

## Sport and Physical Education in Communist Factories: from the Soviet Union to Romania

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**Abstract:** *After 1948, Romania followed the Soviet canon regarding the physical culture: before any sport performance, sport was designed to improve the general health and labour capabilities of the working people. Physical education was both a propaganda element of the new communist regime and also a slowly growing reality in the Romanian factories. As the economical framework and the overall well-being of the society improved, the physical education propaganda slowed down its pace, while sport infrastructure and its practice in factories were the seed not only for the “massification” of sport, but also for true performance in sport. In this article we explain the Soviet implications towards Romanian sport in general; we focus on recreating the framework around practicing of sport in factories with clear examples, statistics and a focus between the contrast of propaganda and the reality from factories.*

**Keywords:** Communist factories, Romanian Communism, Soviet Union, education, Soviet sport, Romanian sport.

After the year 1948 and the establishing of a communist regime, physical education and sport in Romania had entered a period of development, centred on mass sport and performance sport. Mass sport targeted the development of sport for the whole population, but especially among industrial workers, who were considered the most important social class by the communist ideology, and this in a framework where industry was essential for the development of economy and the creation of a ‘new society’. Sport, as any other domain of activities after 1948, was asked to contribute to the objectives of the new political regime.

‘With the help of letters from books and newspapers, spread by the people who loved the stadium, the notion of physical culture and sport penetrate more and more in branch’s and factories, in little houses from villages were the electric bulbs

were lightening for the first time, in class rooms, in amphitheatres'<sup>1</sup>. It was an image of sport practiced in every region of the country. This was the plan, to have sport in every part of the country, as a defining accomplishment of the communist leaders. It was an aspect postulated also in the Soviet Union, but also in Romania after 1945.

The mass sport was developed through a lot of activities: Sport Complex Event 'Ready for Labour and Defending of the Country', sport events 'Spartakiad', the organization of 'Sport Sundays', mass running events, tourism and trips, gymnastics in production<sup>2</sup>. Some of these activities, oriented on the benefits for workers, will come into our attention in this article. But first, in order to understand the Romanian case, it is necessary to have an image of the Soviet perspectives in this domain.

### **Soviet Union and Physical Culture and Sport**

In the interwar period, the Soviet Union promoted the utilitarian side of physical culture despite the performance dimension of sport. This idea came from the 1930s, when the Soviet society was focused on the term of *fizkul'turnik*. It was a concept related with the idea of mass participation, but also with the dimension of the country defence. With this objective, in 1931 the communist regime launched the program called GTO (*Gotov k trudu i oborone*) (Ready for Labour and Defence).

It was a permanent interest to develop the sport activities in Soviet factories, but not every time the results were acceptable. The strategy was very extensive and cantered on the idea of including all the employees in physical

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Gîrleşteanu, Hristache Naum, Radu Urziceanu, *Două decenii de avînt sportiv 1944-1964 [Two decades of sport evolution]*, Bucharest, UCFS Edition, 1964, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Cultură fizică și sport*, 1961, no. 1.

education phenomenon. When the results were not so good, the chiefs of this department were criticized and then changed<sup>3</sup>.

The sport clubs from factories appeared as important entities in the interwar period in Soviet Union. From this situation to the next level, synonymous with the foundation of the competition called Spartakiad and any other, it was just a little step<sup>4</sup>. The factory was seen also as a sport community, where a variety of physical activities were available. 'The new man' was a worker and a passionate for sport, and because of his work he received a salary and for his participation to the Spartakiad he was honoured with diplomas and bonuses<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, factories extended their mission, when they started to fight for pride and medals. The sport activity was developed fast under the pressure of the competitive attitude (stakhanovite movement)<sup>6</sup>.

The physical training became obligatory in factories. In fact, we can identify a continuity of the sport policy. From kindergarten to secondary schools and then in colleges and universities, the sport activities were transferred in factories. It was a continuous preparation, which meant that sport was seen as a permanent component of the Soviet people. Scott Nearing has visited in 1925 and 1926 the Soviet Union and has observed the educational system. He published a book in 1926, where we can find some aspects of the Soviet sport and its meaning for the state education. 'Organized sport means mass participation in outdoor activities'.

