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**PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS AND SOCIETY IN
TRANSYLVANIA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD
WARS (1919-1939)**

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Key Words: Physical Education, Sports, Transylvania, Inter-War Period, Education, Sport Competitions, Sport Associations, Sport Mass-Media, Everyday Time, Leisure, Working Class Sport Movement, Taken Exercise, Gymnastics, Legislation.

RESUME

„The relationship between people and sports have lasted for centuries” wrote Georgiu Gingăraș. This „friendship” was written and will be still written without any doubt because sport influenced the evolution of humanity „shaped characters” and created strong personalities¹.

Today, sports, invade in the good sense of the word the life of all the people irrespective of sex, age, colour, party allegiance, religion or social status even if they are practiced only for pleasure and not at a level of performance.

We will see in the following chapters that sports imposed themselves as a necessity at all the learning institutions being present in all the school curriculums. Sports knew a stages of development a long history. Very much has been written about sports including the Romanian ones. That’s why we will not insist to much on the stages they underwent beginning with Antiquity and finishing with the modern period.

The history of sports in Romania is a chapter to which it is very difficult to bring improvements because it was covered by a series of authors, the most important being Nicolae Postolache.

We will mention these works in the order they appeared: **Francisc Lorinczi**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*, Cluj-Napoca, 1972; **Nicolae Postolache**, *Istoria sportului românesc în date*, Editura Junimea, Iași, 1979; **Gheorghe Neța**, *Istoria educației fizice sportului*, Cluj-Napoca, 1992; **Nicolae Postolache**, *Istoria sportului în România: date cronologie*, Editura Profexim, București, 1995; **Maria Niculescu**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*, Pitești, 1995; **Victor Albu**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*, Editura Ovidius University Press Constanța, 2002; **Constantin Huțanu și Constantin Rancea**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*, Editura Orizonturi Universitare, Timișoara 2003; **Mihai Constantin și Răzvan Barbu**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*, Editura Universitaria, Craiova, 2004; **Flavia Rusu**, *Educația fizică și sportul de la origini la Jocurile Olimpice moderne*, Editura Napoca Star, Cluj-Napoca, 2004; **Ionela Niculescu**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*, Editura Universitaria, Craiova, 2006; **Nicolae Postolache**, *Istoria educației fizice, sportului și olimpismului*, Editura Fundației „România de Măine”, București, 2009; **Urichianu Sanda Toma**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului: de la vechile civilizații la lumea modernă*, Editura Bren, București, 2009; **Florin Țurcanu**, *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*,

¹ *Enciclopedia Educației Fizice și Sportului din România*, vol. 1, Editura Aramis, București, 2002, p. 7.

Editura Litografia UMF Tg. Mureș, Tg. Mureș, 2010; To this works are added *Enciclopedia Educației Fizice și Sportului din România*, în four volumes, appeared in 2002, at Aramis Publishing House, Bucharest, whose coordinator is **Alexe Nicu**. It is a work of sports history „a documentary pretending to be exhaustive”, as Georgiu Gingăraș remarks.

All the works succeeded in setting out, revealing and reconstituting facts of the past, through the archives, memories, sport chronicals and sources of oral history. Thus, we don't propose to make a history of the Romanian sports from the beginning to the present, subject which we already dealt with.

A new approach of this kind will be necessary and undoubtedly interesting in time. Actually, the present thesis suggests a presentation of the life of the Transylvanian society in the period between the two World Wars, understanding by this the launching on a field already approached by others, but not thoroughly studied.

The everyday life of the population from Transylvania in the inter-war period, was rarely present among the literary preoccupations of the Romanian authors, very few references being made about them.

Ioan Scurtu wrote about the everyday life of the population from Transylvania in the inter-war period (see *Viața cotidiană a românilor în perioada interbelică*, Editura RAO, București, 2001), but the author doesn't mention absolutely anything about his concerns for sports.

In this respect we can also mention the work *Viața cotidiană, familie, alimentație și populație în secolele XVIII-XXI*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2011. **Corneliu Crăciun's** work is more recent being entitled *Viața cotidiană în Oradea interbelică* (Editura Primus, Oradea, 2010), having as a subject matter everyday sociology. The author refers in a lacunary manner, to the participation of the population in the sportive life of the town.

Concerns of the researchers concerning everyday life of the Romanians are manifested in the other Romanian regions and refer to other periods of the history not the inter-war one, which we deal with.

