

Agnieszka MIRKIEWICZ*
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8025-7356>

The Sports Badge “Fit For Work and Defence” (“Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony” – SPO). The Characteristics and Principles of Earning It on the Example of Sports Associations in Rzeszów Voivodship in 1953

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Odnazka sportowa „Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony (SPO)”. Charakterystyka i zdobywanie jej na przykładzie zrzeszeń sportowych województwa rzeszowskiego w 1953 r.

Streszczenie

W 1950 r., wzorując się na radzieckiej odznace GTO, wprowadzono w Polsce odznakę sportową „Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony” – SPO (BSPO). Była ona podstawą ówczesnego systemu kultury fizycznej i czynnikiem propagowania sportu masowego. Odznakę podzielono na cztery stopnie i ustalono następujące kategorie wieku: BSPO stopnia dziecięcego z podziałem na dwie kategorie: 1) dziewczęta i chłopcy od 11 do 12 lat i 2) od 13 do 14 lat, oraz BSPO stopnia młodocianego z jedną kategorią wieku 15–16 lat. SPO obejmowało stopnie I i II i dwie kategorie wieku: 1) od 17 do 35 lat, 2) od 36 lat wzwyż. Opracowano regulamin zdobywania odznaki i powołano odpowiednie komisje, a wszystko nadzorował GKKF. Władze polityczne przywiązywały bardzo dużą wagę do

* PhD, Professor of University of Rzeszów, University of Rzeszów, Institute of Physical and Cultural Studies, Medical College; e-mail: amirk@02.pl

posiadania tej odznaki, a masowe zdobywanie SPO było priorytetem dla ówczesnych władz sportowych. Do przeprowadzania norm na SPO zobowiązano szkoły, uczelnie, wojsko, Ludowe Zespoły Sportowe i zrzeszenia sportowe. W niniejszym opracowaniu starano się odpowiedzieć na pytania: Jakie kryteria trzeba było spełnić, aby zdobyć SPO i BSPO?, a także: Ile konkretnie odznak zdobyto w zrzeszeniach sportowych województwa rzeszowskiego w 1953 r.?

Słowa kluczowe: odznaka sportowa SPO (BSPO), zrzeszenia sportowe, województwo rzeszowskie.

Abstract

In 1950, using the Soviet GTO badge as a model, the SPO (BSPO) sports badge was introduced in Poland. It was the basis of the contemporary physical culture system and a factor of promoting mass sport. The badge was divided into 4 degrees and the following age categories were established: the kid degree BSPO with the division into two categories: 1) girls and boys aged 11 to 12, and 2) aged 13 to 14, as well as the youth degree BSPO with one age category: 15–16. SPO included degrees 1 and 2 and two age categories: 1) 17–35, 2) 36 and above. The regulations of earning the badge were prepared, special committees were appointed, and the whole process was supervised by the Main Committee of Physical Culture (Główny Komitet Kultury Fizycznej – GK KF). Political authorities attached a lot of importance to possessing that badge, and mass earning of the SPO badge was a priority for the contemporary sports authorities. Schools, universities, the army, People's Sports Teams and sports associations were obliged to conduct tests for the required standards for the SPO badge. This paper tries to answer the following questions: What criteria had to be met to be awarded the SPO and BSPO badge? and: How many badges were achieved in sports associations in Rzeszów Voivodship in 1953?

Keywords: SPO (BSPO) sports badge, sports associations, Rzeszów Voivodship.

Introduction

Right after the Second World War in the Polish physical culture some organizational solutions were used that referred to the pre-war times. In 1946 the State Office of Physical Education and Military Training (Państwowy Urząd Wychowania Fizycznego i Przysposobienia Wojskowego – PUWFiPW) was established, chaired by Tadeusz Kuchar, a sportsman renowned in the Second Polish Republic. It was a transitional period because in September 1949, based on the resolution of the Politburo of the Polish United Workers' Party Central Committee (Biuro Polityczne KC PZPR) the Soviet model of physical culture was introduced¹. On 30 December 1949, the Main Committee of Physical Culture (Główny Komitet Kultury Fizycznej – GK KF) was established, which from then on managed that area of life in Poland. According to Piotr Godlewski:

¹ L. Szymański, *Kultura fizyczna i turystyka w polityce Polski Ludowej 1944–1989*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2004, p. 233; idem, *Model zarządzania kulturą fizyczną w II Rzeczypospolitej i Polsce Ludowej*, "Wychowanie Fizyczne i Sport" 1997, No. 1–2, p. 334.

The establishment of the Main Committee of Physical Culture, whose aim was to create relatively favourable conditions for promoting the sports movement, ended the period of relative pluralism and independence in the Polish sports movement².