In 1925 the first competitions for workers were organized at a state scale, culminating with the First Festival of Physical Culture All-Union-Council of Workers Association. The workers were distributed in voluntary sports associations. It was the moment when important sport entities have appeared. Dynamo was the first club with a powerful structure since 1923. In 1935, the sporting association of craftsmen cooperative Spartak has its start. One year later, other sport clubs of workers unions were created. Torpedo represented the workers

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Grant, *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society: Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s*, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth M. Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998, p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Grant, *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society: Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s*, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> From Aleksei Grigorievich Stakhanov, a miner from 1930s, with whom practically the propaganda of socialist competition started.

union of car industry, Krylia Sovietov gathered workers union of aviation industry, Vodnik, workers union of river and sea transport and Lokomotiv was the club of workers union movement of 'city and village working masses'<sup>7</sup>. These are some of the important clubs of the 'new order'.

The Communist Party Resolution of 1949 claimed the role of physical culture as a part of the communist education and the connection with the labour domain was very clear, because it was stated the improvement of the people health and it was a key element for the defence of the Soviet Union<sup>8</sup>.

### **Romania and Physical Culture and Sport**

Romania copied in many aspects the Soviet sport policy in the first years of communism. In Bucharest have arrived specialists from Moscow and they have directed, to some extent, the lines of the Romanian sport. Their first objective was to increase and even to oblige the accessibility to the sport activities. The Romanian state had encouraged the physical education in schools and had stimulated the development of the infrastructure in towns and villages. The industrialization and urbanization processes facilitated and doubled this tendency, by the construction of places to practice sport, although in a difficult period for Romania, of reconstruction after the destructions of World War II.

Before 1948 sport in factories was a limited activity, carried out only at some factories and which in many cases implied football teams, few workers, almost no females practicing sport and little or no planning or documentation<sup>9</sup>. These characteristics were heavily criticized after 1948 and said to be an indicator of superficiality<sup>10</sup>.

Especially in the 1950s and 1960s many sport publications presented in their papers examples of workers from many factories who took part at sport

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<sup>7</sup> Ryszard Stefanik, "Social and political aspects of physical culture in the Soviet Union in the years 1917-1939", in *Central European Journal of Sport Sciences and Medicine*, vol. 8, no. 4/2014, p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> Irina Makoveeva, "Soviet Sports as a Cultural Phenomenon: Body and/or Intellect", in *Studies in Slavic Cultures*, p. 12, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Stadion, 1947, no. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Stadion, 1947, no. 4. There are no few mentions saying that after 1948 there was "no sport done at random, but physical education on scientific bases" and "no sport to kill the boring, but sport to train and strengthen new leading cadres in production, pawns of a new world, of socialist society" (Stadion, 1949, no. 67).

activities. The mix between showing the fact that the industrial and sport activities were done at their best by the workers, was essential for the political regime.

For example at *Filatura Românească de Bumbac* from Bucharest, we find out that the female workers are having a ‘production match’ with other factories, said to be interesting because ‘the increasing of the production is today a sport of the highest honour’ in which performance was measured ‘not in seconds like in sprints and not in centimetres like in jumps, but in kilos of cotton yarn’<sup>11</sup>. No less interesting is the mention that ‘Today, when increasing of the production is the aim of all different working activities and physical education has to contribute to this fight’<sup>12</sup>. This comes into sustaining that each domain of activity needed to contribute to the industrial production and through this, to the creation of a ‘new society’.

