SOVIET SPORT AND SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

By James Riordan

Introduction

The influence of politics on sport is particularly evident today in relation to foreign policy, where sporting success is seen by some as a measure of national vitality and prestige; it can therefore serve as an unobtrusive form of propaganda. As a result, ‘international competitive sport has become an arena for ideologies, mirroring the same tensions as are seen throughout the world on the purely political plane’. UNESCO drew attention in the mid-1950s to the increasing ‘ politicization’ of international sport, which had developed to the extent that ‘the Olympic Games are now regarded by many as merely a testing ground for the two great political units’. 

With the division of much of the world into two camps in the fifties, with the nuclear stalemate and the intensifying ‘battle for men’s minds’, sport became an area of considerable social significance. It is today employed by statesmen in East and West as a propaganda weapon in world affairs, a relatively modern method of psychological warfare. By its nature, sport is suited to the task: it excites nationalist instincts and encourages group identification; it is superficially apolitical and readily understandable; and, through modern means of communication, sporting spectacles can be transmitted throughout the world. A Soviet writer has noted that ‘the growing impact of socialist sport on the condition of and trends in the world sports movement is one of the best and most comprehensible means of explaining to the masses the advantages of socialism over capitalism’. 

It is apparent that, today, the nations of the world rank differently according to the amount of interest their governments take in the

---

3 The 1973 USSR v. USA athletics match in Minsk, for example, was attended by over 200 journalists, half of whom were from the West; BBC TV transmitted two half-hour programmes on the two days of the tournament at peak viewing times (6.45 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.)—even though no British athletes were involved.
organization and conduct of sport. On the one hand are those states whose sports movements are fully integrated into the social and political system and thus have become an important instrument of government policies. On the other hand are countries in which sport is largely organized by non-government bodies and tends to be free of state control—except, possibly, when it involves international competition. It is efficiency and command over resources and state commitment that today count most towards success in international sport, and this is a factor that favours state-socialist systems, the Soviet Union's above all.

Organizational Structure

In the USSR, the dependence of sport on politics has always been explicit: the administration of sport came under the aegis of the state immediately after the October 1917 revolution, and has since been used to pursue specific socio-political objectives.

The first major party resolution on sport set the trend: 'Physical culture should be seen not simply from the viewpoint of public health and physical education, not simply as one aspect of the cultural, economic and military training of young people, not simply as a means of socializing the masses . . . but as a means of rallying the great mass of workers and peasants to the various party, Soviet and trade-union organizations, through which they can be drawn into social and political activity.'

Today, overall direction to the sports movement is provided by the Committee on Physical Culture and Sport attached to the USSR Council of Ministers; its chairman is Sergei Pavlov, one-time Secretary of the Komsomol. Actual organization is in the hands of 36 sports societies, all but two of which are run by the trade unions, including 15 urban republican, 15 rural republican and four All-Union (Burevestnik representing students, Lokomotiv representing railwaymen, Vodnik representing river-transport employees, and Spartak representing people employed in communications, health, civil service, trade, culture, education and construction). The two non-trade union societies are Dinamo and Labour Reserves, the former financed by the security forces and the latter representing students at technical colleges. The one major sports organization outside this framework is the Central Army Sports Club (TsSKA). By far the best endowed and most successful sports organizations are those outside union control—Dynamo and the army clubs; both have a membership open to non-service personnel.

The two interlinked elements that underlie the Soviet sports system are the 'Ready for Labour and Defence' (GTO) mass fitness programme.

*Izvestiya tsentral'nogo komiteta RKP(b), 20 July 1925.*
and the Uniform Rankings system for proficient athletes in individual sports. Both were inaugurated in the early 1930s and both are intended to serve the twin aims—massovost* and masterstvo—on which international success in sport is said to be based. While the former sets targets for all-round ability in a number of sports and knowledge of the rudiments of hygiene and first-aid (for which token gold and silver badges are awarded), the latter possesses a whole set of qualifying standards, rankings and titles in individual sports, intended to stimulate the best performers to aim for certain graduated standards. At the top of the rankings systems are two sports titles: 'Master of Sport of the USSR, International Class' and 'Master of Sport of the USSR'; then come the following sports rankings: 'Candidate Master of Sport of the USSR', 'First Rank Sportsman', 'Second Rank Sportsman', 'Third Rank Sportsman', 'First Rank Junior Sportsman', 'Second Rank Junior Sportsman' and 'Third Rank Junior Sportsman'. The two sports titles are honorary for life; the only higher award to which an outstanding athlete may aspire is 'Merited Master of Sport of the USSR' (see Fig. 1).

It is held that the mass basis can produce proficiency and ensure the USSR world supremacy in sport. As a Soviet president, Kalinin, once said: 'It is obvious that talented athletes will sooner be found among the millions than among the thousands.' Since the last war, however, when the accent has been on producing champions who would help to establish and maintain Soviet supremacy in world sport, the twin aims have not always supplemented one another. With the need today for early specialization to produce world champions, 'it is clear that an increase in massovost* does not automatically guarantee an increase in masterstvo. The connection between them presupposes a high degree of organization by sports societies and clubs, the presence of experienced coaches and of efficient training methods . . . . The development of competitive sport will be mainly through special sports organizations, like children's sports schools, schools of supreme sports proficiency, sports boarding schools, etc.'* The trend is therefore towards an

* M. I. Kalinin, O voprosakh sotsialisticheskoi kul’tury (M., 1938), p. 132.

