

election. If he needs any support," Kosygin joked, "we will send some people to vote for him."⁶¹

In regard to hockey, however, he was less jovial. Though Kosygin congratulated the Canadians on their victory the day before, Ford reported that the Soviet premier was "obviously concerned with roughness of play," which he found "upsetting." Echoing past hockey-ideological polemics, he said he "had expected professionals to show how to combine a game of strength with beauty but professionals were not what he had thought they were. He said he realized their lives depend on how they play 'unlike our players who are not professional.'"⁶² Although Kosygin said his remarks were personal, Ford cabled Ottawa that they quickly "were fed out to the Soviet press and, although he was not quoted directly, clearly served official justification for line that CDN professional hockey was brutal, rough, ruthless and alien to the Soviet system."⁶³

Nevertheless, despite some hard feelings, the frozen ice hockey landscape had definitely melted. Far from backing off, the Soviets continued to pursue competition with Canadian professionals for the remainder of the decade, alongside East-West détente. Two years later, in 1974, in another Summit Series, the USSR national team defeated all-stars (including Hull) from the upstart World Hockey Association. In the winter of 1975–1976, two Soviet clubs (CSKA Moscow and Kryla Sovetov Moscow, known as the Soviet Wings) played a "Super Series" against NHL teams. This competition is best remembered for CSKA's 3–3 tie with the Canadiens at the Montreal Forum on New Year's Eve, featuring Vladislav Tretiak's brilliant goaltending, and an ugly 4–1 army loss to the defending Stanley Cup champion Philadelphia Flyers, whose rough tactics prompted a Soviet protest "skate-off" that interrupted play; the contest, once again, perfectly fit the trope of barbaric capitalist hockey goons. Still, top-level ice hockey competition between Canadian professionals and Soviet teams became regular occurrences, even after détente collapsed. That elite hockey rivalry continued through five Canada Cup tournaments, each held before the NHL season began between 1976 and 1991. In 1986, the IOC finally threw in the towel and permitted all to compete at the Winter Olympics.

Transcending entrenched Cold War ideological tensions, bureaucratic politics and self-interest, and various personal and institutional idiosyncrasies, the sport of international ice hockey had finally been raised to its highest level ever. It is fair to say that the ice really began to thaw that one night in Vancouver.

4

ACTION IN THE ERA OF STAGNATION

Leonid Brezhnev and the Soviet Olympic Dream

Mikhail Prozumenshikov

During the seven decades of Soviet power, sport and politics were inseparably connected. Yet the Soviet people were persistently indoctrinated with the idea that these two things were absolutely incompatible. In practice, politics not only actively interfered in sporting matters; it even affected the results of competitions. This approach to sport was, of course, not the preserve of the leaders of the USSR; rather, it was found throughout the world. But if one were to speak about specific politicians, virtually none can be compared with Leonid Brezhnev in his attention to sport and in its use for political purposes.

Brezhnev, who led the USSR from 1964 to 1982, was born and raised in Ukraine, near the city of Dnepropetrovsk. He first studied as a surveyor, then worked in a steel plant, and even served for a year as a tank driver in the Red Army. But even before World War II he had begun a career in the Communist Party, becoming third secretary of the Dnepropetrovsk regional party committee. During that time, Brezhnev had already developed an interest in sport, especially football. The local team, Steel, did not achieve great success, but it did enjoy the active support of the local party leadership.

After the war, Brezhnev continued to climb the party hierarchy. In 1952, Joseph Stalin noticed this young, active functionary who was now based in Moldova. As the leader of the Moldovan Communist Party, Brezhnev arrived in Moscow at the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), but after the congress he did not return to Moldova but became secretary of the CPSU.¹ After Stalin's death in 1953, Brezhnev briefly dropped

from the ranks of principal leaders of the country,² but he soon came to enjoy the support of Nikita Khrushchev. The two men had worked together in Ukraine, and when Khrushchev gained power, he remembered his protégé. From this moment, Brezhnev became one of the top political leaders of the Soviet state, and the active period of his political life corresponded to the years of the Cold War when big-time sport became an important instrument in that larger global confrontation.

Brezhnev's name is most often associated with the 1980 Olympic Games held in Moscow, which he managed with considerable difficulty to organize and run. The idea of holding the Olympic Games in a Communist country first occurred to Brezhnev as early as the 1950s. In February 1956, after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, where Khrushchev made his famous "secret speech" about the cult of Stalin, Brezhnev was returned to Moscow from his post in Kazakhstan and appointed secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Two months later the Soviet leadership received a proposal from the USSR State Sports Committee to organize the Summer Olympic Games of 1964 in Moscow.³ Perhaps the return of Brezhnev and the proposal of the Sports Committee were just a coincidence. Yet such projects were discussed in the USSR only after a preliminary reconnaissance at the highest echelons of power, and Brezhnev even then was known as a big supporter of sport. In the difficult postwar years, he had regularly found time to visit sports competitions. He supported the initiative of the Sports Committee and brought up the matter for discussion at a meeting of the Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee.⁴