Practically, by engaging workers in the mass sport activity, a new type of sport appeared: trade union sport (*sportul sindical*)<sup>13</sup>. From the point of view of physical education and sport, to be a good sportsman was not enough, you also needed to have a working place and to do your best there also<sup>14</sup>. For example, Iosif Sârbu, a Balkan champion at shooting was presented also as being a student and a clerk<sup>15</sup>. Let’s not pass over the mention that Iosif Sârbu was student. The aspect of education of workers was very important<sup>16</sup> as that for the creation of cultural and social activities designed for them, in a way that their free time could also be controlled. This was also important for the communist leaders, who knew that a ‘relaxed’ worker had a social utility and a superior yield<sup>17</sup>. Some examples of types of such relaxation outside the working place: swimming, rowing (Sports Club

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<sup>11</sup> Stadion, 1947, no. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Stadion, 1947, no. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Stadion, 1948, no. 57.

<sup>14</sup> Stadion, 1949, no. 72.

<sup>15</sup> Stadion, 1948, no. 38. Also, ordinary workers were presented in the same way: “Ion Stanculescu is not only a skilled wielder of the oval ball, but also one of the best workers of the section of boiler room” (Sport, 1959, no. 19). In another example, stakhanovite Ștefan Covaci from Electromotor Timișoara was said that “its beautiful professional qualities are complemented by excellent qualities in sport” (Fotbal, 1953, no. 8). Other such examples can be read (Stadion, 1949, no. 72).

<sup>16</sup> The case of sportsmen from UTA Arad who were attending Faculty of Agrotechnics from Timișoara (Stadion, 1949, no. 84) and those of CFR Workshop Grivița Roșie from Bucharest of whom many were engineers (“You see, our political regime has created conditions for workers to attend the highest schools. Many of them have graduated and today are engineers” – Sport, 1960, no. 5).

<sup>17</sup> Stadion, 1947, no. 7; Stadion, 1949, no. 91.

Nicolina Iași), cycling and skiing (Vatra Dornei, Borșa), tourism activities (hiking, trips) organized in Ploiești, Cluj-Napoca, Arad and Iași (mainly in the nearby forests).

At Enterprise Țesătura Iași, in an act of important symbolism, three good sportsmen were presented also as receiving ‘Medal of Labor’ (*Medalia Muncii*). Other examples were from enterprise Grivița Roșie, mining enterprises in Valea Jiului<sup>18</sup>, from Hunedoara, IMS Galați (‘were successes in labour are interwoven with sport victories’)<sup>19</sup>. Propaganda tried to show that good results in sport grew at the same time with industrial development. All this phenomenon was better summarized by the catchphrase: ‘First in sport, first in production’ (adapted depending on the type of sport done – for example at Vasile Roaită Factory from Bucharest, where a shooting range was created, this was called ‘First in production, first in shooting’)<sup>20</sup>. At the Steel Mill from Reșița, the workers guided by the same catchphrase were said to be ‘breakers of work load and winners in socialist contests’ (they were also sportsmen in plane modelling)<sup>21</sup>.

After introducing the sport event ‘Ready for Labor and Defending of the Country’, the workers ‘received’ new objectives. In an example from 1950: the workers from *21 Decembrie Factory* were ‘overcoming their labour duties, making sport and defending the peace’, because, ‘taking part at Ready for Labour and Defending of the Country means that a commitment for fighting for peace was taken’<sup>22</sup>.

If before 1948 sport activity in enterprises especially meant having a football team, after that year the propaganda expressly mentioned examples of factories and the many sports introduced there: volleyball, plan modelling, chess, basketball, athletics, bowling, table tennis and others at STB/ITB from

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<sup>18</sup> In an example of the miners from Petrila from 1949 it was said ‘not only that the plan for 1949 was achieved, but they started working for the objectives of the new plan. This is of course was not a single example, not for that economic plan and not for the factory, especially because each plan contained objectives to improve the standard of living also through practicing sport (Stadion, 1949, no. 107).

<sup>19</sup> Stadion, 1949, no. 79; Stadion, 1949, no. 107.

<sup>20</sup> Pentru apărarea patriei [For the defence of country], 1956, no. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Aviația [Aviation], 1950, no. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Other examples were from factories Kirov, Dinamo, Steel Mill Reșița, Electromagnetica. Even Dinamo Sport Park was said to be completed “for peace” (Stadion, 1950, no. 122; Stadion, 1951, no. 150).