Sports boarding schools have existed in the USSR since 1962; it was only in 1970, however, that a government resolution was passed on their creation. Although statistics are hard to come by it has been revealed that at least 60 existed in 1974. Some concentrate on 3-4 sports, others specialize in a single sport; thus, there were six volleyball, 21 gymnastics, and five football boarding schools in 1973. They follow other specialized boarding schools (e.g., for cultivating mathematical, musical and artistic talents) in adhering to the standard curriculum for ordinary secondary schools, but have an additional study-load—in sports theory and practice. One reason for the development of these schools is the awareness that early specialization is essential to achieve high standards and, hence, success in international competition. It is no secret that the schools are expected to produce Olympic champions. It is regarded as an advantage to have the best potential athletes organized in a well-equipped school served by the best coaches, fed with a specially nutritious diet and constantly under the supervision of
AND FOREIGN POLICY

FIG. 1
SPORTS TITLES AND RANKINGS PYRAMID, 1974

1. State honorific award
   Merited Master of Sport of the USSR
   Master of Sport of the USSR, International Class
   Master of Sport of the USSR
   Candidate Master of Sport of the USSR

2. Titles
   Rankings
   I
   II
   III
   IV (chess)

3. Rankings
   Junior Rankings
   (ages 15-18)
   I
   II
   III

4. Badge Holders
   GTO
   1. Men, 40-60; women, 35-35
   2. Men, 19-34; women 19-39
   3. Boys and girls, 16-18
   4. Boys and girls, 14-15
   5. Boys and girls, 10-13

5. Active Sportsmen*

* Active sportsmen are officially defined as members of sports groups who engage in physical exercise or sport under the supervision of an instructor not less than twice a week over a minimum period of six months. In 1973, the number was put by Sergei Pavlov, Chairman of the Sports Committee, at 50 million people—i.e., one-fifth of the population (see Soviet Weekly, 24 November 1973, p. 15). By contrast to this ‘global’ figure, several micro-sociological surveys have indicated one-tenth of the population as a more realistic estimate. See L. A. Gordon, N. M. Rimashewskaia, Pyatidnevka i srednie delo (M., 1972); I. M. Slepenkov, B. V. Krayan, Molodezh' sela segodnya (M., 1972); V. I. Azar, Otdykh trudyashchikhseya SSSR (M., 1972).
administrative bifurcation in sport with promising athletes being
directed at an early age into an environment of experienced trainers,
superior facilities and intensive training; many of these become full-time
sportsmen whose 'amateur' status is protected, for the purposes of
international amateur competition, by the receipt of a studentship or an
army commission.

External Functions of Soviet Sport

The role of sport in Soviet foreign policy has varied in importance
over the years, reflecting both shifts in domestic and foreign policies
and the rapidly-changing world situation. That sport should be employed
as an agent of foreign policy is taken for granted by Soviet leaders. Five
aims seem to have been pursued in Soviet sporting relations with the
rest of the world—some more or less consistently and others only in one
or another phase of foreign politics. We can consider the pursuit of
these state goals as functions assigned to the sports movement and
attempt to assess how successfully it has coped with fulfilling them.

I. Promoting relations with pro-Soviet and potentially sympathetic groupings
abroad and undermining 'bourgeois' and social-democratic authority

The scope of Soviet foreign sports contacts has depended on a
number of factors, not all of them controllable by the Soviet authorities
—notably when 'bourgeois' (and also communist—e.g., the Chinese,
Albanian and Yugoslav) governments and sports organizations have
refused to play. By and large, however, the pattern of Soviet international
sport has been fashioned after Soviet foreign policy. After the revolution,
when Soviet Russia's territory was seen as a salient and place d'armes on
the front of the class war and the expectation of world revolution
dominated its foreign policy, the tendency was inevitably to develop
sports contacts with workers' sports organizations rather than with
their governments. Since the international workers' movement and its
sports organizations were, however, split into communist and social-
democratic factions, Soviet sports ties were confined mainly to
'sympathetic' foreign workers' clubs. Some attempts were made,
nonetheless, in the 'United Front' and 'Popular Front' periods (1927–37)
to use sport to bridge the gap between the two rival factions—without
marked success.

sports instructors and doctors (see J. Riordan, 'Comes the Revolution', World Sports,
March 1971, pp. 44–45). It is worth noting that in 1968 some 80% of all secondary
schools had no sports grounds, 75% had no gymnasiums and 50% not even the
necessary facilities for conducting P.E. lessons (see M. I. Kondakov, 'Osnova osnov',
AND FOREIGN POLICY

After the war, with the new balance of power in the world, particularly after the vigorous launching of the 'peaceful co-existence' policy in 1953, and with the USSR's desire to measure its strength against the best world opposition, the accent on competing against workers' teams has diminished, though it has not completely disappeared. Examples of the pursuit of such goals since the war are of two main types.

Firstly, the promotion of sports contacts with communist organizations abroad, such as those with the Finnish Labour Union (TUL) and the participation of Soviet and foreign communist athletes in annual races through Paris and Moscow (sponsored by the French communist newspaper Humanité and by Izvestiya respectively). They include, too, the World Youth Festival, in whose programme sport plays a prominent part. The Tenth World Youth Festival, held in East Berlin over nine days in August 1973 with the participation of 20,000 foreign visitors from more than 120 countries, was described in the Soviet press as 'a festival of unity and solidarity of the international communist and the entire democratic youth and student movement, a vivid demonstration of the solidarity of young people in the fight against imperialism'—and in the British press as 'a massive propaganda effort to demonstrate the virtue, strength and inevitability of Soviet-style communism'.

As a measure of the importance attached by the Soviet Union to sport as a means of demonstrating its vanguard position in the communist youth movement, a 138-strong sports delegation was sent to the Festival; it included Olympic and world champions Lyudmila Turishcheva (gymnastics), Valery Borzov (sprinting), Faina Mel'nik (discus and shot), Irina Rodnina (figure-skating), Mikhail Tal and Anatoly Karpov (chess). 'The language of sport', it was claimed, 'became the language of friendship.' Lyudmila Turishcheva, after taking part in a symbolic relay through East Berlin ('In Honour of the Peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia') made the point that 'we took part in this race to demonstrate once again our solidarity with the working people of the whole world, particularly the young'.

The second main type of such contact was with trade and professional associations, such as those with the International Sports Union of Railwaymen and the International Federation of University Sport.

The International Sports Union of Railwaymen (ISUR) was set up in Austria in 1947 with the participation of trade unions from Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Hungary and Italy. Despite the presence of the two East European members, the leadership was predominantly social-democratic until the affiliation of other East European states in 1956 (Bulgaria and Romania) and 1957 (East Germany, Poland.

