

NADIA COMĂNECI



THE ROAD TO PERFECTION

Celebrating the First Perfect 10 in Olympic Gymnastics History

ARHIVELE NAȚIONALE ALE ROMÂNIEI
Bd. REGINA ELISABETA, NR.49
16 IULIE - 12 NOIEMBRIE 2026



ARHIVELE NAȚIONALE

ÎN PARTENERIAT CU:



EVENTIMENT REALIZAT CU SPRIJINUL



Family

*The original meaning of my name is "hope,"
but my grandparents always believed it
should mean "good luck."*

Nadia Elena Comăneeci was born on 12 November 1961 in Onești, Romania.

Her father, Gheorghe, was an auto mechanic and always smelled of gasoline; from him she inherited her love of movement.

Her mother, Ștefania, always carried the comforting scent of the kitchen. She was an incredibly energetic woman, capable of doing five things at once, and from her Nadia inherited her bright, cat-like hazel eyes. When Nadia was five years old, her brother, Adrian, was born. He became her childhood companion and her best friend.



1. Nadia and Her Family. Ion Chirilă, *Nadia*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

2. Gheorghe Comăneeci. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.

3. Ștefania Comăneeci. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.

4. Nadia. National Agency for Sport.

5. Adrian Comăneeci. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.

6. Nadia and Andreea, the Károlyis' daughter. "Radu Rosetti" Municipal Library, Onești.

7. Nadia at a tricycle race at the age of four. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.

8. Nadia with her father. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.

9. Nadia. AGERPRES, photograph by Vasile Moldovan.

10. Nadia at home. *Nadia* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

11. Nadia with her father. *Nadia* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

12. Adrian and Gheorghe Comăneeci. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.

National Archives in partnership with:

National News Agency AGERPRES
National Agency for Sport
Romanian National Film Archive
"Radu Rosetti" Municipal Library, Onești
National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS)
Romanian Television Society (TVR)
Diplomatic Archives Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

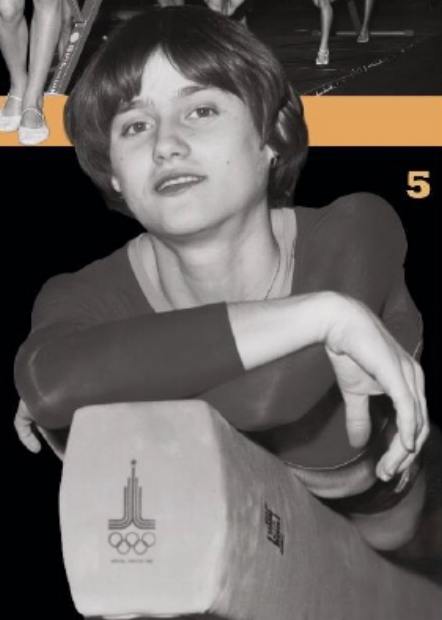
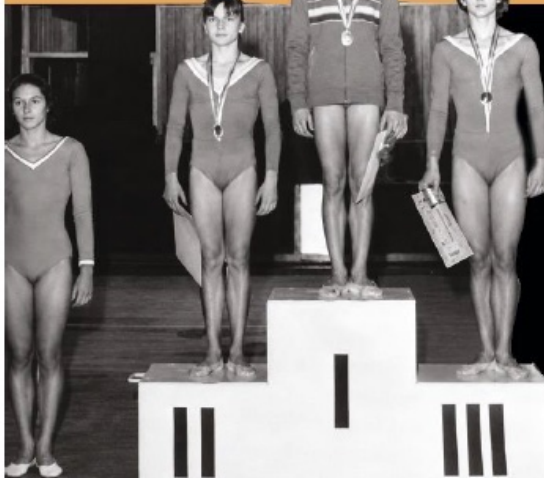
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**GIMNASTELE ȘI GIMNAȘTII ROMANI
PE CÂT MAI MULTE LOCI FRUNTAȘE la
JOCURILE OLIMPE din 1976!**



1. **Nadia at the Friendship Cup, 1973.** Dumitru Dimitriu, *Nadia Comăneci and the Golden Team*, 1976.
2. **Nadia**, Champion at Skien, 1975. *Nadia Comăneci Album*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
3. **Nadia in Training.** *Nadia Comăneci Album*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
4. **Nadia at the National Championships, 1975.** "Radu Rosetti" Municipal Library, Onești.
5. **Nadia in Training**, Moscow, 1980. National Agency for Sport.

Early Years

“When I first started, all I wanted was to do a cartwheel.”

