

From the Spartakiad to the Olympiad

by Anatoli Kolessov,
1964 Olympic wrestling champion

The finals of the 7th summer Spartakiad of the peoples of the USSR generated a good deal of excitement among sports enthusiasts. The event constituted a veritable festival of friendship among peoples and a representative international sports forum, in addition to playing a key role in deepening the understanding and friendship between the peoples of various countries and continents.

Those taking part in the Spartakiad, both in mass participation sports and in disciplines requiring technical equipment, numbered over 100 million. Competitions in mass participation sports were organised in 229,200 physical culture collectives, with more than 87.8 million individuals involved, an increase of 22 million in comparison with the 6th Spartakiad, held in 1975.

In the period between the two Spartakiads, the nature of sports installations underwent a number of changes. In the course of four years, 158 stadia, 7637 gymnasia, 202 swimming pools and tens of thousands of sports fields were constructed in the USSR. Worthy of particular mention among these facilities are the Tbilisi athletics hall, the Spartak aquatic centre in Kharkov, sports facilities for modern pentathlon in Lvov, a wrestling complex in Leningrad, an athletics gymnasium in Minsk, facilities for football and



The author, A. Kolessov, on the Olympic stand in 1964.

athletics at the Frunze Institute for Physical Culture and race courses in the cities of Termez and Ourgentch (Uzbekistan).

It was indeed pleasing to note that the majority of the Spartakiad events were staged at future Olympic sites: the reconstructed Olympic stadium, the Krilatskoye rowing canal, the Mytishchi shooting centre, the new cycling track and the Central Army Club sports centre in Moscow. The new sports facilities were held in high regard by foreign visitors. We are gratified that one year prior to the 1980 Olympic Games, Moscow's builders have succeeded in making a good many sports complexes available for use.

The finals of the Spartakiad, in which 8338 Soviet athletes were entered, took place over a one-month period in the sports centres of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Kaunas and Jurmala.



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The competitions involved 30 sports, some of which are not included on the Olympic programme : sambo, artistic gymnastics, tennis and chess.

Participation on the part of 2306 foreign athletes (from 85 countries on the five continents) was another feature of this edition of the Spartakiad. No other city has ever organised a sports event of such magnitude one year before the Olympic Games. Judging from both the opinions expressed by visitors and international press reports, the foreign participants were satisfied with the event's organisation. They were pleased with the opportunity accorded them by the Soviet Union to familiarise themselves with the Olympic facilities, to pit their strength against that of the USSR's best athletic representatives and, at the same time, to see Moscow.

Among the foreign athletes invited to the Spartakiad were champions or title-holders from the Olympic Games, world and continental championships, as well as competitors laying claim to world records. A number of them returned home with medals...

The task of officiating in the finals was assigned to 2874 referees from all the union republics, ably assisted in their duties by 153 international category referees from foreign countries. Commentary on events was provided by 1568 journalists representing 44 countries.

An initial analysis of the results reveals that in the majority of instances, competitors are performing at an ever-increasing level in their disciplines. Results achieved were superior to those recorded in previous Spartakiads.

The 7th Spartakiad was also characterised by concerted efforts on the part of young athletes to displace more established stars. Thus, in athletics, most of the winners were between the ages of 18 and 22. The same tendency applied to Greco-Roman wrestling, judo and boxing. The coaches of numerous national teams will now, I believe, have to carry out the process of revising the list of their athletes attending the Olympic Games.

Though officially not viewed as a pre-Olympic event, the Spartakiad was permeated by the spirit of the forthcoming Games of the XXIInd Olympiad, to be celebrated in Moscow. These competitions were proof that we are ready for the Olympic Games and that we have forces in reserve. There were, to be sure, unanticipated difficulties, and errors were committed. These will be eliminated by 1980.