (Oktábec & Novák, 1960, p. 24).

As an accompanying feature of the Spartakiade, there was also a comprehensive program of cultural events including plays, film shows, concerts, operas, exhibitions, performances by people's arts dance and song ensembles, etc. (Oktábec & Novák, 1960).

The program also included sports competitions. There were championship competitions at the district level and international championships in skiing, gymnastics, ice hockey, sports gymnastics, swimming, light athletic, etc. Climbing events in the High Tatras (mountains in the Slovak Republic) and tourist events in Krkonoše (mountains in the Czech Republic) were held (Šindelářová, 2011, p. 66). A total of 3,059,035 athletes competed in all sports contests (Oktábec & Novák, 1960).

The high organizational level was appreciated by several participating high-ranking foreign officials. Apparently, the II. Nationwide Spartakiade in 1960 was well managed organizationally, as evidenced by positive reports in the press and on the radio and television. Thus, this Spartakiade became the quality model for the organization of the next one (Oktábec & Novák, 1960).

However, there were also some negative aspects. For example, university students were forced to perform at the event. Therefore, a year earlier (in 1959), the only regular multi-sport university competition registered a significant drop in participants because they had to practice Spartakiade compositions (Bobřík & Seman, 2010, p. 68). Spartakiades, as a model of the functioning mass physical

education in Czechoslovakia, required a sufficient number of active practitioners. Therefore, new members were recruited in the period before the organization of the Spartakiades, especially in university physical education units and sports clubs, (Bobřík & Seman, 2012, p. 33) in order to not only create a high membership base camp but also to have enough people who could be easily forced to perform.

*The III. Nationwide Spartakiade* was held from 1 to 4 July 1965 (Dobrovodský, 1966). As the previous one, this too was held to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army. The slogan was: „*Ve jménu zdraví, síly a krásy za šťastný život v míru, za vítězství komunismu!*“ (“*In the name of health, strength and beauty for a happy life in peace, for the victory of communism!*”) (Šterc, 1975). The slogan makes us think that the Spartakiade was held in the spirit of Kalokagathia, but also in the spirit of strengthening the communist ideology.

The preparations were completed by gymnasts in 1,485 public performances of units and schools at 424 Parish and District Spartakiades (Dobrovodský, 1966). A total of 1,365,514 gymnasts took part in them (Novák, 1966). For the first time, an exercise with parents and preschool children was included at the District Spartakiades. These exercises took place at the national level and the title of the collective composition was „*Na sluníčku*“ (“*In the sun*”) (Česká televize, n.d.).

A significant change occurred in the design concept of the main program. Two cycles, Junior Days and Senior Days, were replaced by a single cycle lasting 4 days. The number of compositions was reduced to 12 and *continuous Program Afternoons* with a representative slogan were created. *The Program Afternoons* were designed around two program thematic concepts (Šterc, 1975). The first concept, „*Zpěv míru*“ (“*Song of Peace*”), took place 1-3 July 1965 and the second program concept, „*Vítězství patří nám*“ (“*Victory belongs to us*”), was held between 2-4 July 1965. In

eight groups compositions for each concept, about 90,000 gymnasts practiced at the stadium (Dobrovodský, 1966).

### ***An overview of the mass compositions performed in the main program of the Spartakiade 1965***

*Younger school students (8-11 years)* performed a composition called „Učit se hrou“ (“Learn through Game”). Girls practiced dance exercises and boys an exercise with crates (boxes). A total of 13,440 boys and 13,440 girls performed.

*Older students – Boys (12-14 years)* performed a composition called „Jeden za všechny“ (“One for All”). It included 12,000 boys practicing a gymnastics exercise.

*Older students – Girls (12-14 years)* performed a composition called „Má země je kvetoucí louka“ (“My country is a flowering meadow”). 16,000 girls performed an exercise with two flowers with a ribbon.

*School teenagers – Boys* performed a composition called „Přes překážky“ (“Over the obstacles”). They used 1,260 benches in their exercise.

*School teenagers – Girls* performed a composition called „Jaro země mé“ (“My country's spring”). A total of 14,484 girls practiced a floor exercise.