Nadia

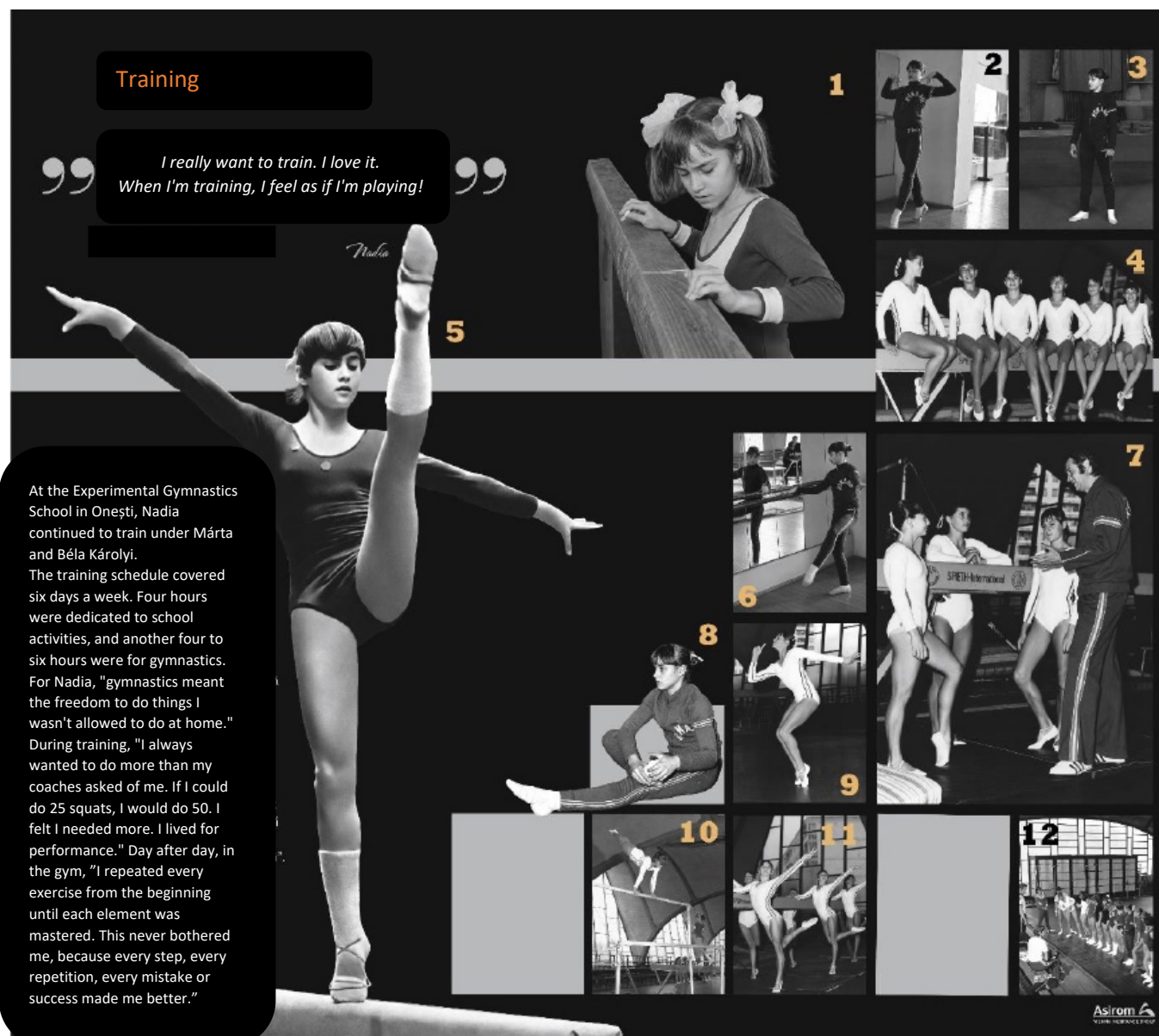
Nadia began gymnastics at the age of six and a half at the Flacăra Sports Club in Onești, under the guidance of coach Marcel Duncan. She was "a real tomboy, bursting with energy," who, from time to time, drove her parents "to despair."

As a result, her mother took her to the „ great gymnastics hall, hoping to find an outlet for my boundless energy". There, Nadia felt "like a fish in water." Every „mat, vaulting horse, uneven bars, and balance beam offered endless opportunities for play."



1. **Nadia on the Balance Beam.** Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

2–5. **Nadia and Béla Károlyi.** Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.



1. Training on the Balance Beam. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.
2. Nadia in the Training Gym. AGERPRES, photograph by Vasile Moldovan.
3. Nadia in the Training Gym. AGERPRES, photograph by Vasile Moldovan.
4. Nadia with Her Teammates During a Training Break. Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
5. Nadia in Training. Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
6. Nadia in the Training Gym. AGERPRES, photograph by Vasile Moldovan.
7. Nadia and Her Teammates in Conversation with Béla Károlyi. Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
8. Nadia Preparing for Training. "Radu Rosetti" Municipal Library, Onești.
9. Nadia and Her Teammates in the Training Gym in Onești. Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
10. Nadia and Her Teammates in the Training Gym in Onești. Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
11. Nadia and Her Teammates in the Training Gym in Onești. Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
12. Nadia and Her Teammates in the Training Gym in Onești. Nadia Comăneci Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

The First Competitions

”

Concentrate, and don't
make a fool of me!

”

Marta Károlyi

These were Márta Károlyi's words to Nadia just before her balance beam routine at the 1970 National Gymnastics Championships in Sibiu. Only nine years old, Nadia was taking part in her first national competition. Overcome by nerves, she was "unable to concentrate, even though she knew the routine perfectly." She fell from the balance beam three times and "experienced the taste of defeat for the first time."

Despite her modest score that did not help the team overall, they still win the competition. After the disappointment in Sibiu came her first major success in 1972, at the Friendship Cup in Sofia, where Béla Károlyi's girls "burst onto the scene like fireworks." Nadia became the all-around champion, winning the gold medal. In the years that followed, she grew "stronger, more determined, and better with every passing day, month, and year."



1. Nadia at the Friendship Cup, 1973. Dumitru Dimitriu, *Nadia Comăneci and the Golden Team*, 1976.
2. Nadia Comăneci. Dumitru Dimitriu, *Nadia Comăneci and the Golden Team*, 1976.
3. Nadia Comăneci. Dumitru Dimitriu, *Nadia Comăneci and the Golden Team*, 1976.
4. Nadia on the Podium at a National Competition. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.
5. Nadia Competing on the Uneven Bars. *Nadia Comăneci Album*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
6. Nadia, Her Teammates and Coaches in Onești. "Radu Rosetti" Municipal Library, Onești.
7. Nadia Competing in the Floor Exercise. Ion Chirilă, *Nadia*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 2009.
8. Nadia Competing on the Uneven Bars. *Nadia Comăneci Album*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
9. Nadia Competing on the Uneven Bars. *Nadia Comăneci Album*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.