---

8 The Times, 17 August 1973, p. 4.  
and the USSR). The Union has now expanded to cover virtually all European states and many railwaymen’s organizations in other parts of the world. That internal relations are not entirely smooth is testified to by the strict delineation of countries during championships into two independently-competing groups—socialist and the remainder, so as to ensure opportunities for athletes from non-socialist states to win events. A compromise has been reached on representation on the ISUR governing body by giving six places to non-socialist states (Belgium, Finland, France, Holland, Italy and West Germany) and six to socialist (Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Yugoslavia); this device also prevents a communist ‘take-over’ of the administration. At least six individual sports championships are held annually, each sport (of the 19 cultivated) being contested once every four years.\footnote{A. O. Romanov, *Mеждународное спортивное движение* (M., 1973), pp. 84–87.}

Soviet sports relations with foreign student sports unions have also had their vicissitudes since the end of the war. International university games had been held before the war at two-yearly intervals since 1923, but without Soviet participation. After the war, a new International Union of Students (IUS) was formed (in 1946), whose sports section arranged student games in Paris the same year in which Soviet students made their international début. The domination of the IUS and its sports section by the students’ unions of socialist states and their sympathizers in Western students’ unions led to the student games of 1949 and 1951 being given an explicitly political slant by being combined with communist-sponsored World Youth Festivals. A split occurred when several Western students’ unions tried to prevent their members from taking part in the youth festivals and set up a break-away organization—the International Federation of University Sport (FISU) in 1949. Between 1949 and 1958, the two student sports organizations held their games separately; they came together again in 1959 when all the student sports organizations of Eastern Europe (with the exception of East Germany and Albania) were admitted, on application, to FISU. As mutual compromises, the sports council of the International Union of Students was dissolved and the FISU Games were renamed Universiad, or World Student Games. Disagreement again occurred, however, in 1967 when the socialist states boycotted the Universiad as a protest against the presence of Taiwan students as representatives of China. Nonetheless, as we have seen above, the socialist states continue to hold their student and youth games within the bounds of the overtly political World Youth Festival, although prime Soviet attention is today concentrated on the Universiad which, in 1973, was held in Moscow.\footnote{The Moscow Universiad was held on the Olympic pattern in the following...}
AND FOREIGN POLICY

Since the war, therefore, there has been no serious effort to turn either communist or social-democratic sports organizations into alternatives to the existing sports federations, as happened prior to the war. Nor has 'loyalty' to communist sports organizations abroad been permitted to interfere with the Soviet policy of 'peaceful co-existence' with non-socialist states. For example: 'Sport is an essential element in contemporary international relations; it affects their development, their forms of organization and their content. Sport effectively helps to break down national barriers, create international associations, and strengthen the international sports movement. It is a great social force helping to establish and promote international contacts between the national sports associations of countries with different social systems.'

2. Promoting good-neighbourly relations with states bordering on the USSR (such as the Baltic, Balkans and Middle East states)—for strategic reasons and (where regional contacts are encouraged with bordering states) for demonstrating the progress made by kindred peoples under socialism.

The exception to the prewar policy of confining sports relations to workers' organizations was in respect of neighbouring or geographically close states. Right from the outset Soviet policy was to encourage sports relations with bourgeois (or even feudal) states in this category. Contacts took two forms: between All-Union and foreign national teams (e.g., between the USSR and Turkey, Finland or Sweden), and between local Soviet and local and national foreign teams from just across the border (e.g., between Baku and Iran, Odessa and Turkey, Leningrad and Finnish town clubs).

Since the last war, the range of contact has corresponded to the international situation and to the Soviet concepts first of 'two camps', then of 'peaceful co-existence'. Nonetheless, priority in sports relations with non-socialist states has continued to go to the good-neighbourly policy, with particular emphasis on meetings between the USSR's neighbours and adjoining Soviet and cross-frontier (often ethnically related) people. Thus, recently, a Black Sea regional football competition was launched in 1970 which included teams from Odessa, Sevastopol, Novorossiisk and Batumi, on the one hand, and from Turkey, Romania

---

sports: athletics, basketball, diving, fencing, free-style and Greco-Roman wrestling, gymnastics, swimming, tennis, volleyball and water polo.

---

12 *Teoriya i praktika fizicheskoi kultury*, 1971, no. 3, p. 5 (editorial); emphasis added.

14 Today, immediate neighbours include six states in Europe (Norway, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania) and six in Asia (Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Mongolia, China and North Korea). Countries whose geo-political situation brings them within the category of strategically important 'neighbours' of the USSR are evidently Denmark and Sweden in the Baltic area, Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia in the Balkans, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Algeria in the Middle East, and Japan in the Far East.
and Bulgaria, on the other. A regional contest has existed for several years in the Baltic basin for Finnish, Swedish, Estonian and Leningrad teams. Similarly, in 1972, a Baltic Cup weightlifting competition was held with participants from Finland, Norway, Sweden, East and West Germany, Poland and the USSR. The first tournament was held in Riga, capital of Latvia. In the summer of 1973, Baku was the venue of the now traditional two-day athletics match between Iran and Azerbaijan.

Although sports ties with Middle Eastern countries also fall into the category of 'seeking support among developing states' (see sub-section 5 below), the fact that the Soviet Union often promotes contacts between their athletes and Soviet Central Asian nationals indicates also that some priority is being given to these contacts for regional 'strategic' reasons. Bilateral sports meetings with Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, Lebanese and Algerian athletes, which have grown since 1969 (in line with heightened Soviet interest in the Middle East), have generally taken place in the Soviet Union within the former Islamic area. Under the terms of the Sports Cooperation Treaty between the USSR and Egypt, signed in 1969, it was agreed to hold annual 'Soviet-Arab Sports Weeks' alternately in the two states; the first such 'Sports Week' was held in Egypt in 1970, when a team of Uzbek, Kirgiz and Kazakh athletes was sent. The next year, a group of Egyptian athletes, weightlifters, swimmers and wrestlers competed against Soviet Uzbek opponents in Tashkent, Samarkand and Andizhan. 15 A similar agreement was signed with Iraq, Syria and Algeria in 1972, and with the Lebanon in 1973. 16

Other countries with whom sports relations might be said to be promoted for 'strategic' reasons are Austria and Japan—the only capitalist states (apart from Finland) in which Soviet sports coaches and players were working (up to 1974). Soviet ice-hockey coaches and players were (in 1973) employed by the Austrian Atletik-Klub, KAS (Klagenfurt), Graz ATSE and the Viennese club WAT-Stadtlu. 17 A long-term sports exchange agreement was signed with Japan in 1971 and an ice-hockey tournament was held in April 1973 in Sapporo between Japanese players from Hokkaido and Soviet players from the Soviet Far East and Siberia. 18