*Apprentice juveniles.* A total of 14,120 gymnasts performed a composition called „Svou práci přetváříme svět“ (“We are transforming the world with our work”) and 12,000 boys and girls practiced a composition using a short jump rope. (Šterc, 1975). The dance performance was delivered to the musical rhythm of cha-cha-cha (Česká televize, n.d.).

*Men* performed a composition called „Jednotně vpřed“ (“Unanimously go ahead”) and included 14,104 men performing gymnastics exercises in 2 groups.

*Women* performed two compositions called „Zpěv míru“ (“Singing of Peace”) and „Pohybem ke kráse“ (“By movement

to beauty”). A total of 16,000 women performed the compositions based on a modern concept of gymnastics and choreography.



*Figure 6.* Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1985, Strahov stadium in Prague. Women performed the original aesthetically impressive dance vortex in a circular exercise called “Rej”. Source: Iija Van de Pavert (1985). Personal photo from Spartakiade 1985. Československá republika, Praha. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilvic/albums/72157625792004861>

One of the most attractive mass compositions was the performance of the *Czechoslovak Army* called "Vítězství patří nám" (“Victory belongs to us”), where 16,000 soldiers entered the stadium in armored transporters (Šterc, 1975).

This Spartakiade also included sports competitions and tourist events that were attended by 2,200,000 athletes and tourists. It introduced a multi-competency badge (PPOV) competition in categories: best district, best team and best athlete (Šindelářová, 2011, p.69).

The benefit of the Spartakiade was the organization of the *National Spartakiade for deaf, blind and physically handicapped athletes* that was held in parallel with the main event at the Strahov Stadium (Česká televize, n.d.).

*Friendship Evenings* were held in a sports hall in Prague for the first time. Gymnastic exercises were practiced by gymnasts from Bulgaria, Finland, France,

Yugoslavia and Cuba (Šindelářová, 2011, p.69).

At *III. Nationwide Spartakiade in 1965*, a total of 356,120 gymnasts took part in the main program in front of 730,000 viewers (Šterc, 1975, p. 59). A total of 27,757 gymnasts from Slovakia participated (Slovenský zväz rekreačnej telesnej výchovy a športu, n.d.).

Even though there was a decrease in the number of gymnasts and compositions and there were some changes in the design of the program, it is not possible to evaluate *III. Nationwide Spartakiade* as unsuccessful, as it introduced an innovation that worked and was applied to future Spartakiades.

Five years later, in 1970, the *IV. Nationwide Spartakiade* was planned; however, the highest political authorities decided to cancel the event. The main reason was fear of demonstrations because of August 1968 when occupying troops of the Soviet Union and its allies had entered the territory of Czechoslovakia. The political leadership expected demonstrations against the occupation and the political regime that could probably be organized at a planned mass sports event such as the Spartakiade. Thus, there were also concerns for the safety of gymnasts. (Školské, 2015).

In 1975, the official name 'The Nationwide Spartakiade' was changed to *Czechoslovak Spartakiade* (Doležalová, 2018).

The Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1975 was held from 23 June to 1 July (YouTube, 2015).

It was traditionally held as a celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army. The slogan this time was: „Pod vedením Komunistické strany Československa za další rozvoj socialistické tělesné výchovy“ ("Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for the further development of socialist physical education") (Chválny, 1976).

More than 1,460,000 gymnasts performed at Local, Parish and District Spartakiades during the preparation stage. A total of 180,000 gymnasts performed in *two Program Afternoons* at the Strahov Stadium. The main program comprised 16 compositions (<https://www.maria-online.us/go.php?x=1>). A total of 27,757 gymnasts from Slovakia took part in this mass event (Slovenský zväz rekreačnej telesnej výchovy a športu, n.d.).

*The Program Afternoons* were conceived around two program thematic concepts that were repeated twice, following the model from the Spartakiade in 1965 (Šindelářová, 2011).

### ***An overview of the mass compositions performed in the main program of the Spartakiade 1975***

*Parents with children (3-5 years)* performed a composition with a musical accompaniment. Children from Prague and its immediate surroundings practiced exercises at the Strahov stadium. Three-year-old children were the youngest gymnasts in the history of Czechoslovakia who took part in a mass sports event.

*The youngest school children (6-8 years)* performed a composition with concrete building blocks.

*Younger school students - Boys (9-11 years)* - 7,000 boys performed a composition using red and white flying discs.