1. Nadia at the Blackboard. AGERPRES, photograph by Vasile Moldovan.

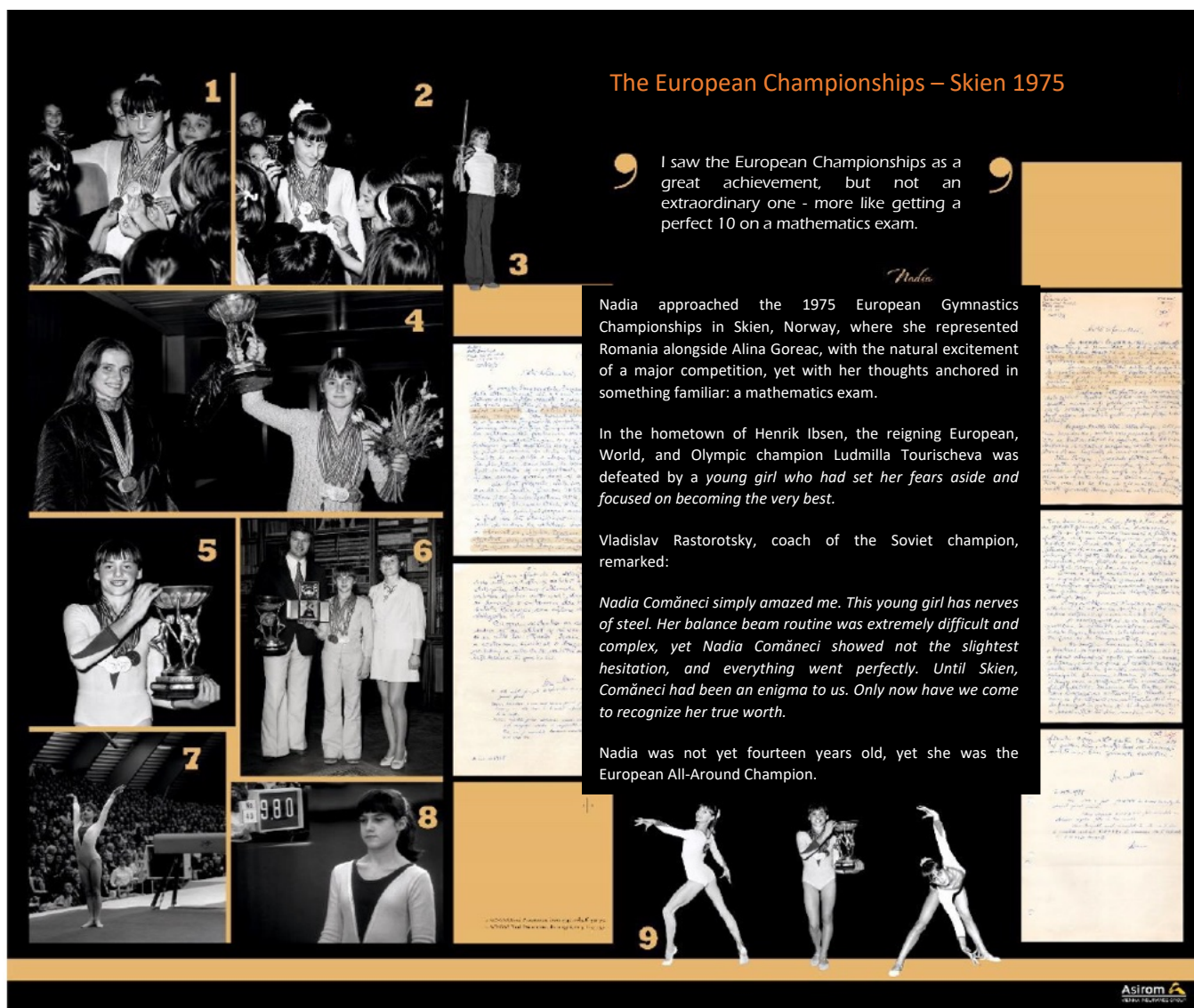
2. Nadia and Teodora Ungureanu on the Steps of the Gymnastics High School in Onești. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

3. Nadia at School During a Break. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

4. Nadia Doing Her Homework. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.

5. Nadia During School Activities. "Radu Rosetti" Municipal Library, Onești.

6. The Gymnastics Hall in Onești. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.



1. Nadia Returning from Skien. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
2. Nadia Returning from Skien. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
3. Nadia Returning from Skien. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
4. Nadia and Alina Goreac, Romania's Representatives at the European Championships in Skien. Dumitru Dimitriu, *Nadia Comăneci and the Golden Team*, 1976.
5. Nadia with the Skien Trophy. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
6. Nadia with Coaches Márta and Béla Károlyi. Dumitru Dimitriu, *Nadia Comăneci and the Golden Team*, 1976.
7. Nadia Competing in Skien. Still from the Romanian Television Society (TVR).
8. Nadia Competing in Skien. Still from the Romanian Television Society (TVR).
9. Nadia Competing in Skien. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

The Montreal Olympic Games

There is no difference between the Village Games and the Olympic Games. In both, it is you facing yourself, your hard work, and, above all, the sacrifices you have made. Let's go, kids!



At the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, Nadia redefined the meaning of gymnastics by introducing the very notion of perfection. She was awarded seven perfect 10s.

The scoreboard displayed 1.00, exactly as it had been programmed. No one had imagined that a perfect score could ever be achieved at the Olympic Games. Nadia became the Olympic All-Around Champion, won gold on the uneven bars and balance beam, silver with the team, and bronze in the floor exercise. She transformed into a symbol of perfection.

Nadia became an icon, a phenomenon, a universal inspiration.

"My dream in 1976 was to discover who I was, what I was capable of, and to become better than everyone else," Nadia said.

The great Soviet champion Ludmilla Tourischeva declared at the press conference:

"In the past eighteen years, gymnastics has made remarkable progress, so much so that someone my age can no longer keep up... For the time being, no one in the world is capable of challenging Nadia Comăneci."

1. Nadia Comăneci and Teodora Ungureanu Before Departing for the Montreal Olympic Games. AGERPRES, photograph by Vasile Moldovan.