In December 1950 all Polish sports associations were disbanded, and transformed, following the Soviet model, into sports sections of the committees of physical culture, and thus the sports movement lost its independence³.

The SPO badge was an element of propaganda of the contemporary authorities and one of the elements of copying the Soviet model of physical culture⁴. The significance attributed then to the badge for the development of physical culture is proven by the slogans under which it was propagated, for example: "Fit for work and defence – the motto of every citizen; the SPO badge – a test of physical culture in Poland; there is no sport without the SPO badge; Do you want to do sport? Achieve the SPO badge; Every Pole achieves SPO; The world of labour achieves SPO; SPO will help you to accomplish the 6-Year Plan; SPO will help you in work competition; By earning SPO you fight for peace; By earning SPO you win health, power to study, work and fight for peace; Mass achievement of SPO is our contribution to strengthening the power of the People's Republic of Poland – an important link in the world peace front"⁵. L. Szymański claims that the badge was: "The foundation of the Polish system of physical education and sport and its symbol [...] modelled on the Soviet badge 'Gotow k Trudu i Oboronie SSSR' (GTO)"⁶. It should be emphasised that it was introduced not only in Poland but also in other countries of the socialist block. It had a similar name, in Hungary and Romania "Ready for Work and Defence", in Czechoslovakia "Ready for Work and Defence of the Country", in GDR "Ready for Work and Defence of Peace", in Cuba "Ready for Victory"⁷. To get to know Soviet models better, at the turn of 1951 and 1952 a delegation of Polish physical culture activists was sent to the USSR and had an opportunity to learn the methods applied in physical education and sport there⁸.

² P. Godlewski, *Sport w Polsce na tle politycznej rzeczywistości lat 1944–1956*, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego w Poznaniu, Poznań 2006, p. 175. All citations transl. by Anna Szuba.

³ L. Szymański, *Model zarządzania...*, p. 334.

⁴ A. Nowakowski, *Zarządzanie kulturą fizyczną w Polsce w latach 1944–2001. Studium historyczno-porównawcze*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2005, pp. 55–56.

⁵ "Sport" 1950, No. 30, p. 3; *Jak przygotować i przeprowadzić zawody sportowe*, No. 7, Wydawnictwo Głównego Komitetu Kultury Fizycznej, Warszawa 1951, p. 83.

⁶ L. Szymański, *Kultura fizyczna...*, p. 48. The GTO badge was introduced in the USSR in 1931, in addition to fit tests it also included tests checking the ability to provide the first aid. R. Wroczyński, *Powszechne dzieje wychowania fizycznego i sportu*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk 1979, p. 325.

⁷ A. Pasko, *Sport wyczynowy w polityce państwa 1944–1989*, Wydawnictwo Avalon, Kraków 2012, p. 136. In 1949 the Soviet sport management announced that 18 000 000 USSR citizens had the GTO badge. "Sport" 1949, No. 2, p. 8.

⁸ T. Jurek, M. Kruk, *Uwarunkowania rozwoju sportu szkolnego w Polsce po drugiej wojnie światowej (1945–1953)*, „Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Kultura Fizyczna” 2017, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 79.

Historians studying the Polish physical culture after the Second World War agree that the SPO badge was the core of the contemporary physical education system and sport, and earning it was a factor of promoting mass sport. So far, no detailed characteristics of this interesting issue has been made. The problem which seems important not only to the researchers of the history of physical culture but also to theoreticians and practitioners of physical education has not been tackled, even from the point of view of comparative studies. Since it played such an important role, it is worth, even for cognitive purposes, following carefully what level of difficulty was required to earn it.

Research methods and problems

The author of this paper, by using the method of the analysis of literature, press and archive documents, as well as the comparative method, attempts to answer the following questions: What criteria had to be met to achieve the SPO and BSPO badges?, How many badges were achieved in sports associations in Rzeszów Voivodship in 1953?

Findings and discussion

In the years 1950–1956 in addition to the Main Committee of Physical Culture with its regional branches, also state administration bodies were responsible for physical culture, namely: 1) the Ministry of Education, 2) the Ministry of Higher Schools, 3) the Ministry of Health, 4) the Ministry of National Defence, 5) the Ministry of Public Security, 6) Central Vocational Training Office. Moreover, social organizations, such as: 1) Central Council of Trade Unions (Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych), 2) Farmers Self-Help Association (Związek Samopomocy Chłopskiej), 3) University Sports Association of Poland (Akademickie Zrzeszenie Sportowe), 4) Gwardia Sports Association, 5) Central Military Sports Club (Centralny Wojskowy Klub Sportowy)⁹. The greatest role in promoting mass sport was played by the Central Council of Trade Unions, which managed the works of Sports Associations and the basic links of sports movement, namely sports clubs which operated at employment establishments associated by the industry membership. Sports Associations were an organizer of numerous professional and mass sport events. Within the latter, sports spartakiads were organized, as well as earning the SPO badge which was established in 1950. In the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of 17 April 1950 on the SPO badge we can read that it is introduced:

⁹ A. Nowakowski, *Zarządzanie kulturą...*, pp. 55–56.