We can mention here the following works *Viața cotidiană a Țării Românești în documente 1800-1848*, author **Vladimir Gh. Diculescu** (Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1970); *Viața cotidiană în castrele Daciei Porolissensis*, author **Dan Isac** (Editura Napoca Star, Cluj-Napoca, 2001); *Viața cotidiană în Făgăraș în anul 1916*, written by **Elena Ioana Igant** (Editura Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 2011), work that contains the writings of Iacob Popa; *Viața cotidiană în timpul lui Carol I*, author **Ion Bulei**

(Editura Tritonic, București, 2004), work that presents the period of 1900-1908; *Viața cotidiană la secui: 1750-1850*, author **Istvan Imreh** (Editura Kriterion, București, 1982); *Sport și politică în epoca Nicolae Ceaușescu*, author **Marius Marinău**, a thesis for a doctor's degree appeared in Oradea in 2011; *Viața cotidiană în orașul Chișinău la începutul secolului al XIX-lea (1900-1918)*, author **Lucia Sava** (Editura Pontos, Chișinău, 2010) and *Viața cotidiană la curtea regală a României 1914-1947*, author **Ștefania Ciubotaru** (Editura Cartex, București, 2011), which doesn't refer to Transylvania in any way.

The work that intersects our concerns is that of **Dionisie Turcu Marian**, *Educația fizică în Transilvania din secolul XV până la cel de-al doilea război mondial* (Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu, 2004). Dionisie Turcu Marian approaches the problem of physical education in Europe from the 14th to the 19th centuries. Dionisie Turcu Marian is the author of several works having as a subject matter the physical education and the sport phenomenon and we mention here *Activitățile corporale, tradiție și contemporaneitate* (international scientific conference, Sibiu – Păltiniș, 7-9 May, 2004); *Management în educație fizică și sport* (Editura Psihimedia, Sibiu, 2008); *Marketing sportiv* (Editura Psihimedia, Sibiu, 2003);

Bogdan Popa showed concerns for the sport phenomenon in the inter-war period, elaborating a thesis for a doctor's degree entitled *Educație fizică, sport și societate în România interbelică*, professor Andrei Pippidi being the coordinator.

The author makes a research of the past of the physical education using the methods of social and cultural history. Bogdan Popa starts from the idea that society is mirrored in the theory and practice of sports and physical education. We have also to mention Adrian Hatos's work, *Sport și Societate. Introducere în sociologia sportului*.

We have to mention that the inventory of the Central Library „Lucian Blaga” from Cluj-Napoca has thousands of titles with works about gymnastics, sports, physical education and sport movement.

Sports initially represented a subject matter for sociological and anthropological researches, being transferred into a secondary plan, not to say that it was disconsidered by historians. The physical education attracted the attention of the latter once after establishing the trends of social and cultural history. We have also to mention that physical education has to be regarded as an element of modernizing the Romanian society at the end of the first World War, in full process of transformation.

Modern physical education had a significant educational dimension. As Bogdan Popa remarks, „the domain of physical education was marked by the concept on the different social

roles of the woman and man in a society in which traditional forms dominated over the modern ones”².

Sport won a well defined place in the inter-war society, being a way of climbing on the social scale. Sport is today, more than ever, a way through which, the individuals that practice it at a level of performance, made themselves known.

Some of them more, others less, depending on the sport discipline and the performances they reach. You can get far through sports. We can see this taking into consideration the performances of Lionel Messi, Usain Bolt, David Beckham, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Kobe Bryant and the examples can go on and on.

They became famous through sport and they are who they are today thank to sport. Undoubtedly, the development of the sport phenomenon led to the birth of a new category of sport culture, that of the audience, of the lookers on, of those who get to practice sports at an amateur level, only for the sake of exercise and not to reach any performance or break records. This is the category we decided to deal with. Leisure, everyday life, entertainment, sport, are the main ingredients of our approach. We let others to deal with the results, statistics and participations at the Olympic Games.

We considered that a thorough analysis of the sport phenomenon in the inter-war period of Transylvania has to be taken into consideration. We have to mention that this period was not very much studied from this perspective.

There are concerns regarding the sport phenomenon in Transylvania before the first World War and in this respect we have to mention the studies of Killyeni Andras, Ștefan Maroti and the late Laszlo Ferencz, with whom I am proud to say I collaborated. The studies of the three authors mentioned above offered us a support for establishing the preliminaries. I have chosen as a domain of research the main centers of Transylvania.

The present work is structured on eight chapters. In the first one we will see if there is a difference between sports and physical education. We have to define the two concepts. In the first chapter I presented the national systems of physical education in the 18th and 19th centuries, mainly the Swedish System, the German System, the Danish System, the English System, the Swiss System and the French one.