2. Romania's Women's Gymnastics Team Before Departing for the Montreal Olympic Games (coaches Márta and Béla Károlyi; gymnasts Anca Grigoraș, Gabriela Trușcă, Georgeta Gabor, Marilena Neacșu, Luminița Milea, Teodora Ungureanu, Nadia Comăneci, and Mariana Constantin). AGERPRES, photograph by Vasile Moldovan.

3. Nadia with the Medals She Won in Montreal. National Archives of Romania, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Collection, Photo Albums, File A 2668 II.

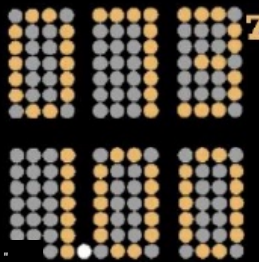
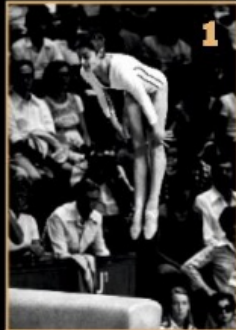
The Great Dance

"She brought joy to the Games. Amazed and relieved, Montreal celebrated her!"

L'Express

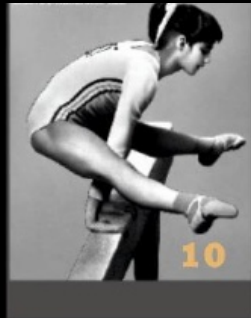
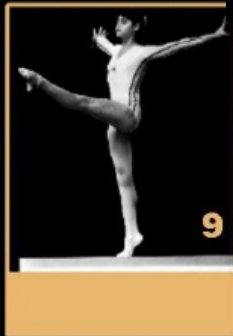
The star of the Games will remain Nadia Comăneci, "the bird-like child", who managed to astonish even the computers with her seven perfect 10s.

Agence France-Presse (AFP)



"She collects perfect 10s and dolls."

Lidové Demokratické Týden



"Nadia performs on the balance beam as though she were walking across a vast meadow."

Die Welt

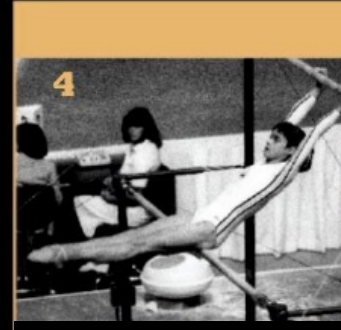
"As precise as a diving seagull, as light as a snowflake."

Le Nouvel Observateur

Le No

"Romanian Nadia Comăneci is a gymnast of extraordinary rarity. She performs with exceptional confidence and displays a remarkable sporting maturity for a girl of her age."

Corriere della Sera



"Nadia's technique approaches perfection."



"Nadia, the wonder of the Montreal Games."