Bucharest<sup>23</sup>, UTA Arad, Electroputere Craiova, Rulmentul Bârlad, Steaua Roșie Bacău and others<sup>24</sup>.

Very important is to present some examples of how really sport was introduced in factories and the problems throughout this process. For example, at Vasile Roaită Factory from Bucharest it was organized the Cup of Working Youth: political agitators visited the factory and spread the word of this sport event, the workers were then enlisting and after some days, the sport contest was taken place with different sport events (sprints, gymnastics and so on)<sup>25</sup>.

From an interview of 1958 with the methodist Didona Ursu from the Printing Plant ‘Casa Scânteii’ we found out that:

‘With the direct support of party organization we have started, in the first days of June, an intense work of popularization of gymnastics in production within the plant broadcasting station and meetings. Diligently promulgating the meaning and advantages of the gymnastics we managed to arouse the interest of workers. For those who were attracted by gymnastics and the minute of physical education I trained them to be instructors in order to lead the practical program’<sup>26</sup>.

At Simo Geza Factory from Târgu Mureș, 10 minutes of gymnastics in production were done under the surveillance of an instructor: ‘daily at 10 o’clock the labour is stopped for gymnastics in production’<sup>27</sup>. At Maritime Shipyard Constanța a similar image: ‘10 and a half hours. Sirens announced the termination of work. In the place reserved for the boiler house, over 200 workers are running correctly complex physical exercises. Five minutes work will resume with further production increment’<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Some big factories had their own sport events. This was the case of ITB (Enterprise for Transportation Bucharest) where ‘Itebiada’ was organized. Also, for some domain of activities special contest were organized – for metalurgical factories, The Metal Cup was organized.

<sup>24</sup> Stadion, 1948, no. 58; Stadion, 1949, no. 84; Sport, 1960, no. 8; Sport și tehnică, 1964, no. 5; Sport și tehnică, 1964, no. 9. It was even said, for the example of Oțelul Roșu Works, that if beside football, other sports were to be introduced, for sure the mass sport could have attracted even more workers (‘Stadion’, 1949, no. 67). In an article of 1950 we can also find a list of sports that need to be developed: gymnastics, skiing, athletics, shooting, swimming, rowing, wrestling, rugby, football, volleyball, basketball, national games, mountaineering and tourism (Cultură fizică și sport, 1950, no. 2).

<sup>25</sup> Stadion, 1949, no. 81.

<sup>26</sup> Sport, 1958, no. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Sport, 1959, no. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Sport, 1960, no. 12.

The communist propaganda brings often examples to stimulate the national phenomenon of sport in factories. The sports journal *Sportul Popular* presents cases from all over the country with people in factories making sport. For example, in 14 February 1961, the newspaper offers an article about the IPROCHIM factory from Bucharest<sup>29</sup>. Under the title, "The story of nine minutes..." the author describes the gymnastics for workers in this institution. To strengthen its ideas, the article is doubled by a suggestive photo, in which workers are making gymnastics. The author explains that "for nine minutes, all the employees from IPROCHIM have a common program: gymnastics in production"<sup>30</sup>. The movements are coordinated from a radio and the hour reserved for this time was at 11.

Another article with the same approach was published in 25 February 1961. "The girls from *Țesătura* are making sport" was the title of an ample presentation about the sport activities which implies women from the *Țesătura Iași* factory<sup>31</sup>. Also this article comes along a photo with women workers from *Textila Roșie* factory, which make gymnastics in production in their break at 10. It is a dynamic image and emanates the idea of energy.

It is a standard article in that time, which tries to transmit the idea of workers unity, their will to make sport and intends to stimulate other people to practice sports. The visual communication was very important, especially in such cases. Often, concepts as movement and pleasures were transmitted to the reader. The collective examples are extended with individual cases. *Sportul Popular* presents many profiles of model workers with multiple abilities. We can identify in the press articles the typology of worker-instructor, who stimulates the gymnastics in production. It had to be a person with initiative and dedicated to the political regime demands<sup>32</sup>.