Contacts with other neighbours have depended on certain other factors; for example, with Afghanistan, Mongolia, China and North Korea they were long inhibited by the backwardness of sport in those countries. Sporting contacts were established with Afghanistan in 1955

---

15 *Sovetskii sport*, 3 August 1971, p. 4.
16 The five-year sports cooperation agreement with Syria encompasses bilateral matches in both states, joint training and seminars, exchange of documents and agreements to build sports amenities and manufacture equipment.
18 *Sport v SSR*, 1973, no. 4, p. 11.
and exchanges now take place regularly between Uzbek and Afghan athletes. Exchanges with Mongolia and North Korea commenced in the mid-1960s. With China, sports relations have closely followed the course of the Sino-Soviet dispute: bilateral contacts, which began only in 1955, were abruptly halted in 1961. The post-cultural-revolution resumption of political contacts between China and the West, said to have been presaged by table-tennis matches in 1971, has not yet (1974) been paralleled by a similar renewal of sports contacts with the USSR.

On balance, the Soviet policy of promoting sporting ties with neighbouring states—a quite deliberate attempt to use sport to cement good-neighbourly relations—has been fairly successful. This policy has been pursued in regard to neighbouring states even when general foreign policy and sports policy towards other ‘bourgeois’ countries have been radically otherwise.

It has to be noted that in most sports the USSR’s neighbours lag, often considerably, behind the world’s foremost sporting nations and have generally been inferior to their Soviet opponents. By encouraging reginal as often as national contacts, the USSR has avoided completely demoralizing or publicly shaming opponents; pitting its strongest teams against them might well have had the opposite propaganda effect to the one desired: pursuit of the goal of demonstrating the progress made by kindred peoples under socialism is in no way vitiated by this. The success of, say, Azerbaijani against Turkish athletes is often cited by Soviet publicists as evidence of the progress of national minorities under socialism.

3. Attaining world sporting supremacy as a nation-state (after the last war)—particularly through the Olympic Games—for the purposes principally of enhancing the status of the USSR and Soviet communism abroad

Despite initial reluctance, prior to World War II, to compete against ‘bourgeois’ teams, especially the ‘professional’ ones, the Soviet authorities came to recognize that they provided the strongest world opposition, and ‘defeating’ the ideological opponents would most boost Soviet prestige: ‘Our ties with Western Europe, the USA and Canada

—For example, the Leningrad Zenit football team played 11 matches in China in September 1955 (winning ten and drawing one) and the Soviet national football team toured China in the spring of 1958. The last recorded football match was between Peking and Leningrad Zenit in Leningrad (won 3–2 by Zenit), on 29 July 1961 (N. Kisslev (ed.), futbol’nykh let (L., 1970), pp. 210, 220, 242). Sports ties with Albania have followed a similar pattern: the Leningrad Labour Reserves football team played in Tirana in 1954 and Tirana Dinamo played in Moscow and Leningrad in 1956. No matches are recorded after 1960, when Albania withdrew from international competition (save with China). It is noteworthy that, following China’s resumption of competition against foreign athletes in 1971, Albania followed suit, rejoining, for example, the International Weightlifting Federation (in 1972).
are determined primarily by sporting expediency and the need to meet strong sports competitors; this is the best way Soviet sportsmen can prepare for European and world championships.” In the mood of nationalistic fervour immediately after the war it was felt that Soviet sport, too, was strong enough to take the offensive and, in the words of a party resolution on sport, ‘win world supremacy in the major sports in the immediate future’. To do this would be to advertise the socialist system: ‘The increasing number of successes achieved by Soviet sportsmen in sport has particular political significance today. Each new victory is a victory for the Soviet form of society and the socialist sports system; it provides irrefutable proof of the superiority of socialist culture over the decaying culture of the capitalist states.’

Before the war, apart from the sports exchange between the USSR and Nazi Germany in 1940, few official representatives of foreign states had visited the Soviet Union for a sporting event, nor had Soviet athletes competed, except on rare occasions, with athletes other than those belonging to workers’ sports associations. Nor had Soviet sports associations joined or been invited to join international federations. Further, since tsarist Russia’s participation in the 1912 Games, no Russian or Soviet team had contested the Olympics. That is not to say that standards in Soviet sport were necessarily inferior to those in the West. It is claimed that by 1939 44 Soviet records exceeded world records, including 23 in weightlifting, nine in athletics, nine in pistol-shooting, two in swimming and one in speed-skating. They could not be registered because the Soviet Union was not a member of international federations.

In the immediate postwar years Soviet sports associations affiliated to nearly all the major international sports federations, and Soviet athletes were competing regularly at home and abroad against foreign ‘bourgeois’ opposition (see Table 1).

Alongside the limited traditional national rivalries, ideological political rivalries or confrontations have emerged since the war—e.g., the USSR v. the USA, the socialist v. capitalist bloc, East v. West Germany or Cuba v. other American states—the latter mainly in the Pan-American Games. The central arena, however, for these trials of

27 Kul’tura i shanson, 1 November 1949, p. 5.
29 The International Olympic Committee continued to recognize the old tsarist Russian Olympic Committee for several years after 1917. Such ROC members as General Butovsky, Count Rionier, Baron Vilebrandt and Prince Urusov all served on the IOC in the period 1917–32.
30 Romanov, op. cit., p. 185.
31 Between 1946 and 1958 the USSR joined 30 international federations; by 1966 it had joined 45 and by 1972 56, thereby embracing all the principal world sports. Moreover, as many as 104 Soviet officials held posts in international sports organizations in 1972 (see Romanov, op. cit., p. 197).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Foreign sports groups visiting the USSR</th>
<th>No. of Soviet sports groups travelling abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971*</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Well over half (67.7%) of the exchange in 1971 was with other socialist states.


The strength has been and remains the Olympic Games; as A. Ivanov, Vice-Chairman of the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport, has said: 'In evaluating the significance of sport in international tournaments, we must not forget that, while world and European championships are extremely important, victory at the Olympics acquires a political resonance.'