Brezhnev was not alone in his desire to use sport for the benefit of Socialist society. In the 1950s, sport began to play an increasingly important role in Soviet foreign policy. Before World War II, sports competitions in the USSR were considered a means of training future defenders of the Communist system, intended primarily for domestic use, but after Stalin's death the situation changed. The new leadership realized sports victories could successfully advertise the Soviet way of life and demonstrate the superiority of the Socialist system. In 1956, the USSR made a brilliant debut at the Winter Olympics in Italy by winning the team competition. Four years previously, the Soviet Union had performed no less successfully at its first Summer Olympics in Finland. In December 1956 the Soviet Olympic team repeated its stellar performance in Australia. This event took place even though the USSR had broken off diplomatic relations with Australia in 1954 because of a spy scandal, with some Soviet leaders opposing participation at Melbourne. They insisted on a number

of restrictions, demanding that Soviet athletes should not live in the Olympic Village but stay aboard the ship *Georgia*, which was to be anchored in the port of Melbourne.⁵ Brezhnev was among those who strongly fought against these manifestations of a Stalinist closed society, and it was decided that the Olympic Games in Melbourne should witness the complete triumph of Soviet athletes and that the whole world would see how beautifully Soviet people lived in the country of victorious Socialism.

Brezhnev and his allies then raised the idea in the Politburo of holding the 1964 Games in Moscow. On the financial side, the leadership made preliminary calculations; the estimated cost of 36 million rubles was to be offset by income from foreign delegations to the tune of almost 420 thousand dollars.⁶ Yet it soon became clear that there were many obstacles to the implementation of these ambitious plans. Among the objective obstacles was the fact that Soviet infrastructure was not yet ready to host such a large-scale event. Moscow was desperately short of new sports arenas. Just built in 1956, the new national stadium at Luzhniki Park would not be sufficient in itself. There were not enough modern hotels, cafés and restaurants, or transport. The World Youth Festival in Moscow, which took place in 1957 and did not compare in scale with the Olympics, only highlighted all of these problems. The subjective factors were the product of the Cold War orthodox Stalinist thinking of many Soviet leaders. Despite the beginning of the "thaw" and some democratization of Soviet society, the uncontrolled access of foreign tourists and the Western press to Soviet citizens was still considered highly undesirable. Even worse, the country that hosted the Games would have to make a commitment to invite all member countries of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), whether or not they maintained diplomatic relations with the USSR. At the time, the Kremlin could not imagine the flags of such countries as Taiwan, South Korea, and Israel hanging in the Soviet capital. As a result, the idea of organizing the Olympic Games in 1964 in Moscow never got off the ground.

The figure leading the country, Nikita Khrushchev, represented another subjective obstacle to hosting the Olympics in the USSR. Despite his earlier support for Brezhnev, he was not interested in sports and considered them frivolous. Nonetheless, Khrushchev was forced to put up with sporting competitions being organized in the Soviet Union because they raised the prestige of the country. Khrushchev also suppressed the attempt to hold the Olympic Games in the USSR in 1968. Before discussing this question in the Central Committee, Khrushchev read the note of the Propaganda Department, which

stated that the 1960 Olympics in Rome incurred losses of about 2.5 billion lire. The Soviet economy was suffering from very serious difficulties at the time, and the note, prepared by party specialists who knew Khrushchev's attitude to sport, achieved its negative goal. Khrushchev, who was skeptical about the idea of holding the Games, became angry. How, he asked, could you spend so much effort and money on the organization of sports competitions when the country was facing more important and complex tasks?

It may seem like a coincidence, but the fact remains. Khrushchev's negative reaction to the Olympics proposal coincided with his idea to remove Brezhnev from the post of chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which he had occupied since 1960.⁷ Although he was essentially a figurehead in the Soviet nomenklatura system, it afforded a good opportunity to visit different countries and establish contacts with various individuals and organizations, including international sports committees. Brezhnev, as the nominal head of the Soviet state, opened the 1962 session of the IOC that took place for the first time in Moscow. He organized the reception of heads of international sports federations and discussed with them the problems of the world sports movement. All of these ties would later prove very useful when Moscow submitted an official bid to host the Olympics, but in 1963 Khrushchev, who was generally supported by Brezhnev, believed that his protégé should work more for the benefit of the party and not engage in such "nonsense" as sport.⁸ A year later, Brezhnev was removed from the post of chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.⁹ This move may well have played a role in Brezhnev's decision to join the 1964 plot by members of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee that ended Khrushchev's time in power. They also resolved that in the future, one person should not occupy two posts simultaneously—that is, leader of the party and head of the government. Accordingly, Brezhnev was elected first secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, and Alexei Kosygin was elected chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