Gymnastics in production had an important place among the ways of implementing mass sport: it was easy to introduce in many factories, took little time and financial funds and practically demanded no equipment and little specialized assistance<sup>33</sup>. From 1957 it also gained in importance, because of an

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<sup>29</sup> *Sportul Popular*, 14 February 1961, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Sportul Popular*, 25 February 1961, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Sportul Popular*, 15 October 1960, p. 2; *Sportul Popular*, 4 May 1961, p. 1; *Sportul Popular*, 16 May 1961, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> "The gymnastics of the XIX century is the sport of our century, which along with the work has started on the new road to progress" (*Stadion*, 1948, no. 52).



official party act reorganizing the physical culture and sport deciding among others that ‘measures will be taken towards development of gymnastics in production in all enterprises and institutions’<sup>34</sup>.

From simple walks, daily gymnastics to gymnastics at the working place (‘rally gymnastics’, pause for gymnastics, individual exercises, gymnastics at the end of the working day)<sup>35</sup>, they all aimed an increase of efficiency at work and offering a resistance against the fatigue. Depending on the types of industrial enterprises, different types of physical exercises were recommended and also possible, as limited by the nature of different industrial activities carried out in some enterprises.

There was no general program of physical exercises to be carried away in an enterprise, even of the same industrial type. The local initiative took the main role and it mainly consisted of experiments which, if they proved successful, would later be introduced in other enterprises. For example, self-massage during work, in order to enhance the working capability, was introduced at Textila Enterprise from Sebeș (Alba County) under the supervision of the sport association of the enterprise<sup>36</sup>. At the Garment Factory from Brăila, during the lunch break, a running of 500 meters or gymnastics were carried out by the female workers<sup>37</sup>. In some enterprises, like Electroputere Craiova, gymnastics in production was also well received<sup>38</sup>.

Recommended physical exercises varied depending on the targeted professions. For example, for electricians, pharmacists, painters, printers and weavers among others, a pause for gymnastics, individual exercises and ‘rally gymnastics’ could be tried, as for steelworkers, forgers and miners ‘rally

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<sup>34</sup> *Cultură fizică și sport*, 1962, no. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Efreim Cherteș, Iovița Popa, *Îndrumar pentru educație fizică și sport în întreprinderi și instituții [Guide for Physical education and sport in factories and institutions]*, Bucharest, Editura Politică, 1981, p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 122.

<sup>38</sup> “Gymnastics at work is carried out with good results in many enterprises (Regional Directorate of Railways, Machinery and Appliances Enterprise, Folk Art Cooperative), but the more sustained activity on this land is taking place in enterprise Electroputere: here, a number of over 3,000 working people participates in gymnastics at work, under the guidance of 24 instructors” (Ion Cetățeanu, Ilarie Hinoveanu, Elisabeta Trăistaru, *Județele patriei. Dolj. Monografie [The country counties. Dolj. Monography]*, București, 1981, p. 285).

gymnastics' and gymnastics at the end of the working day were said to be more appropriate<sup>39</sup>.

Of course there were some problems regarding the introducing of sport in factories related to insufficient financial funds and a weak propaganda movement<sup>40</sup>, although during 1950s and 1960s there were many articles in main sport publications in order to help the introducing of sport in factories<sup>41</sup>. Also scientifically documentation did not developed as fast as needed (one example is the sport medicine)<sup>42</sup>. The sport equipment was in great need too and there are examples in which it was bought by dues of workers<sup>43</sup>, but also we can think on the problem that not all the needed equipment was produced and even less imported in Romania. A limited number of sports in enterprises of course meant that not many workers could have been attracted and even less female workers among them. Strong related with the latter problem is that the need for specialist (methodists, coaches, referees, trainers) was high, especially thinking on the many sports that were desired to be introduced<sup>44</sup>.