The USSR made its Olympic début at the 15th Olympic Games, held in Helsinki in 1952. The extent of Soviet preparation was evident from the fact that Soviet athletes were to contest all events in the Olympic programme (with the exception of field-hockey). Bearing in mind that nearly all the Soviet sportsmen and sportswomen had never competed previously against world-class opposition from outside the USSR, the Soviet performance was remarkable. Although in the unofficial Olympic table the USSR gained fewer gold medals than the USA (22:40), it gained more silver (36:19) and bronze (19:17) and tied with the USA in points allotted for the first six places (see Table 2).

The USSR took no part in the 1952 Winter Olympics, and made its winter début only in 1956 at Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy. There it amassed most medals and points, winning gold medals in speed-skating, skiing and ice-hockey. The ice-hockey success was particularly creditable, in so far as the sport had been taken up in the Soviet Union only after the war; even two years before the 1956 Winter Olympics, the Soviet ice-hockey team had won the world championships at its first attempt. Since the Olympic Summer and Winter Games débuts, the USSR has had to concede 'victory' in one year only (1968).

* Teoriya i praktika fiziiskoi kultury, 1968, no. 5, p. 42; emphasis added.
TABLE 2

SOVIET PERFORMANCE IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES, 1952–72

**Summer Games**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gold Medals</th>
<th>Medal Total</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Nearest Rival Medals</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>494<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>624<strong>c</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>498<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>453<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>608<strong>c</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>581<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>591<strong>c</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>700<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>665<strong>c</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>636<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Winter Games**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gold Medals</th>
<th>Medal Total</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Nearest Rival Medals</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td><em>d</em></td>
<td><em>d</em></td>
<td><em>d</em></td>
<td><em>d</em></td>
<td><em>d</em></td>
<td><em>d</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>66<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>146<strong>c</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>62<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>89<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>103<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>83<strong>c</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*The points allocation is the same as in the Olympic Bulletin: awarding seven points for first place, five for second and so on; decreasing by one point down to one point for sixth place.

**USA**

**USSR not participating**

**Austria**

**Sweden**

**Norway**

**East Germany.**

_Sources: K. A. Andrianov et al. (eds.), Olimpiiskie igry (M., 1970); Sovetski sport, 16 February 1972, p. 4; Sportsworld, September 1972._

As an example of the total commitment to Olympic success and state artificial stimulation to produce results, the USSR formed a Field-Hockey Federation in 1969—with virtually no popular support for the sport—with the avowed aim of fielding a team for the 1972 Olympic Games. Almost the entire Soviet world-champion bandy team was drafted into field-hockey in order to form the nucleus of the Olympic squad. It made its international début in 1970 in the European Championships, coming third of four teams in its group; it did not, however, qualify for Munich. Nevertheless, the official campaign to promote the sport resulted in eight teams contesting the first Soviet Field-Hockey Championships held in Alma Ata in 1971. The importance to the USSR of field-hockey is that it is the only sport the country has been unable to contest at the Olympics.

The USSR’s attachment to the nationalistic ritual of the Olympic Games, with its unfurling of flags, victory celebrations, national anthems, contingent marching, distinctive uniforms, its staunch resistance to any reduction of such elements and its attempts to have these elements reproduced in other international tournaments all testify...
to the importance which Soviet leaders attach to the use of sport for boosting national prestige and advertising their political system. One of the tasks officially set Soviet sports organizations is to combat cosmopolitanism in the international sports movement, in particular the efforts to abolish the ceremony of playing national anthems and raising national flags in honour of victors at the Olympic Games and other official international competitions. This is not to say that other high-level contests in the full glare of world publicity are seen as unimportant. Several international contests rank high in prestige value to the winners—e.g., the biennial USA v. USSR athletics match, the World Cup in football, and the various European and world championships.

The Soviet Union is keenly aware of the advantages that are thought to accrue from international sporting success and, of course, deliberately prepares its athletes for international events. These advantages may be said to include: enhancing the prestige of the USSR among the leaders and peoples of developing states and among the public in capitalist states, and raising the status of the ‘world socialist community’, in which the USSR has a special leading role.

Soviet leaders are not slow to capitalize on international sporting success by using their outstanding sportsmen as ‘ambassadors of good will’, not infrequently as a ‘try-out’ for political initiatives. For example, in 1972, as part of an intensive campaign for a détente with the USA and as a prelude to President Nixon’s visit to Moscow, the Soviet leaders sent their leading girl gymnasts (including Olga Korbut and Lyudmila Turisheva) on a gymnastic display tour of America. Two months later, when the USA–USSR Treaty on Contacts, Exchanges and Cooperation

27 Romanov, op. cit., p. 185.
28 Testimony to the attention devoted to participation in international sport comes (worthily) from an unlikely source: the eminent biochemist and dissenter, Zhores Medvedev (himself denied an exit visa to address the CTBA Foundation on gerontology) wrote of the high priority given by the Party Secretariat to international sports events: “I knew of a case of a footballer who was suddenly required for an international match and was summoned and rushed by air from the resort where he was on holiday, approved by all departments, including the visa section, delivered from Moscow to England, driven straight from the airport to the stadium, and all this within twenty-four hours. He was to play for the Rest of the World against an All-England side... But this, of course, was a special case: football, sport, the glamour, the prestige! It was not a lecture on gerontology” (see Z. Medvedev, The Medvedev Papers (London, 1971), pp. 160-1). The supreme state award, the Order of Lenin, has been bestowed on a number of well-known sportsmen and sportswomen, including Yashin and Netto (football), Latynina, Turisheva, Chukharin and Shaiklin (gymnastics), Borzakov, Smyslov and Gaprinadshvili (chess), Vlasov and Alekseev (weightlifting), and Kuts, Bolotnikov, Borzov and Saneev (athletics). In recognition of success at the 1972 Munich Olympics, athletes, trainers and officials who excelled during the Olympics were rewarded by a decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of 5 October 1972: six persons received the Order of Lenin, 23 the Order of the Red Banner of Labour, 105 the Badge of Honour, 48 the medal ‘For Outstanding Labour’, and 74 the medal ‘For Excellent Labour’. Though high, the number of awards was more modest than that after the 1956 Melbourne Olympics when the Soviet Union first gained most points in the unofficial table (see Soviet sports, 5 October 1972, pp. 1-2).
was signed in Moscow, it included a clause (Article XIII) on sports exchanges, on which Sovetski sport commented: 'the foreign policy of our party and government is reflected in international sports relations which must play their part in establishing firm foundations of mutual understanding and friendship between our peoples.' A month after the signing of the new agreement (and at the end of the year's Soviet-American athletics match, in which the USSR had soundly beaten its rival), the new entente was symbolically represented on the track by Soviet and American athletes linking arms, doing a lap of honour together and waving to spectators—a far cry from the atmosphere of the relations between the 'bastions of communism and capitalism' over the prewar and most of the postwar years.

