

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

SECRET

COUNTRY	USSR	REPORT		25X1
SUBJECT	Soviet Soccer and Outstanding Soccer Teams	DATE DISTR.	24 January 1955	
DATE OF INFO.		NO. OF PAGES	5	
		REQUIREMENT NO.	RD	
		REFERENCES		25X1

This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
 THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
 (FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

1. Soccer, or football, is the national sport of the USSR, and the one in which there is a genuine popular interest. There are several teams in each city or town, and each village, factory, school, or military unit has its own team. There is keen government support in the development of soccer as the national game; it costs little to maintain this sport, and soccer is a collective game with none of the individual competition of tennis or fencing. Soccer draws probably the largest sporting crowds of any sport played in the Soviet Union.
2. Soccer was introduced in the USSR before the Revolution, and is the same game as western Europe's association football. The first Russian clubs had been organized well before 1917 and, despite the game's foreign origin, the Soviet Government permitted it to survive because of its mass appeal. Soccer in the USSR began to be developed on a fairly large scale in the mid-1930s, when a Spanish Basque team and a Turkish team were invited to compete with Soviet teams. The Government soon learned that there was a good profit to be realized from soccer gate receipts, and a 10-to 15-ruble admission is charged even at present.
3. It was in the mid-1930s that the Spartak Club's team was quite popular. The two Starostin brothers were the team's mainstays, and are known now as the "fathers of Soviet football". Later, the Starostiny were arrested for alleged anti-State political activities and financial corruption, together with a larger group of athletes headed by a high-diving champion named Zhigalov (fnu). The latter, according to files of the NKVD, had tried, along with some other swimmers, a scheme to escape the USSR. All were tried, convicted, and sentenced to ten years of hard labor, which they served in eastern Siberia and the Kolyma region.

SECRET

STATE	X	ARMY	X	NAVY	X	AIR	X	FBI	AEC					
-------	---	------	---	------	---	-----	---	-----	-----	--	--	--	--	--

(NOTE: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#")

SECRET

25X1

--2--

4. After Zhigalov had served most of his term, he was released; he returned to Moscow and later married Blokhina (fnu), a well-known woman swimming champion. [redacted] Blokhina went to Helsinki in 1952, perhaps as coach of a Soviet swimming team. Zhigalov was not permitted to accompany her as the Soviet Government feared he would skip to the West at the first opportunity. This policy extended to "many other Soviet athletes", notwithstanding their brilliant sports records at home. Athletes from the minority areas, especially the Baltic states, drew, in particular, the suspicion of the MGB's chief of counterintelligence directorate. Athletes who are permitted to go abroad are put through the same rigorous screening process applied to all official and semi-official delegations proceeding outside the USSR. 25X1
5. After the arrest of the popular Starostin brothers and their banishment to the east. [redacted] By special permission granted by Col. Gen. Goglidze, the Starostiny trained the local Dynamo (MGB-MVD) Club's soccer team. After their work day, the brothers were marched back to a prisoner camp in the outskirts of Khabarovsk. According to the remarks of the commandant of all penal camps in Khabarovsk and its environs, MVD Col. Akerman or Tsimmerman, "You do not have to go all the way to Moscow to see the best actors, symphonic or jazz musicians, or soccer players--we have them all right here. And it does not cost us a single ruble to see them perform!" 25X1
6. The pre-World War II era of Soviet soccer saw the sport undergo growing-pains. The Soviets had met their first foreign teams and realized that the Soviet skill did not match that of the Europeans. This was one of the prices paid for the then general policy of the Government to isolate the peoples of the USSR from foreign "contamination".
7. To a certain degree, this policy has undergone marked changes since the end of World War II, for two reasons: the level of proficiency of the top Soviet sports teams had to be increased, and good sport could be used as an effective propaganda weapon to publicize universally the virtues of Soviet Communism. It took a long time for the old isolationist policy to wear off, however, and the bogeys of possible defection by Soviet athletes and their exposure to the realities of the free world haunted the Party Central Committee and the security organs under its control until the end of the 1940s. It was not until the early 1950s that the Soviets realized that they stood to gain considerable prestige by a methodical preparation for the 1952 Olympics.
8. The result of this policy of sports isolation, even after World War II, was that the Soviet teams lost most of their matches abroad. There were very few wins: the Dynamo soccer team defeated the British Arsenal team in London in 1945, and several games were won from Scandinavian teams later. In 1948, the All-Union TsDSA team was sent to Czechoslovakia, where it encountered such good opposition that small town teams were giving the Soviets severe trouncings.
9. In keeping with Soviet official policy, no word was reported in the Soviet press of a single defeat of the TsDSA. Since only victories are reported, the reading public was lacking news on the TsDSA eleven for days at a time. The Committee of Physical Culture and Sport considered this a sports fiasco, something which could undermine Soviet prestige abroad. After the team's return from their tour, its managers and captain were hauled before a Central Committee commission, reprimanded severely, and warned that a repetition in the future of such poor results would mean a "sad end" for the team's coach, Arkadev (fnu), and for the politruk of the team. Needless to say, the fact that the team was reprimanded was not published in the press.
10. [redacted] it is interesting to note that it has been seldom that the Soviet Government has invited a foreign team to play in the USSR. The reason for this is that the defeat of a Soviet sports team on its home soil would have an adverse effect on Soviet public opinion, which has been constantly nurtured 25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