As anything starts from somewhere, I considered necessary to identify the source of physical education, as being in ancient Greece. Taking advantage of the context, I also presented the way the greatest philosophers of the Antiquity, especially Platon and Aristoteles

² Bogdan Popa, *Educație fizică, sport și societate în România interbelică* (teză de doctorat), p. 3.

understood the role sport had in the education of the individual. We will see that they formulate somehow different opinions about the effects of sport on the human body. Using the analogical method of research, we did not hesitate to make in this respect a comparison between the idea of sport at the Greeks and the way in which the Romans understood physical education and sport. If the first ones saw in sports a way of strengthening health, the latter ones perceived the phenomenon as a way of entertainment, of spending our leisure time, of getting some incomes through bets. The first chapter ends with a short history of physical education in Transylvania.

The second chapter opens with the history of physical education and sport in Romania, pointing out the most important moments which marked in a decisive way the evolution of the phenomenon on the territory of our country from a legislative point of view.

The chapter is dedicated to physical education in the learning system of Transylvania in the inter-war period, excepting the University one, to which I granted a more generous space in the third chapter. Our approach imposed the presentation of the preliminaries concerning the first attempts to introduce physical education in the school curriculum. The sport competitions between schools created an emulation and stimulated the desire of the pupils for the physical education and sport.

This competitions gave another meaning to the word stake and increased the pupils' wish to make movements, to practice sports.

In this chapter I also chose a comparative study resulting in the use of analogical methods of research.

As I mentioned before, the third chapter is dedicated to physical education among the students pointing out their role in the development of the sport phenomenon. How was this accomplished? On the contrary, they tried to develop the interest for sports by founding student associations which did not neglect this aspect.

As a study of case, I chose the University of Cluj because I had at my disposal a very rich documentation. I refer here to the Annuary of the University „Regele Ferdinand I”, to the archive sources, to memories and diaries of former students and professors, correspondences as well as sources of oral history. The introduction of physical education at the University of Cluj is closely related to the name of Iuliu Hațieganu, a great personality who couldn't be absent from our study.

I also tried to sketch the role that a series of personalities had in the promotion and development of physical education and sports in Transylvania in the third chapter. The first to

be considered here is Iuliu Hațieganu, but it would be unjust to omit Gheorghe Moceanu or Pavel Vasici, who are the pioneers of physical education on the territory of Transylvania. Certainly, this work did not comprise all the personalities who brought, more or less, their contribution to the development of sports in Transylvania, but we leave the door open to future researches.

The fourth chapter also refers to contributions, this time to that of the mass-media in Transylvania to the promotion of the sport phenomenon. We will see to what extent the publications and reviews of the time brought their contribution to the promotion of sports and the development of the desire of the society for movement. The sport mass-media, and we refer here to that from Transylvania in the inter-war period, had ascending and descending stages. Unfortunately, the sport mass-media was also influenced by the political class, that imposed in a certain way censorship according to their preferences.

Of course, in the inter-war period in Transylvania predominated the Hungarian publications. In order to exemplify we made the list with the exclusive sport publications which activated on the territory of Transylvania from 1919 to 1939 with the few exceptions in 1940. We are not sure that we did not skip some periodicals, but the percentage is very small. Actually, we identified not less than fifty Hungarian sport publications (including here the Jewish ones to). The number of Romanian publications was very little if we make a comparison. We identified 14 publications of this kind. There were also 14 German ones. It was interesting to see the approach of the subjects. Until about 1930, the most publications dealt with sports such as fencing, athletic events, horse racings and tourism.

The publications based on activities in tourism were in German, from Braşov and Sibiu. As far as the number of publications is concerned, from the studies I made, I identified, in comparison with those from Bucharest, that they did not exceed 6-7000 issues a day. I did not study thoroughly this domain, because our domain of research on the whole would have suffered. In our study, we came to the conclusion that the great majority of sport publications had an ephemeral existence, a short life. We mention here...metheoretical publications, which ceased their activity after a single number. There were nevertheless some exceptions, namely „Carpații” from Cluj (193-1947), „Videki Sport” from Arad (1919-1927), „Tranzsilvania” from Cluj (1936-1948), „Vadasz Ujsag” from Tg. Mureş (1922-1931) and „Arena” from Timișoara (bilingual publication, 1925-1931).

The fifth chapter refers to sport among the working class, also understanding through this the ways through which the working class understood to make their leisure time worthwhile, when they did not work.