To emphasise the serious role of physical education and sport in improving health and to ensure comprehensive physical development of the citizens and preparing them to efficient work and defence of the People's Republic of Poland¹⁰.

As it was mentioned before, the SPO badge was the core of the physical education system in People's Poland. It was assumed to educate "young people who will be healthy physically and morally, young people who are able to perform a great task of building socialism and bring it to a victorious end, who, when necessary, are able to defend the country against the evil attempts of enemies"¹¹. As we can see, the approach with a high ideological level was applied to the activity of earning the badges, and the ideological patronage over the action was assumed by the Union of Polish Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej – ZMP*)¹².

The badge was divided into four degrees: 1) kid degree – for children aged 11 to 14; 2) youth degree – for teenagers aged 15 to 18; 3) 1st degree – for people above 19 years old; 4) 2nd degree upon the achievement of the 1st degree. The kid degree and the youth degree badge were called "Be Fit for Work and Defence" (BSPO). The Main Committee of Physical Culture was responsible for the preparation of the regulations and for the supervision of the organization of accomplishing the required tasks for the discussed badge, and the Ministry of Health was supposed to provide healthcare for the applicants¹³.

Two years later, with the Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 746 of 10 September 1952, corrections were made concerning the age categories. The kid degree for the ages 11–14 was left, the youth degree was called "adolescent" for the age range 15–16. Also, the 1st degree and the 2nd degree were changed, and were applicable for those aged above 17¹⁴.

The regulations of the badge were very extended, and to perform some tasks it was necessary to build an obstacle course. Two committees had to be appointed: the *SPO committee* and the *SPO supervisory committee*. SPO committees were appointed in schools, sports clubs, holiday houses, at camps and summer camps, at sports organizations, etc. On the other hand, SPO supervisory committees were appointed in municipal, district, powiat and voivodship physical culture committees and in the Main Committee of Physical Culture. The SPO committees could be composed of physical education teachers, instructors, activists, sports section referees, graduates of courses for SPO organizers, commanders of scout troops

¹⁰ Monitor Polski [The Polish Monitor] No. A-61, Resolution of the Council of Ministers 713 of 17 April 1950.

¹¹ Z. Dall, *Kultura fizyczna i sport w Polsce Ludowej*, Wydawnictwo Głównego Komitetu Kultury Fizycznej, Warszawa 1952, p. 25.

¹² F. Kędziorek, *Odznaki sportowe*, [in:] *Księga sporu polskiego 1944–1974*, Wydawnictwo Sport i Turystyka, Warszawa 1975, p. 116.

¹³ Monitor Polski [The Polish Monitor] No. A-61, Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 713 of 17 April 1950.

¹⁴ Monitor Polski [The Polish Monitor] No. A-80, Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 746 of 10 September 1952.

“Civil Service for Poland” (“Służba Polsce”). SPO committees were approved by committees of physical culture from a given area¹⁵.



Photo 1. Bronze BSPO badge, kid degree;
ref. msit_1607_m.png



Photo 2. BSPO badge, adolescent degree with
honours; ref. msit_1597_m.png



Photo 3. Silver 1st degree SPO badge;
msit_14327_m.png



Photo 4. Golden 2nd degree SPO badge;
msit_1833_m.png

Source: Photo Archive of the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw.

¹⁵ *Sprawni do Pracy i Obrony. Regulamin*, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Sport i Turystyka, Warszawa 1953, p. 14.

The following types of badges were introduced: bronze with the BSPO sign for the kid degree (photo 1), silver with the BSPO sign for the adolescent degree (photo 2), silver for the 1st degree with the SPO sign (photo 4), and golden with the SPO sign for the 2nd degree (photo 4). Moreover, for BSPO kid degree and adolescent degree, as well as for the 2nd degree the SPO badge with the sign *with honours*, which aimed at motivating for further work on oneself.

To conduct tests for the discussed badge, the following age categories were established: for kid degree BSPO the division into two categories – 1) girls and boys aged 11–12 and 2) for the age range 13–14. Adolescent degree BSPO had one age category, 15 to 16. 1st and 2nd degree SPO had two age categories: 1) 17–35 years old and 2) 36 and above¹⁶.