*Younger school students - Girls (9-11 years)*- 14,000 girls performed a dance composition.

*Older students (12-14 years)* – 11,500 boys performed a composition using sticks and balls.

*Apprentice juveniles* - 14,000 boys and girls performed a composition to music using non-traditional instruments similar to a Swedish vaulting box.

*School teenagers – Girls* performed a composition called „Zpíváme slunci“ (“We sing to the Sun“). A total of 7,000 girls

practiced exercises with gymnastic elements.

*Men (17-75 years)* performed a brisk and practical group composition aimed at preventing obesity.

*Women* practiced group exercises with cones and blue ribbons to a well-known musical composition 'Vltava' composed by world-famous artist Bedřich Smetana.

*The performance of the Army* began with a flight of fighters over the stadium and continued with admirable gymnastic mass compositions demanding physical fitness and spatial orientation (YouTube, 2015).

Gymnasts from ten, mostly socialist, countries took part in the international event *Večery Družby (Friendship Evenings)* (Wikipedia, 2020).

Sports competitions experienced a great boom. A total of 3,890,475 athletes participated in winter and summer Spartakiade sports competitions (Šindelářová, 2011, p.72). An interesting sporting event was *the Spartakiade Relay of Dukla Prague* attended by 820,660 runners, some from other countries. Tourists participated in an event called "*Ohňové posolstvo*" ("*Fire Message*") including almost 250,000 tourists (Wikipedia, 2020).

At the end of the Spartakiade, there was a parade with 120,000 participants marching through Prague. It was watched by 700,000 spectators (Březina, 1996).

Despite unfavorable weather - there was constant rain during the mass performances on the first day of the main program, the *Czechoslovak Spartakiade in 1975* surpassed all previous mass physical education events in terms of its aesthetic value, performance, organization, care, technical parameters at the stadium and participants' involvement in the procession around Prague (Perůtka, 1980, p. 222).

Other sports events held elsewhere were often dedicated to Spartakiades. For example, in 1975 the oldest national road race in Slovakia called "Devín – Bratislava" was dedicated not only to the

30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia, but also to the Czechoslovak Spartakiade. (Bobřík & Seman, 2017, p. 43).

*The Czechoslovak Spartakiade in 1980* was held from 26 to 29 June. It was held in honor of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of liberation by the Soviet Army. A total of fifteen compositions were presented in *four Program Afternoons*. The compositions were modern in terms of music and physical movement. The originality of spatial solutions and a higher difficulty level of exercises provided a proof of increasing effectiveness of the physical education process in Czechoslovakia.

The gymnastic compositions by *the Czechoslovak Army* and women were repeated in both *Program Afternoons*. The highest number of gymnasts participating in one composition was 13,824.

A total of 1,265,320 gymnasts took part in the Regional and Parish Spartakiades and a total of 702,732 gymnasts took part in the District Spartakiades (Chválný, 1981, pp.161-162).

A total of 189,000 gymnasts performed at Strahov during the main Spartakiade program. The main program was watched by 2,340,000 spectators. The event cost 673,000,000 Czechoslovak crowns, i.e., about 220,000,000 euros (Kern, 2015). A total of 34,652 Slovak gymnasts participated in the main program (Slovenský zväz rekreačnej telesnej výchovy a športu, n.d.).

### ***An overview of the mass compositions performed in the main program of the Spartakiade 1980***

#### ***I. Program Afternoon (26 June – 28 June)***

*Opening I.* – a total of 2,944 high school students performed a dance composition called „*Oslava života*“ ("*Celebration of Life*").

*The youngest school children (5-7 years)* performed a composition by ČSTV

and the Ministry of Education; 840 children with 192 trainers participated. The aim of the composition was to lead children to an all-round movement development through simple gymnastic exercises.

*School teenagers – Boys (15-18 years)* performed mass composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education; 6,912 boys presented a mass gymnastic exercise in pairs and trios. The composition had lots of difficult elements.

*Younger school students – Girls (8-11 years)* performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education. 13,824 girls practiced a mass exercise using non-traditional tools – red wooden frames.

*Apprentice Youth (15-18 years)* performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education; 6,912 girls practiced gymnastic exercise using metal bars and orange ribbons and 6,912 boys exercised with chrome bars.