Despite some sporting setbacks, there is ample evidence to show that the USSR, in the last two decades, has gone a considerable way to achieving its aim of world supremacy in sport—but only in the broad sweep of amateur Olympic sports taken together. Until the anomalies that keep some amateurs and professionals apart are removed, it is difficult to gain an overall perspective of Soviet performance.

4. Maintaining and reinforcing the unity of the socialist bloc and the Soviet 'vanguard' position within it

Today, the bulk of Soviet foreign sports competition, like that of foreign trade, is with other socialist states—above all with those of Eastern Europe. During 1969, for example, 825, or some 58%, of the 1,420 international contests in which Soviet athletes were involved were confined to members of the East European bloc; in bilateral and multilateral contests, East Germany and the Soviet Union met 187 times, Bulgaria and the USSR 151 times, Poland and the USSR 127 times and Czechoslovakia and the USSR 74 times. 'Sporting relations with socialist states are central to Soviet foreign sports contacts and every year exceed half the entire Soviet sports exchange. Thus, in 1970 they amounted to 58% and, in 1971, to 67% of the total exchange.'

In so far as sport is centrally controlled in all these states and fully integrated in the political system, it can be wielded for manifestly functional purposes. 'The overriding principle [of socialist states' international sporting relations] consists in relations between fraternal communist and workers' parties which control physical culture and sport and formulate the foreign policy tasks of the national sports

29 Of the 11 matches held between the two world athletics giants, the USA and the USSR (also regarded by many as the chief world representatives of their respective ideologies), the USA has won only twice overall (in 1964 and 1969).
30 See Rodichenko, op. cit., p. 106.
31 Romanov, op. cit., p. 196.
AND FOREIGN POLICY

organizations. From the Soviet point of view this enables Soviet leaders to use sport to integrate the various socialist societies, to bind them to Soviet institutions and policies and to maintain and reinforce the USSR’s ‘vanguard’ position within the bloc. Relations have tended to reflect the political tenor within the bloc, with the Soviet Union defending (or imposing) its ‘special relationship’ as the ‘most advanced socialist state’, and the other socialist states striving for compensatory supremacies that are denied them elsewhere. In the period 1948–56, most of the other socialist states (with Yugoslavia the notable exception) were more or less obliged to learn from the Soviet model, to form Soviet-type administrative organizations and run physical–fitness programmes like the GTO—this despite the long sporting traditions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia (with its Sokol gymnastics) and East Germany, all of whom had competed successfully in international sport many years before Soviet participation. Since 1956, however, there has been a gradual loosening of the Soviet grip on sport in other socialist states. Albania has, of course, gone its own way, following China, while other states have resurrected certain national sporting traditions and institutions which were submerged during the late Stalin era. Thus, for example, the Sokol gymnastics movement now plays a major part, once more, in Czechoslovak sport, and East Germany pioneered the use of sports boarding schools in the early sixties. In place of Soviet-dictated exchanges, new bilateral agreements have been drawn up and negotiated separately between the USSR and other socialist states. Thus, a five-year sports exchange agreement was signed in 1966 between the USSR and East Germany, in 1969 with Bulgaria, in 1971 with Poland and Hungary, in 1972 with Czechoslovakia and Cuba, and in 1973 with Yugoslavia and Romania. The last two states to sign pursue the most independent sports policy in Eastern Europe, paralleling their greater autonomy today in other spheres.

Sports contacts between the socialist states embrace a variety of sports and take place at various levels. Sportsmen from the state-socialist countries come together in such single-sport tournaments as the annual Peace cycling race across Eastern Europe, the Znamensky

26 Ibid., p. 777.
27 Romania has, for example, permitted some athletes and coaches to travel and work abroad with far greater freedom, particularly in regard to disposing of their foreign income, than athletes from other socialist states (except Yugoslavia). A Romanian football-trainer worked (until 1973) for three years with the famous Dutch and European champions Ajax; the unrestrained behaviour of the globe-trotting tennis star Ilia Nastase is certainly something the Soviet authorities would not condone among its players.
28 The Znamensky brothers were outstanding Soviet athletes before the war.
Memorial athletics meeting (held in Moscow) and the '26 Baku Commissars Memorial' athletics meeting (held in Baku), in such multi-sport tournaments for specific groups and organizations as the Friendship sports tourneys for junior sportsmen, socialist rural games, twinned-city games, the Baltic Sea Week and annual sports meetings between army and security forces' sports clubs. Few opportunities are lost to associate sporting events with a political occasion or to employ sport to cement loyalties within the bloc. Thus, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the USSR, a mass assault was made on its highest mountain, Peak Communism (7,495 metres). In all, 87 climbers reached the summit and planted there the flags of the 15 union republics of the USSR and of eight other socialist states (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia) as 'a symbol of unshakeable friendship and inspired by the ideals of proletarian internationalism, peace and friendship between peoples'.

To mark the same anniversary, one outstanding athlete from each socialist state (with the exceptions of Albania, China and North Vietnam but including Cuba and North Korea) was made a Merited Master of Sport of the USSR.

The sporting ties between army and security forces' clubs are particularly illustrative of the Soviet policy of military integration—or, at least, the desire to put a friendly face on some of the possibly less popular aspects of the Warsaw Pact. A Sports Committee of Friendly Armies (SCFA) was formed in Moscow in 1958, three years after the establishment of the Warsaw Pact. It embraced all members of the Pact plus China, North Korea and North Vietnam. Neither the Pact nor the SCFA included Yugoslavia. Cuba joined the SCFA in 1969 and the Somali Democratic Republic in 1973; China, Albania and North Vietnam took no part in it after 1966. The declared aims of the SCFA are 'to strengthen friendship between the armies, improve the quality of physical fitness and sport among servicemen and popularize the attainments of army sport'.