Table 1. The set of exercises and requirements for kid degree BSPO for the age group 11–14

Types of exercise	Girls			Boys		
	11–12	13–14		11–12	13–14	
	standard	standard	with honours	standard	standard	with honours
Gymnastics	8 floor exercises, 7 drill exercises	8 floor exercises, 7 drill exercises	10 floor exercises, 7 drill exercises	the same as girls	the same as girls	the same as girls
2.5 km march	28:00 min.	25:00 min.	22:30 min.	25:00 min.	23:00 min.	20:00 min.
Swimming	15 m	25 m	50 m	15 m	25 m	50 m
60 min run	11.7 s	11.5 s	11 s	10.6 s	10.3 s	10.0 s
Running long jump (the sum of jumps with left and right foot takeoff)	4.90 m	5.00 m	5.80 m	5.50 m	6.00 m	7.00 m
Running high jump (the sum of jumps with right and left foot take-off)	1.38 m	1.47 m	1.60 m	1.55 m	1.67 m	1.85 m
Palant ball throw (the sum of throws with right and left hand)	28 m	30 m	38 m	43 m	49 m	60 m
Team games:						
dodgeball,	4	6	8	–	–	–
palant,	4	6	8	4	6	8
handball (7 player)	–	–	–	4	6	8
volleyball	4	6	8	4	6	8
Inter-class and inter-school meetings can be included						

Source: *Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony. Regulamin*, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Sport i Turystyka, Warszawa 1953, p. 35.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 8; M. Niewiadomski, *BSPO w szkole*, Warszawa 1954, p. 9.

The number of requirements necessary to pass the test depended on the age and the badge degree. For example, for the kid degree BSPO it was 8, and for the other ones it was 12 requirements. Obligatory exercises for children included: gymnastics, 2.5 km march, swimming, running long jump, running high jump, palant ball throw, team games (dodgeball, palant, handball, volleyball). For the remaining degrees of the badge the set of obligatory exercises included, for example for the age range 15–16: gymnastics, obstacle course (100 m girls, 150 m boys), swimming, march (5 km girls, 8 km boys), run (500 m girls, 1000 m boys). Obligatory requirements also included an exam checking the theoretical knowledge on the organization of physical culture in People's Poland and the basic knowledge about health protection. Selectable requirements included, starting from the age of 15, shooting (air gun, sporting shotgun, military Mosin's rifle), exercises improving the basic motor abilities: strength, speed, stamina, agility and courage. The exercises were combined into five groups, of which the exercising person was to choose one exercise from each group: 1) exercises forming speed (short run, skating, cycling or short-distance swimming); 2) weight training (discus, javelin, hammer throw, throwing a grenade, shot put or weightlifting); 3) endurance activities (runs, swimming, long-distance cycling, basketball or handball, rowing race, hiking trips, kayak trips, rowing, skiing or cycling trips); 4) agility-forming exercises (long jump, high jump, pole vault, triple jump, downhill skiing or acrobatic exercises)¹⁷; 5) courage-building exercises (walking on a balance beam, leapfrog vaulting, ski jumps or trampoline jumps, sailing, horse riding or motorcycling)¹⁸.

Table 2. The set of exercises and requirements for the adolescent degree SPO, age 15–16. Obligatory exercises

Types of exercise	Requirements			
	Girls		Boys	
	standard	with honours	standard	with honours
Gymnastics	8 floor exercises, 11 drill exercises, 1 balance beam exercise	10 floor exercises, 11 drill exercises, 1 balance beam exercise	8 floor exercises, 11 drill exercises, 1 horizontal bar exercise	10 floor exercises, 11 drill exercises, 1 horizontal bar exercise
Obstacle course girls 100 m (5 obstacles) boys 150 m (8 obstacles)	1:30 min	1:10 min	1:50 min	1:30 min

¹⁷ We can doubt whether athletic exercises form agility.

¹⁸ *Odnaka Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony. Cele, zadania i organizacja*, Warszawa 1951, pp. 30–32.

Table 2. The set of exercises... (cont.)

Types of exercise	Requirements			
	Girls		Boys	
	standard	with honours	standard	with honours
Swimming	15 m	50 m	15 m	50 m
March girls 5 km boys 8 km	45 min	40 min	1 hour 10 min	55 min
Run girls 500 m boys 1000 m	2:20 min	1:50 min	4:00 min	3:50 m

Source: *Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony...*, p. 36.

