

## **Abstract**

The dissertation looks at the history of one physical education organisation which was of great significance to the development of physical culture in inter-war Czechoslovakia and Poland, despite this not being its only activity. The YMCA came into being in England but it particularly flourished in the United States of America. During the First World War, Czechoslovak and Polish soldiers were given a taste of their activity, being accompanied home by members of this international association after the war had ended. Following requests from military and political leaders of the time, the American YMCA sent its secretaries to the newly established Czechoslovakia and renewed Poland to help establish the first local associations. It was particularly due to them that new practically unknown sports, were introduced to the region. In addition, in both Czechoslovakia and Poland, the YMCA also took responsibility for having new physical education facilities built, improving training methods and generally enhancing young people through sport. During the inter-war years, local YMCA groups and their members performed exceptionally well in a number of sporting disciplines and ranked among the top Czechoslovak and Polish athletes. Furthermore, the YMCA contributed to establishing the tradition of permanent summer camps. However, the activity of both national associations was interrupted by the Second World War. For the same reason, the YMCA got into trouble in the fifties, when the Communists gained power in Czechoslovakia and Poland. Both national associations were able to renew their activity in the nineties, but they did not manage to carry on in their traditions and exceptional achievements of the inter-war years.