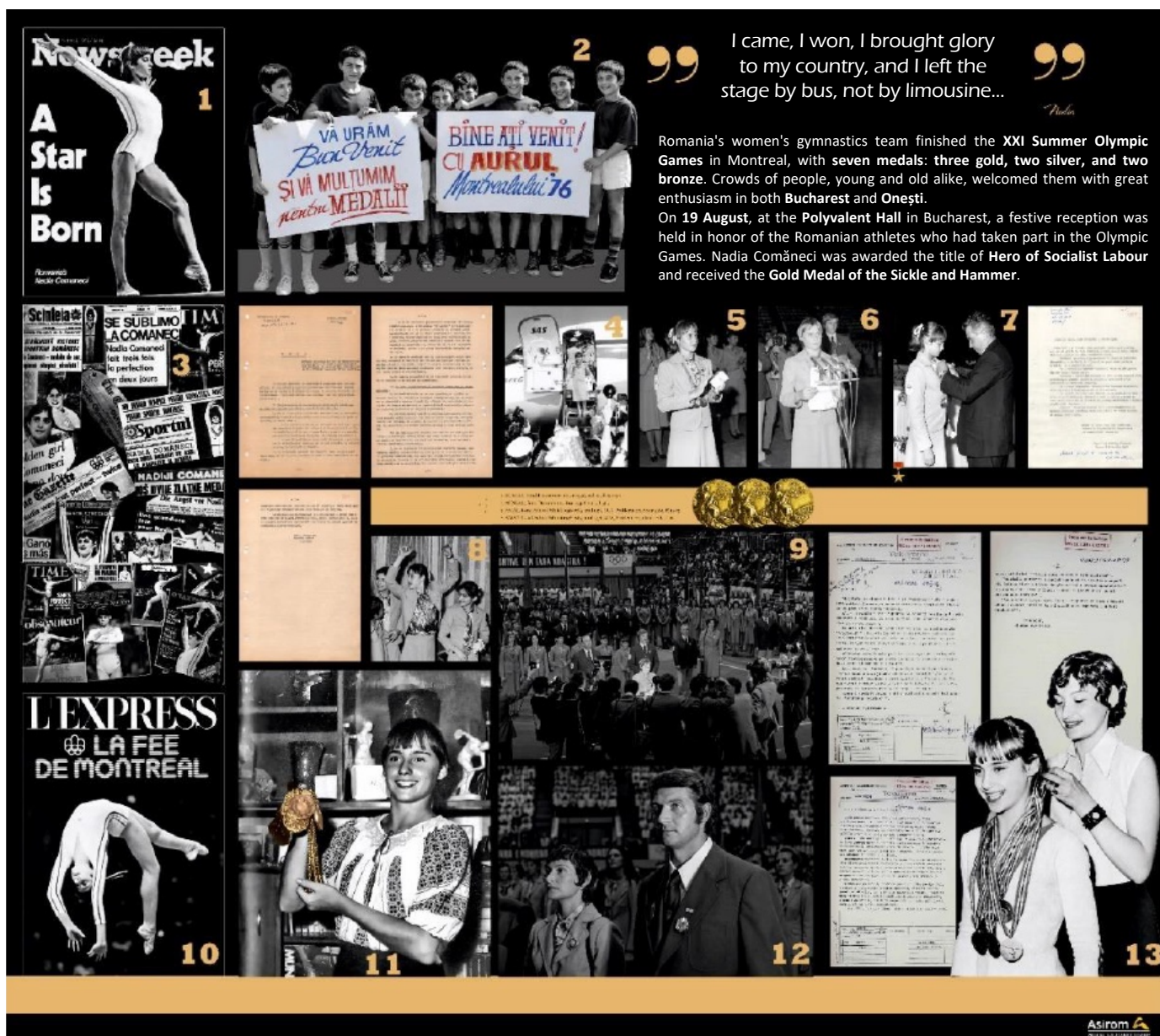
Paris Match



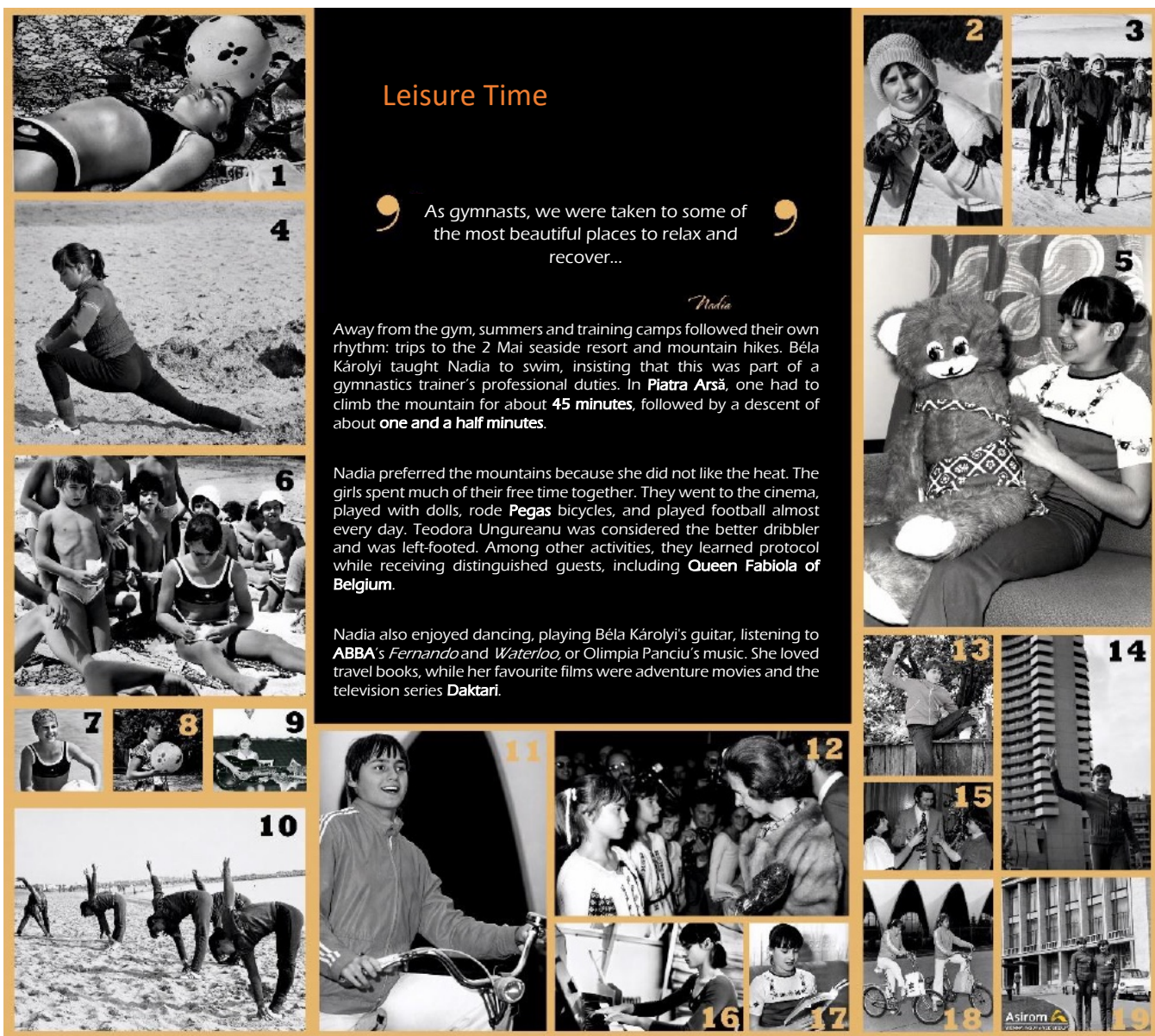
"Charm captivates the eye; merit conquers the soul."

L'Express





- 1, 10 International Press Coverage of Nadia's Achievement. Ion Chirilă, *Nadia*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
2. A Group of Children Awaiting Nadia's Return from Montreal. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.
3. International Press Collage. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
4. Nadia Returning from Montreal. National Archives of Romania, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Collection, Photo Albums, File A 2668 II.
5. Nadia at the Ceremony Honouring the Romanian Athletes Who Participated in the Montreal Olympic Games. National Archives of Romania, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Collection, Photo Albums, File A 2668 II.
6. Nadia at the Ceremony Honouring the Romanian Athletes Who Participated in the Montreal Olympic Games. National Archives of Romania, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Collection, Photo Albums, File A 2668 II.
7. Nadia at the Ceremony Honouring the Romanian Athletes Who Participated in the Montreal Olympic Games. National Archives of Romania, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Collection, Photo Albums, File A 2668 II.
8. Nadia and Her Teammates After the Montreal Olympic Games. National Archives of Romania, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Collection, Photo Albums, File A 2668 II.
9. Scenes from the Ceremony Honouring the Romanian Athletes Who Participated in the Montreal Olympic Games. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.
11. Nadia with the Medals She Won in Montreal. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
12. Scenes from the Ceremony Honouring the Romanian Athletes Who Participated in the Montreal Olympic Games. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.
13. Nadia and Márta Károlyi. Ion Chirilă, *Nadia*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.