-3-

on the myth of Soviet athletic invincibility. Protocol has forced, however, the reciprocal invitation to the Soviet Union of some foreign teams. Oddly enough, the British Arsenal team was not invited for a return match until 1954. "Courtesy does not rule at all", and the political nature of Soviet sports is again evident. The British might well have come determined to decimate their conquerors, and succeed. Arsenal lost the 1954 match to Dynamo.

11. The Soviets have shown a little more courage in inviting teams from the "people's democracies" to visit the USSR. In 1948 or 1949, the top-rank Hungarian Vashash soccer team was invited to come to Moscow, "after a careful study of the problem by the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport". The Vashash was scheduled to play "a typical amateur soccer team of factory workers", the Torpedo team of the ZIS automobile plant. The latter was, in actuality, a collection of All-Union soccer champions headed by the TsDSA's captain Grinin (fnu).
12. [redacted] the Soviet team lose the first match to the Hungarians, despite a desperate rally by the Soviets to win toward the end of the game. This was the first postwar game with a foreign team on home soil, played before an overflow crowd at the Dynamo Stadium. The Soviets, players and fans alike, were puzzled by the tactics and techniques employed by the Hungarians. The spectators were particularly impressed by the gentlemanly courtesy and the friendship of the visitors, as contrasted with the boorish field manners of the Soviet players. At one point, after a Hungarian had accidentally shoved a Soviet player, the Hungarian apologized and extended his hand in friendship. The Soviet failed to shake hands with him. [redacted] after the game, [redacted] the crowd was muttering, about the theretofore unbeaten Soviet team: "Oh! well, that was not the Torpedo team, anyway--it was just an All-Union team assembled for the purpose."
13. According to Olga Romanova, wife of the previous chairman of the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport [redacted] Col. Gen. Apolonov, the new chairman, "turned so pale" as he watched the Hungarians march to victory that he could not bring himself to remain until the end of the match and the Torpedo defeat. Upset, he spent the next few days in bed with a severe case of diarrhea, brought about by the fear that he would be reprimanded and relieved of his post for the defeat of the Torpedo team, "certainly not an uncommon affliction among Soviet bureaucrats". New steps were taken immediately to offset the loss and regain Soviet prestige.
14. Another team, also made up of All-Union soccer stars, was hastily assembled and given the name of the Dynamo team. These reinforcements met the Vashash a few days later and the Hungarians were defeated. [redacted] during the second game the Vashash "played terrible soccer", and for some reason their leading player was missing in the line-up. The Soviet press was sure, this time, to praise the Dynamo club "for their outstanding athletic achievement". A full-length sports motion picture was made of this match, titled, "Vashash-Dynamo", and released for public viewing shortly afterward. No mention was made of the earlier defeat of the Torpedo team.
15. More interesting yet, [redacted] was the participation of Soviet soccer players in the 1952 Olympics. [redacted] the USSR sent abroad their All-Union number one team, TsDSA, strongly reinforced by players borrowed for the occasion from other leading Soviet soccer teams. In the match with the Yugoslav team, the Soviets lost to the Yugoslavs. While the victory must have been hailed with ceremony in Yugoslavia, such was not so in Soviet circles. The soccer team was recalled to Moscow immediately, despite other invitations to play foreign teams.
16. The team management was called in audience before a Central Committee commission and came out of the experience with good reason to have qualms about the future; the players who had made up the TsDSA team abroad disappeared for a while from the field of competition. Instead, in the place of any TsDSA team at all, a new soccer team, belonging to the Moscow Military District, appeared, composed entirely of

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

-4-

players who had not been involved in the debacle at the hands of the Yugoslav team. The USSR defeat at the Olympics had been considered a political crime by the Soviet Government.

17. Various soccer players have complained [redacted] that they are "overtrained and overplayed", but enjoy their work nonetheless. There is, generally speaking, a considerable jealousy toward soccer players on the part of other athletes because of the fact that soccer players receive the best treatment and compensation among all Soviet athletes.
18. The fact that only half of the teams can win is an accepted athletic axiom within the USSR even if the axiom is held inapplicable to Soviet participation in international sports. The "A" and "B" Conference or Division teams in each area compete in parallel. The "A" and "B" schedules culminate at season-end in the award of the Championship of the Soviet Union, an award made to the legitimately best team in the USSR. Concurrent with the season and winning of the Championship there is an Olympic-style elimination terminating in a final play-off. All "A" teams are eligible to compete in this contest; the winners are awarded the Cup of the Soviet Union.