10,368 *women* performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education. The composition was focused on the rhythm, movement alterations and spatial perception.

*Older students – Boys (12-14 years)* – 9,216 students performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education.

*The Czechoslovak People's Army* performed a mass composition organized by Ministry of National Defense. A total of 13,824 soldiers were involved in the first and second *Program Afternoon*. The soldiers performed demanding gymnastic exercises with acrobatic elements, e.g., ejection from "live " trampolines into bent high squadrons.

*The Ending I.* – a total of 15,018 gymnasts performed a group composition forming the symbol of the XXII. Olympic Games.

## **II. Program Afternoon (27 June - 29 June)**

*Opening II.* – A total of 1,944 women performed a collective composition with

red battalions as part of a coin technique and 1,728 men performed sports gymnastics.

*Parents with children (3-4 years)* performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education, including 2,450 children with mothers and fathers. They practiced exercises in pairs and more emphasis was put on the elements of basic gymnastics for parents.

*Women* performed the same collective composition as in the I. Program Afternoon.

*Younger school students – Boys (8-11 years)* performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education. 13,824 boys practiced a mass exercise using balls, skipping ropes and rings also known as "Hula Hoops".

*Zväzarm and schools* – The collective composition of ČSTV and the Ministry of Education was intended primarily for future high school graduates aged 16 and over. A total of 6,144 boys practiced a mass gymnastic exercise using an original metal gymnastic apparatus called "semicircles".

*Universities* - A group composition was performed by 5,760 male and 5,760 female students. The performance had a dance character with the use of aesthetic elements of "jazz gymnastics" and folklore motives.

*Older students - Girls (12-14 years)* – 13,824 female students performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education. The exercise was focused on basic and modern gymnastics.

6,912 *Men* performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education. It was a dynamic composition with a fitness test performed by 18-year-olds as well as 80-year-old men.

*School female teenagers and women* – 5,760 female gymnasts performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education. The exercises included fitness gymnastics using special mattresses.

*School teenagers – Girls (15-18 years)* performed a collective composition by ČSTV and the Ministry of Education. 13,824 girls practiced a mass exercise using white skipping ropes with foam tassels.

*The Czechoslovak People's Army* performed the same composition as in the I. Program Afternoon (Chválny, 1981).



Figure 7. Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1985, Strahov stadium in Prague. Women performed the original dance composition with scarves. Source: Ilja Van de Pavert (1985). Personal photo from Spartakiade 1985. Československá republika, Praha. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilvic/albums/72157625792004861>.

In addition to the main program, *Večery Družby (Friendship Evenings)* with international participation were traditionally held in the Prague Sports Hall. The event was attended by gymnasts from ten countries. The program was repeated four times and was watched by more than 50,000 spectators.

A total of 4,232,840 athletes took part in the sports competitions during the Spartakiade. As part of sports competitions, the *Spartakiade Cup of Talents in Skiing and Sledding* was held in the winter season. The *Talent Cup of the Chairman of the Central Committee of the ČSTV, Youth Sports Games, Apprenticeship Olympiads, Youth Agricultural Olympiad*, etc., were held in

the summer as part of sports competitions (Film Europe Media Company, n.d.).

More than 3,100,000 tourists took part in 2,320 tourist events called "*Fire Message*" (Chválny, 1981, pp. 161-162).

The entire Spartakiade was recorded and archived on film by renowned Czech cinematographers and directors, so it is still possible to view the audio-visual digitized recording of the main program (<https://www.fdb.cz/film/ceskoslovenska-Spartakiadea-1980/30795>).

*The Czechoslovak Spartakiade in 1985* was held from 27 to 30 June (Demetrovič, 1985).

It was held to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the national liberation and liberation by the Soviet Army. The program reflected the pride and love of the working people and youth for their socialist homeland (Súkup, 1985, p.2). The ceremonial parade through Prague was attended by 176,400 gymnasts and watched by 90,000 spectators (Demetrovič, 1985, p. 184).

Preparations for the Spartakiade began with the traditional ritual "*Fire Message*", organized by the Tourism Association. A total of 3,242 fire wafers were lit throughout the Czechoslovak Republic (Demetrovič, 1985, p. 47).