Another problem was the weather, because those activities recommended to be done in the factory yard were possible just for few months in a year. And for this reason, they were special meetings to national and regional level to discuss the possibility to make sport in factories during cold season<sup>45</sup>. Many factories were confronted with lack of space or rooms without heating. Although there were directives to make outdoor sports or winter specific sports, the indigence was

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<sup>39</sup> Efrem Cherteș, Ioviță Popa, *Îndrumar pentru educație fizică și sport în întreprinderi și instituții [Guide for Physical education and sport in factories and institutions]*, București, Editura Politică, 1981, p. 53.

<sup>40</sup> Stadion, 1947, no. 7 ; Stadion, 1949, no. 75.

<sup>41</sup> Translations of some such titles of articles: *First in Production, first in sport* (Stadion, 1949, no. 107); *The role of the volunteer instructor in organization of gymnastics in production* ('Cultură fizică și sport', 1962, no. 2); *The preparing of instructors for gymnastics in production* ('Cultură fizică și sport', 1963, no. 3).

<sup>42</sup> Stadion, 1947, no. 4. In many publications of 1950s and 1960s, and especially in 'Cultură fizică și sport', there were many articles taken from Soviet publication, regarding different physical culture and sport problems (sport medicine, gymnastics in production and so on – see for latter, the example from 'Cultură fizică și sport', 1954, no. 7).

<sup>43</sup> Sport, 1958, no. 1.

<sup>44</sup> For example in the case of gymnastics in production, trainers were said to be needed at 30-50 workers which for many enterprises with over 500 workers, demanded many trainers. Their training was conducted by Union for Physical Culture and Education or by councils of sport clubs in cooperation with local institutions of education and sanitation (Cultura fizică și sport, 1963, nr. 3).

<sup>45</sup> Sportul Popular, 18 October 1960, p. 4.

obvious in many factories. In this case, the communist regime suggested collaboration between factories and the organization of common sport events. After all of these problems presented, a final word is needed about the number of sportsmen among workers and the organization of trade union sport.

Leaving propaganda at one side, in the first years after 1948 there were not that many workers enlisted in the Union for Physical Culture and Sport (UPCS) and from them, even few were really practicing sport: from 264 at 1 Mai Works from Ploiești in 1949 (from a total of 4000 workers), to 700 at Malaxa/23 August already in 1947 and Tudor Vladimirescu in Bucharest (in 1959), 2000 at Steaua Roșie Bacău and Rulmentul Bârlad (in 1964) and as high as 6500 in 1970s (from 500 in 1959) for a Sport Association like Relonul from Săvinești, but in the latter case, comprising many teams and workers from different enterprises<sup>46</sup>.

On the country level, the propaganda came with impressive numbers, which show the expansion of sport development. In 1957, UPCS registered almost one million members (950,114). One year later, the number was more than double, 2,040,858 members. In 1960, the number was more than 2,5 million and in 1962, over three millions<sup>47</sup>. A good part of them was represented by workers, as ‘the Party and the Government offer a permanent support to the sport movement and have to, as responsibility, offer workers from all over the country the possibility to practice physical education and sport’<sup>48</sup>.

In the same time, in the Soviet Union the numbers of workers who make sport are over six millions. The communist propaganda speaks about a giant mobilization and in every corner of Soviet Union, even the little factories have a place to make sport.

‘It is rare to find today in Soviet Union a factory without a stadium or a sport field [...]. In every factory, let’s say Uralmash Zavod, a great enterprise of mechanic constructions, which has over 30 sport domains, or to the Stalingrad Tractor Factory, or to the Likhatchev factory cars in Moscow, or even a little factory from textile industry or a factory for cans on the seaside, all of them have

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<sup>46</sup> Stadion, 1949, no. 75; Stadion, 1947, no. 7; Sport și tehnică, 1964, no. 5; Sport și tehnică, 1964, no. 9; Sport, 1959, no. 10; Constantin Botez, Ioan Burduja, Aurel Cuciureanu, Constantin Turcu, *Platforma industrială Săvinești și împrejurimile [The industrial platform Săvinești and the surroundings]*, Piatra Neamț, 1974, p. 371, 372.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60.

sport groups, which have the means to organize different manifestations'<sup>49</sup>, is an argument for the ideological enthusiasm regarding the sport development in Soviet Union. Such description was presented by the communist regime from Moscow to the Brussels World's Fair in 1958, under the title 'A More Human World'.