Table 3. The set of exercises and requirements for SPO, age 17–35 and 35 and above. Obligatory exercises

Types of exercise	Requirements					
	Women			Men		
	17–35 years old		36 and above	17–35 years old		36 and above
	standard	with honours	standard	standard	with honours	standard
Gymnastics	8 floor exercises, 13 drill exercises, 1 balance beam exercise	3rd grade floor exercise, 13 drill exercises, 1 balance beam exercise	the same as for the age range 17–35	8 floor exercises, 13 drill exercises, 1 horizontal bar exercise	3rd grade floor exercises, 13 drill exercises, 1 horizontal bar exercise	the same as for the age range 17–35
Obstacle course 150 m (men with a rifle)	7 obstacles 1:15 min	7 obstacles 1:05 min	7 obstacles 1:25 min	9 obstacles 1:30 min	9 obstacles 1:20 min	9 obstacles 1:40 min
Swimming (ability to cover a distance)	100 m	100 m 3:00 min	100 m	100 m	100 m 2:40 min	100 m
Cross-country run women 1000 m men 3000 m	4:45 min	4:30 min	5:05 min	12:00 min	10:30 min	12:30 min
March with load women 3 kg, 5000 m men 7 kg, 10 000 m	38 min	36 min	39 min	1 hour 05 min	55 min	1 hour 15 min

Source: *Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony...*, p. 51.

As it was already signalled, young people aged 15 and above had to pass 12 required tasks, including 5 obligatory ones, namely gymnastics, obstacle course, swimming, march (5 km girls, 8 km boys), run (500 m girls, 1000 m boys). The other requirements were selectable exercises, including shooting (air gun, sporting shotgun, military Mosin's rifle) or archery¹⁹.

A very difficult stage to overcome in the right time, as it seems, was an obstacle course which was a part of the obligatory set of exercises for the adolescent degree, 15–16 years old. The track of 100 m for girls and 150 m for boys had 5 obstacles for girls and 8 for boys arranged in the following order: 1) wire entanglements (to crawl), 2) a balance beam, 3) a hedge, 4) a fence of 170 or 220 cm in height, 5) a perch fence, 6) a ditch to jump over, 7) a ditch to jump into, go out along the ramp and throw a grenade, 8) a mannequin to be stabbed with a rifle. The construction of the track and the technique of overcoming obstacles was described in detail by Władysław Wiro-Kiro in a GKKF publication²⁰.

All institutions which were responsible for physical education, sport and recreation were obliged to perform the required SPO tests. As it was emphasised, the contemporary authorities attached great importance to earning the discussed badge because, as they wrote:

it's a badge of People's Poland's patriots. Earning it, encouraging others and organizing help in earning it is the contribution of a sportsperson towards the national front of fight for peace and the completion of the 6-Year Plan²¹.

Just how important it was for the communist regime is proven by the fact that the first SPO badge with honours was accepted by President Bolesław Bierut²². No wonder that children and youth were taught to sing songs about it, and the chorus of one of them said "Run and swim, play the ball, row and build up your will, the power of your hands. You must be brave, you must be cheerful, fit for work and defence"²³.

Older citizens undertook to earn the SPO on the occasions of various state celebrations. Such declarations, occurred, among others, on the occasion of 1st May (Polish Labour Day) under the slogan *Together on the playing field, together to fight for peace and 6-Year Plan*. People undertook to promote physical culture, increase the ideological level of the sports movement, improve sports results, earn SPO badges, exceed the planned tasks in popularizing sport²⁴. For example, on the occasion of the Independence Day, as it was called then, falling to 22 July, "Nowiny Rzeszowskie", the organ of the Voivodship Committee of the Polish

¹⁹ *Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony...*, pp. 36–37.

²⁰ W. Wiro-Kiro, *Tor przeszkód*, Wydawnictwo Głównego Komitetu Kultury Fizycznej, Warszawa 1951.

²¹ *Odznaka Sprawny do Pracy i Obrony...*, p. 49.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ *Młodzież śpiewa*, Vol. 1, n.p., 1953, p. 26. Music: T. Skwarczyński, lyrics: W. Lipniacki.

²⁴ "Nowiny Rzeszowskie" 1951, No. 111, p. 6.

United Workers' Party, on 20 July, 1950 informed that the members of Spójnia Trade Sports Club to commemorate the 6th anniversary of the Polish Committee of National Liberation undertook to work on improving fitness. "Fully understanding that only a healthy citizen may be prepared to build socialism in People's Poland [...]"²⁵. It was undertaken that each member of Spójnia Sports Club until September would earn the SPO badge. Moreover, the decision was taken to promote it among members of sports clubs of Spójnia association and conduct preparatory trainings with all the members. Moreover, Stal Company Sports Club and Rzeszów Ogniwo Company Sports Club were challenged to compete for the badges²⁶. The quoted newspaper of 4 July 1950, under the headline *Fit for Work and Defence*, informed:

Sportspeople will commemorate the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland. On 22 July mass actions will take place all over Poland in which it will be possible to complete tasks required for SPO in athletics and swimming²⁷.