- 1, 4-8, 10. Nadia and Her Teammates at the Seaside. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
2. Nadia and Her Teammates in the Mountains. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
3. Nadia and Her Teammates in the Mountains. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
5. Nadia with Her Favourite Toy. "Radu Rosetti" Municipal Library, Onești.
9. Nadia Playing Béla Károlyi's Guitar. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
11. Nadia and Teodora Ungureanu on Pegas Bicycles. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
12. Nadia and Queen Fabiola of Belgium, 1976. National Archives of Romania, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Collection, *Nicolae Ceaușescu Photo Albums, Visits and Receptions*.
13. Nadia in Her Grandparents' Village. Still from the Romanian National Film Archive.
14. Nadia at the InterContinental Hotel, Bucharest. AGERPRES, photograph by Viorel Lăzărescu.
15. Nadia, Teodora Ungureanu and Béla Károlyi on New Year's Eve. National Agency for Sport.
16. Nadia at the Piano. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
17. Nadia. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
18. Nadia and Teodora Ungureanu on Pegas Bicycles. *Nadia Comăneci* Album, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.
19. Nadia and Teodora Ungureanu at the Palace Hall, Bucharest. AGERPRES, photograph by Viorel Lăzărescu.

European Gymnastics Championships – Prague

”

What more could I have done?
I competed against the world's best
gymnasts - and I beat them!
But I couldn't compete against the judges.

”

Nadia

The 21st European Gymnastics Championships took place on 13–14 May 1977 at the Sports Palace in Prague. Nadia succeeded in retaining the title of **European All-Around Champion**, which she had won in 1975 in Skien, Norway. At the apparatus finals, she had an unpleasant surprise. Although all her scores entitled her to the championship title, alongside Nellie Kim, the officials of the Czechoslovak Gymnastics Federation, announced only the Soviet gymnast as the gold medallist, while Nadia was awarded the silver medal.

"Somehow, my score was reduced. I don't know how, by whom or why."

She continued with her uneven bars where she received the maximum score.

After Nadia's balance beam routine, the Romanian gymnastics team was withdrawn from the competition as a protest against the hostile, biased and incorrect refereeing.

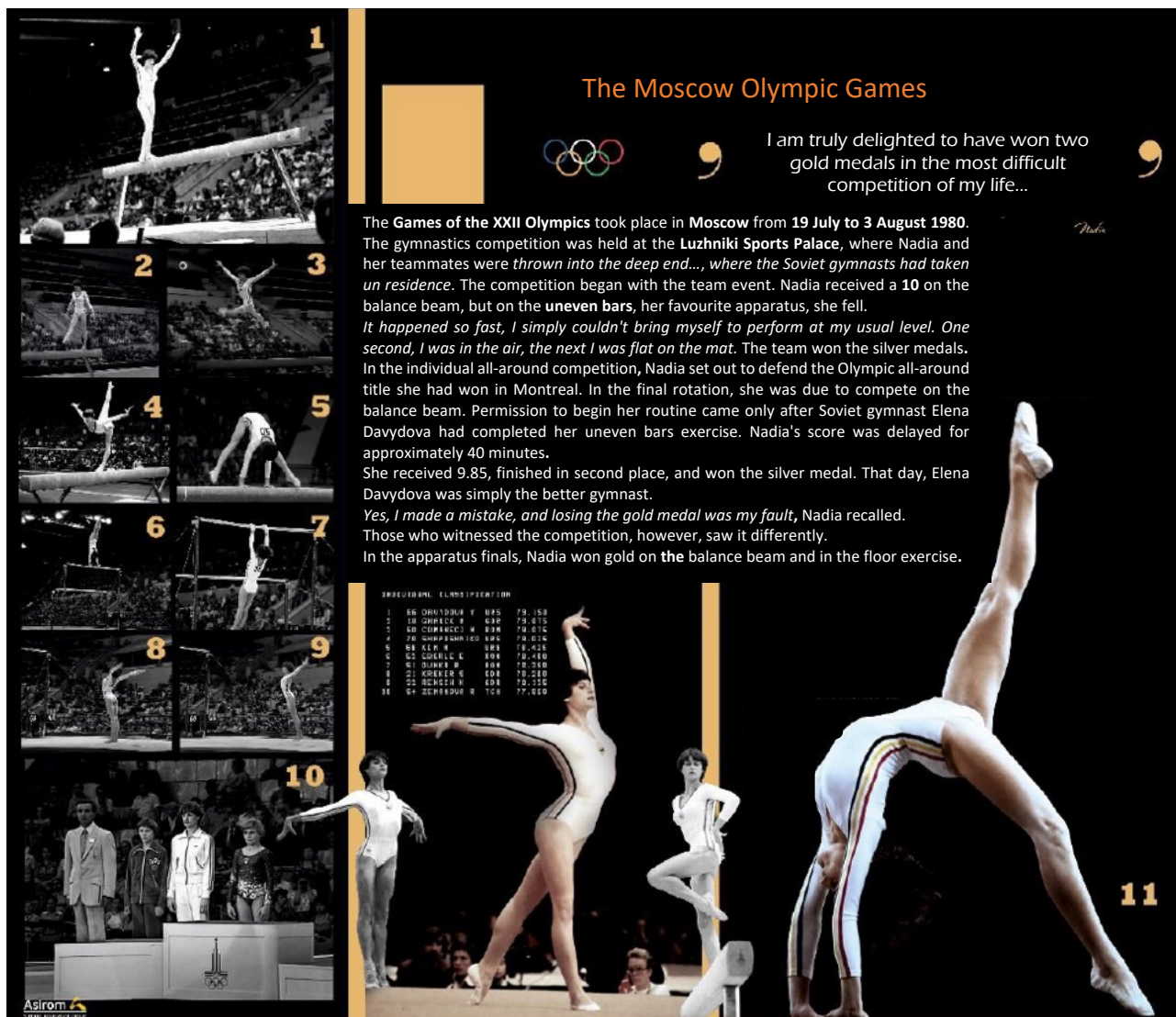
"I didn't want to leave, I wanted to compete because I had trained long hours, but what I wanted didn't matter. When I left, I looked behind and I saw the score at the beam. It was a 10..."