Another important aspect to analyse is the structure of the trade union sport. First, there were 10 sport union organized: Locomotiva (attached to Union of Transports and Communications), Flamura Roșie (Union of Textile-Leather, Clothing), Spartac (Food and Trade-Cooperatives Unions), Flacăra (Union of Printing Industry and Institutes of Art and Culture), Metalul (Metal and Chemical Union), Progresul (Union of Trade Union, State Administration, Didactical and Sanitary Staff), Partizanul (Union of Mining and Petroleum), Constructorul (Union of Builders), Avântul (Union Wood-Forestry) and Dunărea (Danube-Black Sea Canal)<sup>50</sup>.

Each founded association was 'a mass organization of workers, technician and clerks organized in unions and of their family members who have reached 14 years'. Very important is the point that the 'superiority of this new organization, is that it is based on the organization of sport at the production site'. A trade union sport association was structured in three parts: County Sports Council, Sports Collective and Sports Circle. The County Sports Council managed the development of sports in a whole county, the Sports Collective that of trade unions and committees of important enterprises and Sports Circle around the workshops and other components of an enterprise. Also, the Sports Collective was organized in sports sections for one or two sports and could comprised one or more teams<sup>51</sup>.

Sport associations were established in many enterprises. Their names reflected the name of the enterprise and names with different inspiration (close to communist ideology or of general inspiration)<sup>52</sup>. In a similar way, sport

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<sup>49</sup> *Le Sport en URSS, Section de l'URSS a l'exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles 1958*, Brussels, 1958, p. 45.

<sup>50</sup> *Cultură fizică și sport*, 1950, no. 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> A couple of examples taken from a series of monographs named *Județele patriei*, appeared in the late 1970s: Metalul Bocșa, Minerul Moldova Nouă, Metalul Oțelu Roșu, Minerul Anina, Minerul Oravița, Muncitorul Reșița, Celuloza Călărași, Confecția Călărași, Tricolorul Călărași, Industria Lânii Timișoara, Progresul Timișoara, CFR Timișoara, Metalul Vaslui, Rulmentul Bârlad, Viitorul Vaslui, Armătura Zalău, Elcond Zalău, Silvania Șimleu Silvaniei, Voința Zalău, Silvania Cehu Silvaniei, Rapid Jibou, Unio Satu Mare, Victoria Carei, Petrolul Ploiești, Uzinele 1 Mai Ploiești, Chimia Brazi, Locomotiva Mărășești, Foresta Fălticeni, Minaur Baia Mare, Maratex Baia Mare,

competitions were named depending on the industrial domain of activity from where the workers were included (metal, mining and so on), while others came from the communist ideology (under the influence or not of the Soviet propaganda - *Let's welcome the 1st May, spartakiad*). The latter was along with 'Ready for Labour and Defending of the Country' replaced at first by sport events centered on gaining the *Insigna de Polisportiv*, and from the second half of 1970s, with *Daciada*, a huge propaganda sport event at a national level. The name *Daciada* was related with the term „Dacia”, which was the ancient province inhabited by the Dacians.

As the sport practiced in factories developed, it has been transformed into a reservoir for recruiting sport performers. For example, Leon Rotman, Olympic medallist of Romania in canoeing, describes in an interview the moment when he has started to practice sport. He explains the fact that factories like Flacăra or Timpuri Noi in Bucharest had poor facilities to practice sport. In old houses they have set up spaces for boxing and wrestling<sup>53</sup>. After some time, associations like Progresul or Dinamo, improved the general conditions of sport competing with these factories sport clubs. This shows us two important facts: the factories as a place of fostering the sport movement and infrastructure<sup>54</sup> and as a catalyst for increasing sport performance.