On 2 December 1950, on the initiative of the Regional Board of Gwardia Sports Association, a ceremonial assembly was arranged in Rzeszów, combined with awarding SPO badges to *the first winners*. Among them there were people who belonged to the Gwardia Sports Association: Bać, Błaszczyk, Borkowski, Bryza, Czubyński, Dobrowolski, Józef Dyląg, Dzierwa, Fabiszewski, Fetter, Fijołek, Gernad, Grzeskiewicz, Jurkiewicz, Kawa, Z. Klaczkowski, Konarski, Kubera, Janina Kucharska, Zuzanna Matuła, Matys, Wł. Miąsik, Paderewski, Pączek, Przybylski, Rajchel, Różycki, Matylda Wnęk. They all received the certificate and SPO badges from the Chair of the Regional Committee of Physical Culture in Rzeszów, Bartosiewicz. The BSPO badge was also awarded to a group representing School Sports Clubs: Jadwiga Hostyńska, Henryk Mazurek, Lucjan Piertraszek, Zofia Puc and Zygmunt Raczek. The 1st degree SPO badge was also presented. This badge was awarded to representatives of the Polish Army, Kazimierz Gilewicz and Zygmunt Palacz, Stefan Bochaczyk from the Union of Polish Youth, Marian Paczkowski from Słocina People's Sports Team and Władysław Fąfara from Związkowiec Strzyżów. The main item on the agenda was reading out an occasional resolution by one of the awarded women, which fully renders the atmosphere of that time. It is worth quoting in full:

We, the winners of the SPO badge of Gwardia Sports Association and other associations, gathered at the assembly commemorating the Month of Developing the Polish-Soviet Friendship and fight for peace, assure the Chair of the Regional Committee of Physical Culture and the representatives of our authorities that the SPO badges which will decorate our chests, will become a stimulus to further intense work at the section of physical education. We shall make every effort so that in 1951 all members of sports associations can earn SPO badges. We shall fight for better results at work and in sport, thus contributing

²⁵ Ibidem, 1950, No. 198, p. 6.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem, No. 181, p. 6.

to the deed of fight for peace. Today's sports celebration is a great achievement of our working class of the People's Government, which gives a lot of care to physical education and sport²⁸.

“Nowiny Rzeszowskie” of 4 June 1951 informed about the First All Poland's Spartakiad of Sports Associations planned in Warsaw on 9–16 September. The event was supposed to motivate thousands of members of the aforementioned associations participating in powiat and regional qualifiers. The aim of the spartakiad was to promote sport and achieving sports classes and SPO badges. The contemporary propaganda gave also more lofty goals which were to focus on: “preparing the society for the completion of the 6-Year Plan, improving the defensive capability of the country and fight for peace”²⁹. The spartakiad programme comprised 9 sport disciplines which were included in SPO badge, namely: boxing, gymnastics, cycling, basketball, athletics, swimming, volleyball, sport shooting and an obstacle course. The condition of the participation in the competition was having the SPO badge and “the winning team will be the one whose content of all year's work was the SPO badge”³⁰. In “Nowiny Rzeszowskie” of 3 September 1951 there is a coverage from the preparatory camp for athletes of Stal Sports Association before the mentioned spartakiad in Warsaw, organized in Stalowa Wola. In addition to trainings, competitors conducted the achievement of SPO and BSPO badges together with coaches and activists. In total, 120 people participated in them, school children and workers of local establishments³¹.

However, the First All Poland's Spartakiad of Sports Associations was a failure for competitors from Rzeszów Voivodship. A journalist, Zbigniew Rybak wrote that

Rzeszów Voivodship was *at the tail end*, therefore, sports activists have to pay closer attention to talented youth which by earning SPO badges can be found and then guided, especially in athletic teams. When placing a bet on mass character of sport one should not forget about professional sport and sports facilities of which there is a shortage in Rzeszów³².