No doubt that the working class sport has a special place in the history of sports in Romania, its contribution to the promotion and development on the phenomenon being uncontested.

The concept of leisure time, of entertainment (also through sports) will appear in the vocabulary of the workers only later. The exhausting work, the low incomes associated with their lacks at home are reasons which make the workers not to think of entertainment or holidays.

For the most of them, the inn strategically placed in the neighbourhood of the place where they worked represented „an escape” from their everyday life and finally a way to spend their leisure time.

The problem of the leisure time of the working class represented a subject matter for which the mass-media presented a real interest. On the contrary, the publications took an attitude against the physical and moral „persecution” to which the workers were submitted and from whom they expected the highest efficiency.

In this respect, I identified a series of publications that sustained a campaign to support the workers, to improve their level of life, especially their physical state. Many newspapers recommended, after the occidental model, that the enterprises should create recreation spaces. It did not take long till the workers became fond of movement and create their own sport associations.

The inter-war period was proper to the development of the working class sports, a proof of this is the great number of clubs that were founded in this period, especially the clubs for the railway workers.

We also see, the contribution of ASTRA in the promotion of the sport phenomenon, especially in the countryside, by founding in 1927 a subsection of physical education „Șoimii Carpaților” (The Hawks of Carpathians). The sport movement in the countryside was initiated by doctor Iuliu Hațieganu, if we refer here to Transylvania.

The seventh chapter refers to the development of sports within the Army. The sports as lessons of instructing the soldier, namely the sport perceived as a way of reaching some performances in competitions of this kind, either we refer to friendly challenges or official ones. The soldier was perceived for a long time as an individual who must be trained to be useful to the army in case of wars. The training was for a long time rudimentary and was meant to prepare the soldier for an eventual military conflict. The Army also understood the benefic role of gymnastics, of physical education and lately of sports. In this chapter I allocate a subchapter to the military sport competitions, especially those belonging to ski,

shooting and riding. We considered that it is important to appeal again to the analogical method of research.

The last chapter is entitled *The organization of leisure time of the population of Transylvania in the inter-war period* and it is meant to be a thorough approach of everyday life because it proposed not to be an incursion in the sport rituals of the society. I have tried to catch more or less objectively the everyday life of population in Transylvania appealing to the main sources of the mass-media.

The publications of the time proved to be the most faithful and authorized source in this respect. The present paper comprises geographical areas, let's say, big enough, namely the inter-war period (1919-1939). We tried to present only a part of the sport disciplines, let's name the most representative ones. The preoccupations concerning physical education and sport consist first of all in the passion and interest for the sport phenomenon and secondly in the sport journalistic activity I have been making since 1997 in the publications from Cluj „Făclia” (ex-„Adevărul de Cluj”), where I have the function of editor of the sport department. In our attempt we accessed a great amount of information in this respect I refer to different types of sources: written, published or even archeological. The first type of sources, the written ones, contained, of course, materials of archives. The second one that of published sources contained the works of theoreticians from the domain and official documents. I refer to official documents of education, laws, programs, instructions which helped us with the chapter dedicated to physical education in education.

We also included the documents with a historical character in the category of published sources which refer to the organization of schools, to the content of education and obviously to the activity of the teaching staff in the domain of the physical education.

As I asserted, the main information was furnished to us first of all by the archive sources and the mass-media, especially the Hungarian and German ones, but this does not mean that the Romanian press-media did not prove to be also a very valuable source.

The archive sources of the institutions of education which contained registers assured us with material for the chapter connected to physical education in schools. In this context, the annuaries and bulletins of several institutions of education on the territory of Transylvania were of great help to us.

We have to mention that not all the studied sources preserved in the documents could help us in our research. Many archive documents were deteriorated with the passing of the time becoming in this way undecipherable. Some were not preserved and some others simply disappeared from various reasons. It is the case of many documents from the „Fond of the

Townhall of Cluj” for example, which preserved quite little information. Concretly, the fond offers information about the creation of associations or sport associations but the disappearance (unexistence) of documents limited our research. The latter one was made in the National Archives of Cluj, Alba Iulia, Braşov, Bistriţa şi Sibiu.

I considered as a main source for our starting point in accomplishing our objective the Annuary „Regele Ferdinand” from Cluj, the minutes of the Senate of the University and Faculty of Medicine and Law. I appreciated them to be useful as a source of research and oral history. We also used them in many chapters of the thesis. I appealed to the analogical method as a method of research being based on comparison. For this reason the conclusions we have drawn were sometimes uncertain or only probable. Our historical enterprise is based on serious documentations proved by the richness of the bibliography.