The sport for masses was an important element for almost every communist country. Periodical reunions took place to discuss this aspect. It is the case, for example of the conference from Varna (Bulgaria), between 12 and 16 October 1981. A book which mentions the speech of every country was published by the CNEFS a year later. Entitled *Sport for masses* this book was published just for

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Cuprom Baia Mare, Jiul Petroșani, Metalul Hunedoara, Minerul Lupeni, Avântul Gheorgheni, Penicilina Iași, Nicolina Iași, Metalurgistul Sadu, Confecția Târgu Jiu, Petrolul Țicleni, Minerul Rovinari, Metalul Galați, Electrica Fieni, Automecanica Moreni, Cimentul Fieni, Tractorul, Steagul Roșu, Progresul Brăila, Tractorul Viziru, Botoșani, Metalul Botoșani, Cristalul Dorohoi, Minerul Rodna, Silvicultorul Maieru, Unirea Tricolor Dăbuleni, Chimia Turnu Măgurele, Aluminiul Slatina, Chimia Râmnicu Vâlcea, Armătura Strehaia; and other examples from Bucharest: Rapid, Flacăra Roșie, Progresul, Metalul, Olimpia, Electromagnetica, Laromet, Confecția, Unirea Tricolor, Spartac, Construcții, Timpuri Noi, Vulcan, Autobuzul, Sirena, Flacăra Roșie.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Leon Rotman, in Annexes, Pompiliu-Nicolae Constantin, PhD Thesis, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Let us mention here the legislative act from 1956 regarding the construction of sport facilities in factories: Hotărârea Consiliului de Miniștri [The Decision of the Council of Ministers], no. 195, from 7 February 1956, regarding on designing and building sports fields and facilities in institutions and enterprises.

‘internal use’ and reveals some essential aspects of the sport in factories. The ideological dimension is easily identifiable. In the Romanian case, the sport in factories was related with the efficiency of workers and their health. The Romanian delegate speaks about two cases, considered to be relevant for the entire country. The situation in a factory from Bucharest and another from Oradea were studied and the conclusion was that the gymnastics in factory has just benefits for workers and the enterprise<sup>55</sup>.

## Conclusions

The sport in factories was considered an compulsory activity, but this aspect was perceived by the workers as a difficult task to complete. The ideological dimension of the sport project was an element hard to embrace and for this reason the sport in factories was not always a story of success. Often, this practice, which should be just a way to relax the worker and to maintain him in good shape, became a continuous search for Stakhanovism models. The Soviet Union model of stakhanovists was also a demand or a tendency in the Romanian communism. The Romanian propaganda insists on the cases of workers which combine the “labour productivity and sporting success”, as Robert Edelman observed in the Soviet Union case<sup>56</sup>.

The attachment of the Romanian citizens regarding this continuous tentative of the regime to transform the worker in a sport lover received a diffuse answer. People were not willing to make sacrifices in their schedule to make sport in factories. The ambient was not so tempting, considering the penury from factories or the indifference of the ones responsible, and the culture of sport was not developed to the high standards praised by the propaganda.

This phenomenon of sport in factories was impossible without mass-media and propaganda. Analysing documents and press articles it is obvious that this tendency to impose sports in factories was based first of all on a complex mechanism, which insisted every day on the same ideas. It became obsessive and maybe more important in the public speech to make physical education in factories

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<sup>55</sup> \*\*\*, *Sport de masă [Sport for Masses]*, Consiliul Național pentru Educație Fizică și Sport [The National Council for Physical Education and Sport], Bucharest, 1982, p. 7-8.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Edelman, *Serious Fun: a history of spectator sport in USSR*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 36.

than effectively working. This analysis tells us that sport and physical education were considered essential parts in workers life, the communist regime tried to impose them, but the reality in factories reveals a complex contrast, with different levels of interest and perspectives in a country under an industrialization process.

We cannot understand the Romanian case without the situation in Soviet Union. Such a theme could deserve a more detailed exploration because it is a fascinating issue and maybe this article could open the possibilities for further researches on this topic.

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