25X1

Outstanding Soviet Soccer Teams

Dynamo

19. This team represents the Dynamo Sports Club, and is made up of members of the Ministries of Internal Affairs and State Security (now KGB). One of the largest sports societies in the USSR, the Dynamo has clubs from the Baltic to the Pacific, with a total enrollment of between 600,000 and one million. The local clubs all have their own soccer teams, and the professional-level All-Union Dynamo team is the top-ranking MVD-MGB soccer club in the USSR. The Dynamo Club was headed until 1947 by Lt. Gen. S.R. Milshteyn, former chief of the MVD's Chief Directorate of Transportation. He lost his post of president of the central council of the Dynamo Sports Society during the period of early postwar anti-Semitism.
20. Milshteyn was succeeded by Deputy Minister of State Security Lt. Gen. A.S. Elinov, who had been chief of the Moscow URRKB at one time. Elinov became Deputy Minister in charge of administration and supply (DC ~~khodovoye upravleniye~~ ~~khodovoye upravleniye~~) and concurrently chief of the religious staff and one of two chief operational sections in the MVD's Chief Counterintelligence Directorate. Source believes Elinov served as head of the Dynamo Club until at least 1952. Source described Elinov as a "not very capable officer of State Security, and a typical Soviet duke".
21. The Dynamo exploited the MVD-MGB unilateral recruiting prerogative as a talent-scouting device, and selected from among the inductees for Internal Troops or Frontier Troops units those young men who seemed to have promising athletic ability. As in the military departments, these youths were not required to wear their uniforms very often, and were sometimes commissioned and paid MVD-MGB officer salaries. This sort of information is not, of course, given publicity in the USSR, and applies to other types of teams (not only soccer) in the Dynamo Club. These "amateur" players are instructed to tell people that they have full-time jobs during the day and engage in their sports activities only in their spare time—a hobby which in effect consumes at least eight months out of the year.

TsDA, Red Citizens (DC), and Army Teams

22. The Army and Navy sports societies, known familiarly as TsDA, is probably the largest of all the sports societies because the membership virtually includes the millions of men in military uniform. The TsDA also has local clubs throughout the country, with an All-Union championship team in Moscow. The TsDA is directed by a special section of physical culture and sports at the Ministry of Defense level. "A" Conference teams of this society do their sporting in a manner similar to that employed by the Dynamo, and control, through Army-Navy journals, the military assignments of promising young athletes. The professional-level teams (All-Union) consist entirely of athletes who have military commissions. Betrov

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

-5-

and Grinin, for example, held the rank of either captain or major when source last saw them play in early 1950. The players draw military salaries, but have virtually no military duties to perform. The top-ranking stars among these "special" soldiers receive bonus pay, as do the champions of other clubs. [redacted] an Army colonel [redacted] was officially nachalnik of the TsDSA, until at least 1950.

25X1

Spartak

25X1

23. This sports union represents the non-military and non-security offices of the Soviet Government, and the Government-owned industries, commercial enterprises, and trades unions. The Spartak group is known collectively as the "traders" (torgovtsy) because, materially speaking, the Spartak is relatively well off: its officials have access to sources of sports equipment and food. Because Spartak has always been forced to overcome its manpower recruitment limitations, Spartak has become more adept than either Dynamo or TsDSA in the buying and selling of players. The principal lure to new players offered by Spartak is, therefore, good pay. Even then, purchases of players are often one-way deals, especially if the young athlete is draftable for government service by either the Ministry of Defense (and therefore TsDSA) or the security services (and therefore Dynamo).

25X1

Torpedo

24. The Torpedo soccer team is the outstanding of the various sports teams sponsored by the ZIS automobile works, the largest automobile manufacturing concern in the USSR. The plant's director, Ivan Likhachev until 1950, was a soccer fan, so he proceeded to build up a soccer team by whatever means were at his disposal--largely through the purchase of players with funds not originally budgeted for physical culture or sports. Nominally, the players are all employees of the ZIS factory. But the top-rank players spend no time at their purported work because their full time is devoted to the practice or playing of soccer, and other sports.
25. In early 1950 Likhachev was dismissed from his post as the result of a scandal centered around alleged administrative sabotage at the plant, including the embezzlement of official funds. The quality of the Torpedo soccer team thereupon dropped noticeably. There might well have been considerable substance to the charges against Likhachev. He had been "crazy" about soccer and reportedly had, on frequent occasions, bribed players on to victory with promises of automobiles in return for goals scored. The Torpedo Club is not known well outside the area of soccer.

Krylya Sovetov (Wings of the Soviet)

26. This sports club is maintained and sponsored by the Ministry of Aviation Industry. It has fairly good soccer, ice hockey, and basketball teams. It is a "very rich organization" because of the funds allotted to the aircraft industry.

VMF

27. The former teams of the Fleet have been probably integrated by now into the Ministry of Defense's TsDSA organization.

25X1

SECRET