37 The 1973 Friendship junior athletics meeting took place in the Soviet city of Odessa with teams from Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania and the USSR competing (see Sovetskii sport, 8 August 1973, p. 2).
36 Sport v SSSR, 1972, no. 9, p. 2. 36 Sovetskii sport, 21 December 1972, p. 1.
36 Romanov, op. cit., p. 90. Each year, SCFA arranges, on average, 15 army championships in a variety of Olympic and para-military sports; by 1972, it was holding some 200 championships in member countries, including two summer multi-sport SCFA spartakiads (held in East Germany and the USSR) and three winter spartakiads (held twice in Poland and once in Czechoslovakia). The third summer spartakiad was held in Czechoslovakia in 1973, and the fourth winter games in Bulgaria in late 1973. For the first time at a SCFA meeting, a team from outside the bloc participated in 1973—Horses, the army sports club of the Somali Democratic Republic (which subsequently joined SCFA). Apart from these inter-state army meetings, army clubs compete regularly against one another: thus, during 1973, army clubs met in Bulgaria for a
The sporting aid given by the Soviet Union and other countries with communist governments to Cuba was part of the process whereby that country was drawn into the ambit of the system of state-socialist powers after a period of isolation and hesitation. The immediate aim was to help harness and build up Cuban skill in order that Cuba might put up a good showing in sporting confrontations with other states on the American continent. In the years 1969–72 'more than 50 Soviet coaches helped train Cuban athletes for the Olympic and Pan-American Games'. The subsequent Cuban successes in both tournaments provided ample material for linking sporting success with the political system and demonstrating through the popular and readily understandable (particularly so in Latin America) medium of sport the advantages of the 'Cuban road to socialism' for other Latin American states: 'More and more Latin American states realize that Cuban victories in international sport are invariably connected with the successes of the Cuban revolution and the country's progressive system.'

In recent years, however, a number of coaches and instructors from socialist states have been assisting Soviet athletes in sports in which the Soviet standard is below world class. In 1972 East Germany was training a Soviet team in bobsleighing (a sport only recently taken up by the USSR); in the same year the Cuban sprinter Ernesto Figarola was coaching in Odessa and Minsk. Hungarian fencing, swimming and pentathlon coaches have been training Soviet sportsmen in these sports and Czechoslovak ice-hockey coaches have been working with Soviet squads. As a number of countries in the socialist bloc build up specialized facilities and sports amenities, they become increasingly in a position to enable other sportsmen from within the bloc to gather together on the eve of important international events for joint training; thus, in recent years, Soviet athletes have attended training camps in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. These and other forms of mutual assistance and integration are said to have become an important contributory factor in the sporting successes of such states internationally. They also demonstrate how seriously the leaders of

Friendship Sports Week to contest events in weightlifting, the modern pentathlon, boxing, wrestling and shooting—sports with a distinctively military utility. In the same year, in September, a Dinamo Football 'Tourney was held in Moscow's Dinamo Stadium for junior teams of security forces' clubs from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, North Korea, Poland, Romania and the USSR (see ibid., p. 178).

41 ibid., p. 90.
42 Sovetskii sport, 30 January 1974, p. 4. Cuba came second, only a few points behind the USA, in the 1972 Pan-American Games, and won three gold, one silver and four bronze medals in the 1972 Olympic Games. Eight Soviet coaches accompanied the Cuban team to the Olympics and 12 to the Pan-American Games (see Sovetskii sport, 22 June 1973, p. 3).
43 The improvement in sporting achievements of countries of the socialist bloc is noteworthy. When most of them made their Olympic début in 1952 they accounted for
these states regard sport as an eminently efficacious means of advertising the advantages of socialism and demonstrating the superiority of their system, given the fact that special high-level arrangements for such visits have to be made in every case, free movement of citizens among these countries not being part of their mutual treaty arrangements.

5. Winning support for the USSR and its policies among developing states in Africa, Asia and Latin America

Since the early 1960s the Soviet authorities have paid increasing attention to aid to the ‘third world’ in the field of sport as well as in the economic and in other cultural spheres. This assistance takes the form of sending coaches and instructors abroad, building sports amenities, training foreign sports administrators in the Soviet Union, arranging tours and displays by Soviet athletes in Afro-Asian states, and holding Sports Friendship Weeks that often have an unabashedly political character. Much of this aid, including the provision of sports amenities, is said to be given free of charge. Sometimes the sports contact is used as a prelude to political contacts. After all, ‘sporting ties are one way of establishing contacts between states even when diplomatic relations are absent’.

In the five years up to 1971 over 100 Soviet coaches and instructors had worked in 37 Afro-Asian states, including Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Tunisia in the Middle East, Chad, Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and Togo in Africa, and Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia and Malaysia in Asia. In late 1972 there were said to be more than 200 such people working in 28 foreign states. Sports cooperation treaties were signed with Egypt in 1969, Nigeria and the Sudan in 1970, Algeria, Iraq and Syria in 1972 and the Lebanon in 1973 (in which Soviet volleyball, fencing, gymnastics and athletics

20% of the points and 20% of the medals; two decades later the respective percentages were 46.4 and 47. Commenting on this improvement in 1972, Pravda left no doubt that it saw it as a victory internationally for the socialist system: “The grand victories of the USSR and the fraternal states convincingly demonstrate that socialism opens up the greatest opportunities for man’s physical and spiritual perfection” (Pravda, 17 September 1972, p. 1).

See D. Prokhorov, ‘Narodnaya iskustvya i izobrazitel’naya’, Sport v SSSR, 1970, no. 11, p. 14; the author, deputy chairman of the International Board of the USSR Committee on Physical Culture and Sport, writes further that ‘developing states highly value the support granted by Soviet sportsmen to their sports organizations, viewing it as a manifestation of international friendship of peoples striving to construct a new society on the principles of comradeship and mutual assistance’.

Romanov, op. cit., p. 182. As a prelude to Brezhnev’s visit to India in November 1973, an ‘Indo-Soviet Youth Friendship Week’ took place with the famous ex-footballer Yashin and tennis star Alex Metreveli prominent in the Soviet delegation. The leader of the Soviet group was, significantly, the Secretary of the Tajikistan Komsomol (see Sovetskii sport, 25 November 1973, p. 4).