1-6, 8 Nadia Competing at the 1977 European Championships in Prague. *Nadia Album*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

7. Nadia, European All-Around Champion for the Second Time, Prague, 1977. Second place – Elena Mukhina (USSR); third place – Nellie Kim (USSR). *Nadia Album*, Sport Turism Publishing House, 1977.

9. Awards Ceremony at the 1977 European Championships in Prague: Steffi Kraker (GDR), Nadia Comăneci (SRR), Elena Mukhina (USSR), Nellie Kim (USSR), Teodora Ungureanu (SRR), Maria Filatova (USSR). National Agency for Sport.



1-9. Scenes from the Gymnastics Competition at the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Still from the Romanian Television Society (TVR).

10. All-Around Awards Podium, 1980 Moscow Olympic Games: Elena Davydova (USSR), Nadia Comăneci (SRR) and Maxi Gnauck (GDR), tied for second place. National Agency for Sport.

11. Nadia During the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. National Agency for Sport.



1-7, 9 Scenes from the 1981 World University Games, Bucharest. AGERPRES, photograph by Adrian Popescu.

8. Awards Ceremony for the Team Competition at the 1981 World University Games, Bucharest, won by the Romanian Team: Nadia Comăneci, Emilia Eberle, Dumitrița Turner, and Rodica Dunca. AGERPRES, photograph by Adrian Popescu.

A Champion's Farewell

This is what Nadia said on 6 May 1984 at the **Palace of Sports and Culture** in Bucharest, on the occasion of her official retirement from competitive gymnastics.

During the ceremony, she performed several exhibition routines, after which the Romanian Olympic Committee awarded her the Olympic Collar. The President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, who attended the event, presented her with the Olympic Order in Silver in recognition of her outstanding achievements in sport and her remarkable service to the Olympic Movement.

The International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) included in the Code of Points two elements bearing her name: the Comăneci Dismount and the Comăneci Salto.

It is hard for me to accept that, from now on,
I will no longer be able to compete, no
longer experience those unique emotions...

Nadia

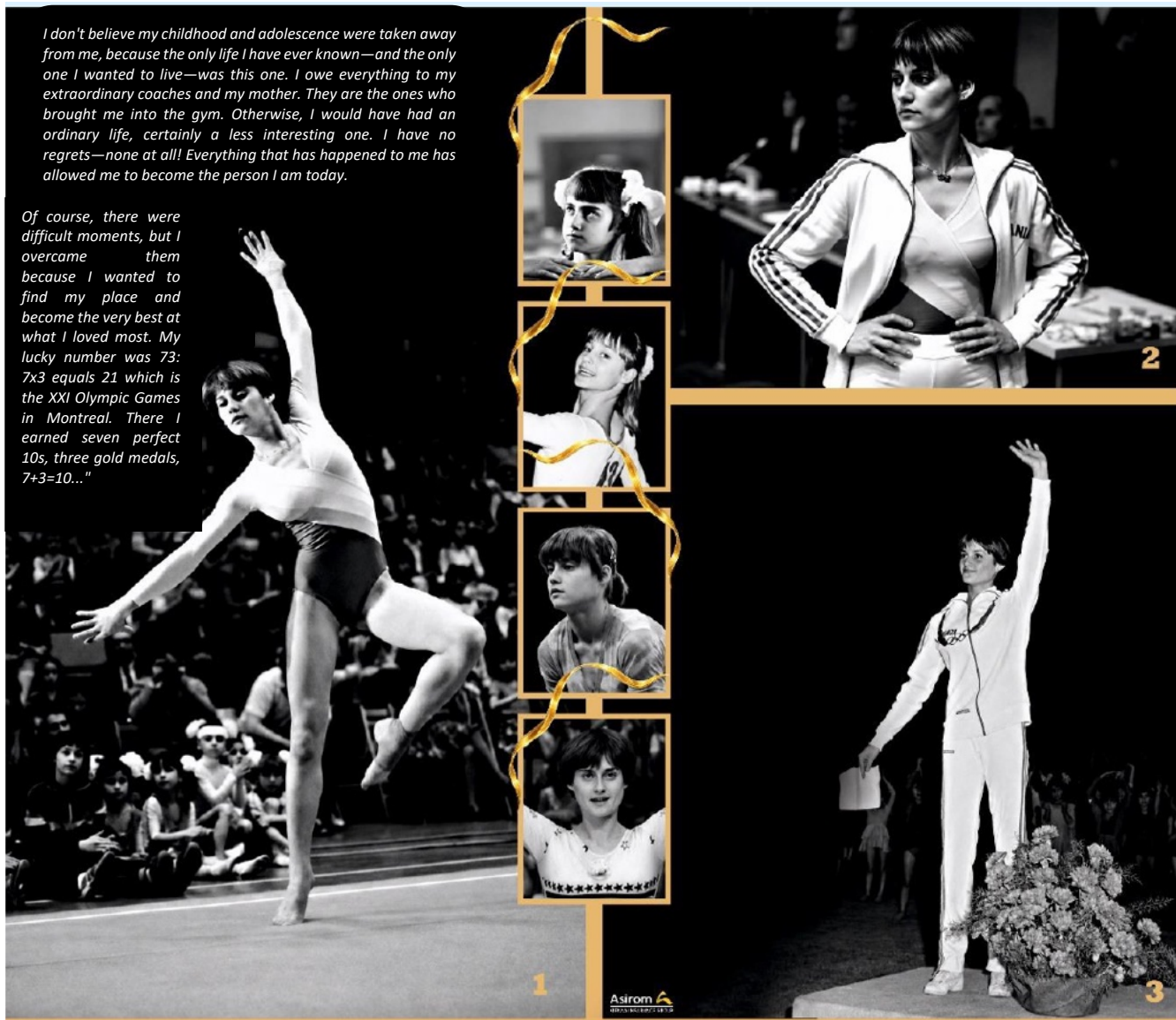
Nadia won a total of 25 medals at the Olympic Games, the World Championships, and the European Championships, including 16 gold medals.