Mass earning of the SPO badge was a priority for sports authorities. We can follow how it was implemented by Sports Associations of Rzeszów Voivodship in 1953 by analysing archive documents. In the State Archive in Rzeszów there are summary reports on SPO and BSPO from the mentioned year, prepared by District Boards of Sports Associations operating in Rzeszów Voivodship. The associations included: 1) Budowlani Sports Association – Trade Union of Construction Workers; 2) Górnik Sports Association – Trade Union of Miners;

²⁸ Ibidem, No. 334, p. 3. A similar assembly during which the first SPO badges were awarded was held in Cracow also to celebrate the Month of Developing the Polish-Soviet Friendship. “Przekrój” 1950, No. 297, p. 15.

²⁹ Ibidem, 1951, No. 153, p. 5.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ “Nowiny Rzeszowskie” 1951, No. 235, p. 5.

³² Ibidem, No. 253, p. 6.

3) Kolejorz Sports Association – Trade Union of Railway Workers, Transport Workers, Workers of Post Offices and Telecommunication; 4) Ogniwo Sports Association – Trade Union of State Workers, Polish Teachers, Finance Workers, Workers of Culture and Art, Workers of Social Institutions, Workers of Energy Industry; 5) Spójna Sports Association – Trade Union of Food Industry Workers, Workers of Cooperatives, Trade Workers, Agriculture Workers; 6) Stal Sports Association – Trade Union of Metal and Foundry Industry Workers; 7) Unia Sports Association – Trade Union of Chemists, Forestry and Wood Industry Workers, Workers of Printing Industry and Press, Healthcare Workers; 8) Włóknierz Sports Association – Trade Union of Textile Industry Workers, Clothing Industry Workers, Shoe and Leather Industry Workers³³.

Table 4. SPOs earned in 1953 in Sports Associations of Rzeszów Voivodship

No.	Associations	Planned				The number of badges earned						Total number of badges earned
		In total	SPO I	SPO II	BSPO	SPO I		SPO II		BSPO		
						M	K	M	K	M	K	
1	Budowlani	420	330	90	–	419	101	1	–	–	–	521
2	Górnik	275	180	95	–	393	23	–	–	29	–	445
3	Kolejarz	405	300	105	–	464	149	121	11	11	–	756
4	Ogniwo	250	200	50	–	319	61	1	–	–	–	381
5	Stal	400	230	90	80	474	75	124	11	27	21	732
6	Spójnia	520	350	90	80	502	244	24	4	28	–	802
7	Unia	366	300	66	–	372	172	8	–	38	–	590
8	Włóknierz	265	165	100	–	134	35	36	17	–	–	222
x	In total	2901	x									4449

Source: State Archive in Rzeszów, team 35, ref. No. 842.

A summary report sheet prepared according to specimen 1 was obligatory for all District Boards. It also included the number of the required tests completed in obligatory exercises and selectable ones. For example, Budowlani Sports Association completed 312 tests, and Stal Sports Association completed 19 554. The biggest number of badges was earned by the workers of Kolejorz Sports Association, and the smallest number by Włóknierz Sports Association. In total, in 1953 sports associations in Rzeszów Voivodship earned 4 449 badges, of which 358 were 2nd degree badges, and 154 were BSPO badges.

From 1954, in specialised press, namely “Kultura Fizyczna” or “Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole” there were articles presenting remarks on further development of the SPO (BSPO) badge, there were also attempts to improve it by adjust-

³³ Z. Dall, *Kultura fizyczna...*, pp. 21–22.

ing the number of requirements to age groups³⁴. Aleksander Gutowski was the first to address the problem. When discussing *structural shortcomings* of the badge he presented his new project of the badge as a proposal to be discussed. It was interesting, particularly as for age groups and strength exercises³⁵. A lot of criticism for the BSPO badge was expressed by Stanisław Giza. In “Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole” he criticized *excessive requirements*, for example, rather difficult gymnastic tests, marches, jumps and throws. Instead of an obstacle course he proposed field athletics exercises, at the same time calling weightlifting a misunderstanding. The regulations valid at that time had been corrected once and the model had a lot of errors. In spite of the fact that SPO and BSPO copied the Soviet badge, the author said, comparing both regulations, that “our sportspeople were set much higher requirements”³⁶. The most insightful characteristics considering numerous critical remarks was conducted by Roman Trześniewski in his article entitled „In the Discussion Over the Improvement of SPO and BSPO badges we Should Participate Broadly”. As a member of the SPO Control Committee at the Main Committee of Physical Culture he had good orientation in issues related to the badge which, as he wrote, “instead of strengthening its position and winning supporters, is clearly losing its importance”³⁷. He mentioned four most important reasons (adding that there are more) which brought about, as he called it, the *depopularization of the badge*. Firstly, top-down planning, that is setting the number of badges to be earned by schools, employment establishments, organizations, sports associations, etc. It contributed to the situation in which organizers seeking to achieve the biggest possible number of badges actually did not pay any attention to achieving it in a proper way. Secondly, the manner of earning the badge by completing special performance tests was very boring and monotonous. Thirdly, another reason which indirectly influenced the interest in the badge was *bureaucratic reporting*, documents the organizers had to complete. Fourthly, the regulations were extended and unclear. Moreover, the division into age groups and performance requirements raised objections. He claimed that they should be developed better. “High and difficult requirements,” he wrote, “discourage participants, whereas low ones evoke contempt, lack of respect to the regulations and the whole badge, which is observed particularly among children and teenagers”³⁸. Many years later a similar opinion about the badge was expressed by Feliks Kędziorek, a physical culture activist in Socialist Poland, who admitted that:

³⁴ A. Gutowski, *O dalszy rozwój odznaki SPO*, “Kultura Fizyczna” 1954, No. 5; S. Giza, *Uwagi na temat BSPO*, “Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole” 1954, No. 6; O. Zawrocki, *Ulepszajmy odznakę SPO*, “Kultura Fizyczna” 1955, No. 2, p. 119.

³⁵ A. Gutowski, *O dalszy rozwój...*, p. 336.

³⁶ S. Giza, *Uwagi na temat...*, pp. 41–42.

³⁷ R. Trześniewski, *W dyskusji nad ulepszeniem odznaki BSPO i SPO powinniśmy wziąć szeroki udział*, “Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole” 1955, No. 3, p. 42.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 43–46.

A negative phenomenon of that period was a bureaucratic implementation of practical tasks, and in particular exaggerated scores in the plans of activities in mass sport, as well as mechanical transfer of Soviet patterns and experiences³⁹.

On the basis of that discussion in 1956 the SPO and BSPO regulations were changed, a lot of requirements which were unpopular were crossed out, namely: water jumps, horse riding, weightlifting, ski jumps, fencing, rowing. Medium runs were reduced to 500 m for girls and women and 1000 m for boys and men, as well as marches. Due to the general shortage of equipment, obstacle course was liquidated, and swimming was obligatory only in the places where there were conditions to perform the required tests⁴⁰.

Conclusions

Today it is hard to compare the SPO badge to contemporary physical fitness tests, firstly because it included military tests. At present, similar ones can be observed only in drill areas of uniformed services. Apart from the lofty slogans to which communist authorities linked the SPO badge, we must say that on the one hand it activated a lot of Poles⁴¹, forced them to work on themselves, to physical training, which in the period after the war devastating people and occupation was extremely important. On the other hand, the performance test glorified by the authorities taught young people to kill, especially the 8th test of the obstacle course, so-called *mannequins*, indicated that. In the run or march one had to make *a long stab* with the rifle to the first one, *hit* the second one *with the rifle butt*, and perform the *short stab* at a short distance. Moreover, the throw with a grenade and shooting must also be included in military tests. It was a good thing that in 1956, as it was mentioned before, the regulations were changed and a lot of requirements were reduced, including the obstacle course. Finally, on 5 May 1958 the resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 131 cancelled the SPO badge and authorized the Main Committee of Physical Education to establish a new one⁴².

³⁹ F. Kędziorek, *Upowszechnianie kultury fizycznej*, [in:] *Materiały Sesji Naukowej 25-lecia kultury fizycznej w PRL*, Wydawnictwo GKKFiT, Warszawa 1970, p. 18.

⁴⁰ S.G., *Zmiana regulaminu BSPO*, "Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole" 1956, No. 2, p. 63.

⁴¹ In 1953 in Poland 527 941 badges were earned. In 1954, 690 644 in total, including: the 2nd degree SPO 14 285, in Rzeszow Voivodship 42 412 in total, including the 2nd degree SPO 534. *Rocznik Statystyczny 1955*, Warszawa 1956, p. 258. Here we should quote Artur Pasko, who writes that in 1955 more than 650 000 badges were earned. However, a question arises to what extent the data in the reports were reliable and the requirements necessary to earn the badge were actually met. The more so that in the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of Polish United Workers' Party mistakes in earning it were noticed. A. Pasko, *Sport wyczynowy...*, p. 138.

⁴² Monitor Polski [The Polish Monitor] No. 37, item 210, Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 131 of 5 May 1958, p. 347.

On the same day the Head of the Main Committee of Physical Education by means of the Resolution No. 28 introduced: the State Badge of Physical Fitness (Państwowa Odznaka Sprawności Fizycznej – POSF) and the Youth Badge of Physical Fitness – MOSF⁴³. It was a new system checking physical fitness, which survived until 1974 when the Common Sports Badge (Powszechna Odznaka Sportowa – POS) was introduced.

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