A total of 2,186,905 gymnasts performed at Local, Parish and District Spartakiades that were viewed by almost 3,917,611 spectators (Demetrovič, 1985, p.188).

The Spartakiade compositions were organized by ČSTV - ZRTV and again included a large number of practicing gymnasts. The exercises were performed by 5-year-old children to adults. They were mainly floor exercises.

The large base of gymnasts came from primary schools (younger and older students), apprentice schools (school teenagers, juveniles) and universities. Spartakiade preparations in schools were incorporated in compulsory physical education lessons. Both basic service soldiers and younger professional soldiers

were selected for the military compositions, 13,824 men in total (Doležalová, 2018).

The main program at the Strahov Stadium was divided into *two Program Afternoons*; each Program Afternoon had two repeats. During the main program, a total of 172,496 gymnasts performed mass exercises in fifteen compositions; it was watched by 940,000 spectators (Demetrovič, 1985, pp. 188-189). A total of 36,433 gymnasts from Slovakia participated in ten performances (Slovenský zväz rekreačnej telesnej výchovy a športu, n.d.).

### ***An overview of the mass compositions performed in the main program of the Spartakiade 1985***

#### ***I. Program Afternoon (27 June – 29 June)***

*Opening I.* – A total of 648 gymnasts performed in the opening ceremony.

*Women I.* – 13,824 women performed a group composition with small hoops and ribbons; its title was „Listy ratolesti“ (“Leaves of a branch”).

*Parents with children* - 2,336 practicing pairs performed a group composition called „Prvé dotyky“ („First touches“).

*Older students – Boys (11-14 years)* performed a collective composition called „Lano života“ (“Rope of life“). A total of 10,368 boys performed the mass exercise with ropes.

*Younger school students – Girls (8-11 years)* 10,752 girls performed a collective composition called „Kto je kamarát“ (“Who is a friend“) using a ribbon with rings at both ends.

*The Czechoslovak People's Army* performed a collective composition called „Mať to šťastie“ (“To have luck“). There were 13,824 soldiers in each of the four performances executing demanding disciplinary gymnastics and acrobatic exercises.

*School teenagers* – 13,824 girls performed collective composition „Najkrajší vek“ (“The most beautiful age“) using ribbons on a short pole.

*Universities* – A collective composition called „Mladosť a krása“ (“Youth and beauty“) was performed by 5,148 university students. Male students did an exercise with over-balls and female students with a ball in the net.

*School teenagers* – 6,912 boys performed a collective composition „Zajtra muži“ (“Men tomorrow“) with two benches.

*Apprentice Youth* – 13,824 boys and girls performed a composition called „Dynamická, veselá“ (“Dynamic, cheerful“) using skipping ropes (Súkup, 1985, p. 8).



*Figure 8.* Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1985, Strahov stadium in Prague. Boys practiced mass gymnastic exercise using the original gymnastic apparatus called the “semicircles” made from metal. Source: Ilja Van de Pavert (1985). Personal photo from Spartakiade 1985. Československá republika, Praha. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilvic/album/s/72157625792004861>.

#### ***II. Program Afternoon (28 – 30 June)***

*Zväzarm* performed a collective composition called „Áno i nie“ (“Yes and no“). There were 6,144 gymnasts performing gymnastic geometric exercises using heavy metal semicircles.

*The youngest school children (5-7 years)* 5,760 children performed a

collective composition called „Let'me s drakmi“ (“Let's fly with dragons“) using an original pedagogical toy that consisted of 5 foam cubes joined into one unit depicting a dragon.

*Younger school students - Boys (8-11 years)* performed a composition „Les tenistov“ (“Forest of tennis players“). There were 10,752 boys exercising with tennis rackets and moss balls.

*Older students – Girls (11-14 years)* – 13,824 girls performed a composition called “Usmiate púčiky” (“Smiling buds”).

*Women II* – 13,824 women performed a collective composition „Listy ratolesti“ (“Leaves of a branch”) using scarves.

*Men* performed a collective composition „Od 18 do 80 rokov“ (“From 18 to 80 years“). A total of 8,640 men executed demanding acrobatic exercises.

*School female teenagers and women* – 6,912 gymnasts performed a collective composition with cones.