Nadia Performing an Exhibition Balance Beam Routine at Her Official Retirement Ceremony, Palace of Sports and Culture, Bucharest, 1984.
AGERPRES, photograph by Mircea Hudek.

I don't believe my childhood and adolescence were taken away from me, because the only life I have ever known—and the only one I wanted to live—was this one. I owe everything to my extraordinary coaches and my mother. They are the ones who brought me into the gym. Otherwise, I would have had an ordinary life, certainly a less interesting one. I have no regrets—none at all! Everything that has happened to me has allowed me to become the person I am today.

Of course, there were difficult moments, but I overcame them because I wanted to find my place and become the very best at what I loved most. My lucky number was 73: 7x3 equals 21 which is the XXI Olympic Games in Montreal. There I earned seven perfect 10s, three gold medals, $7+3=10...$ "



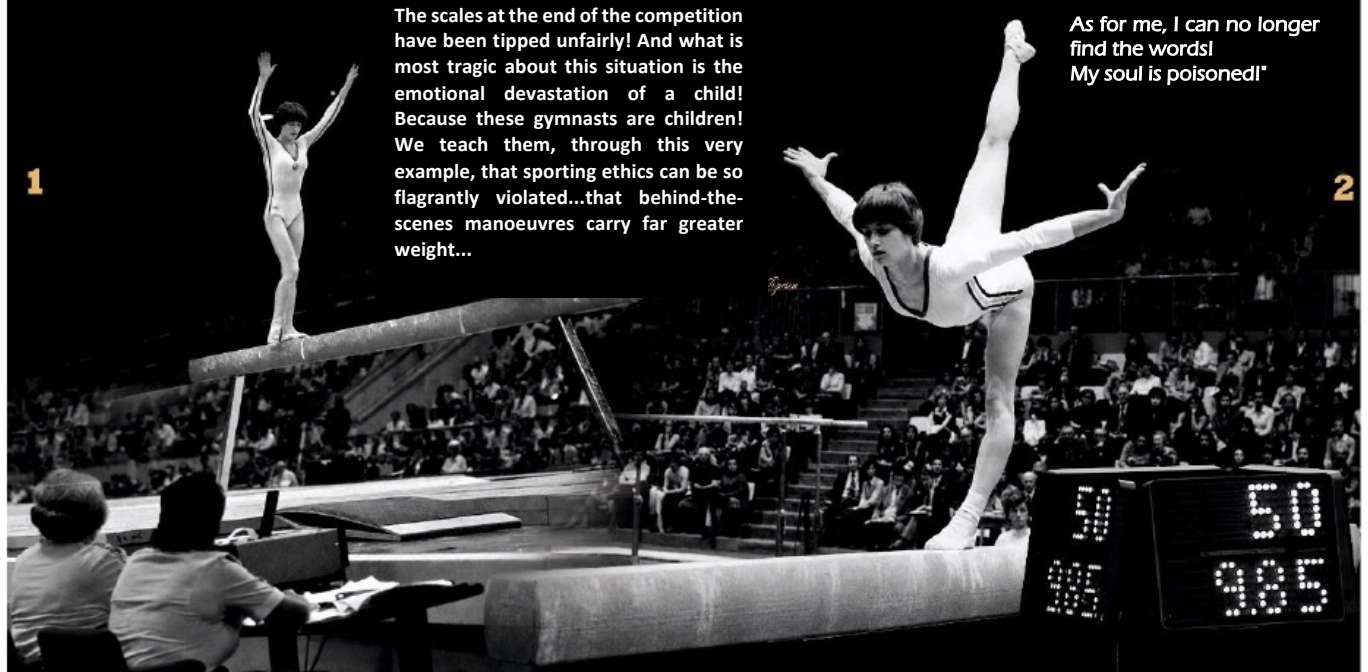
1-3: 1984. The Final Routine and Farewell Salute of a Great Champion—Nadia Comăneci. AGERPRES, photograph by Mircea Hudek.

Cristian
Topescu's
Commentary on
Nadia's Balance
Beam Routine,
Moscow 1980

"Let us try to judge calmly, if we still can!
Nadia has had only one slight loss of balance...
Let's see how much that loss of balance will cost her... though, in any case, our Nadia is on the Olympic podium!
Coach Béla Károlyi cannot contain his emotions!
The entire team is watching the scoreboard, waiting for Nadia's score...
Paradoxically, Nadia seems the calmest of them all!
What tremendous mental strength this young woman possesses, what determination to overcome the limits of her own body!
Today, Nadia has given us a magnificent lesson in life!
The score is delayed, increasing the tension...
Béla Károlyi shows signs of great nervousness...
Nadia seems to be waiting for a verdict!
Béla Károlyi is pacing on hot coals; Márta appears calmer.
I have never witnessed anything like this!
Never before has such a situation occurred at an Olympic Games!
9.85... Incredible!
Perhaps 9.90 could have been accepted! Perhaps! But 9.85 - absolutely not!
A handful of fair play, sprinkled like a pinch of powder, has shattered from the very first clash the desire to win at any cost and the very spirit of sport!

The scales at the end of the competition have been tipped unfairly! And what is most tragic about this situation is the emotional devastation of a child! Because these gymnasts are children! We teach them, through this very example, that sporting ethics can be so flagrantly violated...that behind-the-scenes manoeuvres carry far greater weight...

As for me, I can no longer find the words!
My soul is poisoned!"



1-2. Nadia Comăneci's Balance Beam Routine in the Women's All-Around Final at the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. National Agency for Sport.