Prokhorov, op. cit., p. 15.

Sport v SSSR, 1972, no. 12, p. 25.
coaches had been working). That such cooperation is not entirely motivated by altruistic considerations is apparent in a comment on the Nigerian-Soviet Sports Friendship Week held in Nigeria in the autumn in 1972: ‘Sporting attainments today have an immense power to influence. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Nigeria should arrange a sports week of friendship dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the USSR.’ Nigeria, like Egypt and the Sudan, had held a sports week, with the participation of Soviet athletes, also to mark the Lenin centenary in 1970.

The USSR has built sports centres in Afghanistan, Algeria, Cambodia, Congo, Senegal and Togo. By 1970 students from 25 Afro-Asian states had received a Soviet coaching diploma and over 100 persons (from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Iraq, Malaysia, Mali, Sudan, Syria and Tunisia) had graduated from Soviet institutes of physical culture. Another 50 had completed dissertations in the field of sport and physical education in Soviet colleges.

Judging by the rapidly mounting scale of operations and the budgetary allocations for promoting sport in developing countries, the Soviet leaders obviously regard sport as an important weapon in the ‘battle for men’s minds’. It is a serious business: ‘the authority of sport in the world has grown enormously; there is no longer any place for dilettantism in the politics of sport.’ Given the signal Soviet successes in international sport, such sporting aid is seen as an effective means of demonstrating the possibilities of the ‘socialist path of development’. In arranging contacts and assistance, much emphasis is placed on the propaganda value of the successes attained in erstwhile backward areas of the Soviet Union: ‘In arranging these ties, we attach special importance to the sports organizations of the various republics, to athletes from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, when they visit Africa and Asia, and when the representatives of those countries meet our republican athletes at home.’ It was, significantly, a Kazakh gymnastics team which was the first Soviet sports group to visit India in the summer of 1973 under the Indo-Soviet Cultural Agreement. In the same year, another Kazakh group, the Dorozhnik volleyball team from Alma Ata, became the first Soviet sports delegation to visit the Malagasy Republic. Naturally enough, the sports emissaries ‘told them of sport in Kazakhstan, of its role in the life of the family of equal fraternal Soviet Republics’.

One final aspect of Soviet ‘aid’ to Afro-Asian states has been support

---

48 Sowetskii sport, 22 April 1973, p. 4.
49 Sowetskii sport, 14 July 1971, p. 4.
50 Sport v SSSR, 1972, no. 12, p. 25.
52 Sport v SSSR, 1972, no. 12, p. 25.
53 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 2 August 1973, p. 4.
for ‘third-world’ campaigns to exclude from international contests countries believed to be operating racial discrimination in sport. The Soviet Olympic Committee instigated moves in 1962 within the International Olympic Committee to exclude South Africa from the Olympic Games; the moves succeeded and South Africa has not subsequently been able to compete in the Olympics. The USSR has lent its considerable authority to moves to have South Africa and Rhodesia banned from all international sports tournaments. It is not unusual for Soviet competitors to forfeit matches (in tennis, for example) rather than play against white South Africans and Rhodesians. On the other hand, Soviet athletes play in anti-communist states like Spain and Greece with obvious approbation from the Soviet authorities; these regimes do not cause the same degree of concern among Afro-Asian states, since they have few or no overseas possessions. There is little doubt that such Soviet action wins much sympathy among wide circles in the ‘third world’, which see in the USSR a champion of their cause.\(^\text{54}\) This attitude is exploited in frequent Soviet references to the multinational nature of Soviet sport: “The Soviet Olympic delegation of 1972 was a mirror of Soviet multinational sport . . . . Patriotism and collectivism, friendship and mutual assistance have become integral to the outlook of our athletes. They therefore look upon racial discrimination in sport as monstrous and inhuman.”\(^\text{55}\) “The internationalist character of socialist sport”, the conclusion is drawn, “has a great effect on the newly liberated ex-colonies.”\(^\text{56}\)

Summary

The pattern of foreign sports competition involving the USSR has closely followed the course of Soviet foreign policy and displays clearly differentiated contours in regard to the geo-political situation of different countries. Since the last war, Soviet leaders have assigned sport such tasks as demonstrating the superiority of and winning support for the communist system, encouraging friendly, commercial and good-neighbourly relations with the USSR and, within the communist bloc, achieving unity on Soviet terms.

With its control of the sports system, the Soviet leadership has been

\(^\text{54}\) The USSR refusal in November 1973 to play its World Cup qualifying football match in Chile, following the right-wing military coup that brought down President Allende, may be seen in a similar light—as a decision that meets with the approval of national liberation movements.

\(^\text{55}\) Sportsovaya zhizn’ Rossii, 1973, no. 11, p. 7; the further point was made that representatives of 26 Soviet nationalities, including from all 15 union republics, were present at the 1972 Munich Olympics—‘eloquent testimony for all the world to see of the triumph of the Leninist national policy in physical culture and sport’.

able to mobilize resources to achieve the maximum efficiency of its sports challenge and, hence, to perform what it believes to be important political functions. The high priority it accords such functions has meant the provision of scarce resources almost exclusively for promising and proficient sportmen whom it hopes will become or remain international prize-winners. Despite official pronouncements and ‘global’ statistics, massoccost has had to take second place to masterstvo. Given the high standards of international sport today, the Soviet desire to win inevitably entails early specialization and full-time application to a particular sport in specialist institutions like sports boarding schools, training camps and well-equipped sports centres for the sporting elite. Such is the importance of sport as an agent of foreign policy that the state has gone to quite extraordinary lengths artificially to stimulate certain sports (such as field-hockey, show-jumping and motor-racing) without any popular basis for them within the USSR.

It is, of course, impossible to measure the impact of international sporting success on the behaviour of individuals and states, or to discover whether that success can, in fact, affect state policies. There can no longer be any belief that success is, as it was in the past, primarily a matter of the physical and moral resources of the individual participant; it is today a matter of the ‘totalitarianization’ of national sports systems—the effectiveness with which the resources of an entire society can be brought to bear on record-smashing. This is a system that is bound to favour state-socialist powers—particularly the larger countries like the USSR and, in the future, China; whether its object remains recognizably ‘sport’—how a man disports himself—is another matter.

*University of Bradford*