*The Czechoslovak People's Army* performed the same collective composition as in the I. Program Afternoon.

The last and final Spartakiade composition was performed by 16,000 gymnasts (Súkup, 1985).

The Spartakiade in 1985 received a positive response, as evidenced by the statement of a participant and then chairman of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, who said: *"The Spartakiade is one of the most important sporting events I have ever seen. I have seen many mass sports performances in other countries, but in my life never like the one here in Prague. I think that such gymnastic events as the Spartakiade can also contribute to the development of elite sport. Congratulations on organizing the Spartakiade* (Demetrovič, 1985). *"Your physical education performances are a clear example for other countries"* (Súkup, 1985, p.27).

In addition to Czechoslovak gymnasts, delegations from eight countries (Bulgarian People's Republic, Finland,

France, Cuba, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the USSR) performed gymnastic exercises in 35 collective compositions at *Večery Družby (Friendship Evenings)*. About 70,000 spectators attended this traditional gymnastic event (Demetrovič, 1985, p. 184). An interesting, modern gymnastic performance was presented by German gymnasts. Romanian gymnasts successfully performed gymnastic exercises using a new, non-traditional tool – connecting hemispheres filled with silk scarves. Slovak gymnast from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports in Bratislava, led by Hedviga Šimoneková, Emilie Fialová and Anton Gajdoš, performed an attractive folk dance and an interesting gymnastic composition with skipping ropes (Súkup, 1985, p. 25).



*Figure 9. Czechoslovak Spartakiade 1985, Strahov stadium in Prague. Girls performed collective composition with musical accompaniment called „Najkrajší vek“ („The most beautiful age“). Source: Ilya Van de Pavert (1985). Personal photo from Spartakiade 1985. Československá republika, Praha. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilvic/albums/72157625792004861>.*

A total of 9,089,243 athletes took part in more than 12,000 sports competitions in various sports events. In an event for tourists called „Za jeden den kolem celé ČSSR“ (“In one day around the whole Czechoslovakia”) participants completed a

total of 48 hiking marches throughout Czechoslovakia in one day (Demetrovič, 1985, p. 185).

Immediately after the end of the Spartakiade, preparations for the Spartakiade in 1990 started, as evidenced by mass preparations in 1988 and 1989 including thousands of gymnasts (Kern, 2015). However, due to the political, economic, cultural and ideological changes that began in November 1989, the planned Czechoslovak Spartakiade did not take place in 1990 (Oborný, 2020).

After the fall of communism, the festival of ideological physical education - Spartakiade - was replaced by the *Prague Sports Games* that were held at a much smaller stadium. The number of gymnasts and spectators was lower and there were fewer events and categories (Kern, 2015).

Since 1985 the idea of Spartakiade has not been revived. The only mass exercises on a large training ground since 1985 were due to the revival of Sokol Slets in 1994, 2000, 2005, 2012 and 2018. These Sokol Slets were held at the transnational level, but never had such a high participation of gymnasts as Spartakiades (Česká obec sokolská, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

*Spartakiades*, as a successor of Pan-Sokol Slets, that were held in Czechoslovakia in the period 1955 - 1985, were certainly a phenomenon in the physical education culture and sports. To this day there has not been a comparable event that would involve such a large number of gymnasts in group performances. There were 552,000 gymnasts in 1955 and 172,496 performing at the last Spartakiade in 1985. Spartakiades were mass sports performances with a well-thought-out organizational structure, systematic, regular preparation and with a precise execution of compositions. The composition content was divided into gender and age categories from 5 to 80-

year-olds. Chorographically, there were floor exercises, different types of gymnastics and dance exercises using various non-traditional instruments and tools. Very attractive were performances given by the Czechoslovak Army as soldiers performed demanding gymnastic and acrobatic exercises. The goal was to create unique thematic formations that the spectators seated in the elevated parts of the stadium could admire. The Spartakiade compositions were the result of several years and months of preparation and drills and they symbolized ideological messages, most often the message of unity, cooperation and maintaining peace. As part of each Spartakiade, various cultural, social and sports competitions with international participation were held. Thus, we can unequivocally confirm that Spartakiades represented the development of physical education culture for the masses with an emphasis on the socio-cultural-physical development of the individual.

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