The politics of the Cold War had a tremendous influence not only on sports competitions themselves but also on the choice of Olympic host cities and the internal organization of the Soviet Olympic Movement. In addition to the actual sporting confrontation between the United States and the USSR, the Soviet leadership was well aware of an earlier statement by the new US attorney general, Robert Kennedy, that the prestige of a country is determined by both missiles and Olympic gold medals. The Games quickly became a place of political struggle. In one case, it seemed the Olympics of 1968 in Mexico City

might not take place at all because early that year the IOC reversed its position and allowed South Africa, which had previously been excluded from most international sports federations, to take part. It seemed the Soviet Union and other Socialist states would join the African countries in boycotting the 1968 Games because the USSR had always acted as a "consistent fighter against the apartheid regime."¹⁰ Yet Moscow was not interested in splitting the Olympic Movement in which the USSR had come to play a leading role. So the Kremlin placed quite a difficult task before its sports functionaries within the IOC. They were to take the line that the Olympic Games should still be held in Mexico City, that the USSR should take part in the Olympics, and at the same time that relations with African countries should not be spoiled. Not surprisingly, the Soviets could come up with no answer of their own, and the problem was resolved only when the IOC reversed its own decision and South Africa was again excluded from the Olympic Movement. The Soviet Union received particular appreciation from the leadership of Mexico. As noted in a Committee for State Security (KGB) secret paper prepared for the highest Soviet leaders, the Mexican president "said in the circle of his closest associates that he feels a great sense of gratitude to the Soviet Union for its strong support of Mexico on the issue of the XIX Olympic Games, and he is ready to show the Russians that Mexico can appreciate the friendly support."¹¹

Following the logic of their policy, the Soviets turned a blind eye when the Mexican authorities brutally suppressed the massive student protest that took place on the eve of the Games, saying that it was an internal matter for the country. Moscow itself faced serious sporting and political problems during these Games. The Mexican climate forced the organizers to hold the Summer Games in the fall, meaning that the Olympics of 1968 began two months after Soviet troops had entered Czechoslovakia and crushed the Prague Spring. As a result, as at the Summer Games of 1956 and the Winter Games of 1980, which took place in the wake of the Hungarian uprising and the invasion of Afghanistan, respectively, Soviet athletes became hostages of Kremlin policy. They were exposed to criticism and accusations, and the Czechoslovakian athletes demonstratively refused to communicate with their so-called Soviet friends. In these circumstances, the Soviets fell back on the timeworn slogan of "sport out of politics" and constantly appealed to the representatives of the IOC, which supported the USSR in this matter. However, in contrast to their actions in the case of the African American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who famously expressed political protest in Mexico City and were banned from the

Games, the IOC decided not to disqualify the famous silver-medal winner, Czechoslovakian gymnast Vera Caslavskaya, for her behavior during the medal ceremony. Standing on the podium, Caslavskaya turned in the opposite direction when the Soviet anthem sounded. The new Czechoslovakian leadership that had come to power with the Soviet army subsequently corrected the IOC's "mistake" by banning Caslavskaya from foreign travel for several years.

In the second half of the 1960s the USSR Sports Committee tried once again to apply to host the Games in Moscow in 1972. It was expected that Brezhnev, now general secretary of the party, would support this issue, but at the time the leader had to strengthen his position in power and was not up to dealing with matters of sport. Once again, the application of the Sports Committee sank in the bureaucratic corridors of the Kremlin. Interestingly, the main domestic opponent of bringing the 1972 Olympics to Moscow was the future Soviet ambassador to Canada and one of the closest associates of Mikhail Gorbachev, Alexander Yakovlev. At the end of the 1960s, he was the deputy head of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee and acted as one of the more ideological fighters in the party.

Yakovlev, who in the 1960s was an ordinary party official, strongly opposed the Olympics in the USSR, not for economic or other reasons but solely on ideological principle. He was deeply aware that Brezhnev's desire to host the great sports festival completely contradicted the embargo on inviting athletes from the "forbidden" countries to Moscow. These included some with whom the USSR had no contact, and inviting them to Moscow would seriously damage the ideological principles advocated by the Soviet Union and that Yakovlev actively defended in those years. Moreover, Yakovlev was among those who were most active in the preparation of the well-known resolution of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee in 1968, in which Soviet scientific, cultural, and sports organizations were strictly forbidden to have any contact with a number of countries.

Despite the USSR's decision not to bid for the 1972 Olympics, the Cold War made the choice of who should host that event an unexpected headache for the Soviet leadership. The main contenders were Munich and Madrid. Munich caused a nervous reaction in the Socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR), which saw it as "a political provocation of the West," with the leaders of East Germany begging Brezhnev to use all his influence to prevent the Games going to Munich.¹² Yet the Soviets did not want to vote for Madrid, as they had not maintained diplomatic relations with the Franco regime since the Spanish Civil

War. Ultimately, the pressure from East Berlin was so great that the Soviet leadership decided to vote for Madrid. For the Soviet Union at that time such a decision could only be called sensational, and it is not surprising that the document revealing the CPSU Central Committee's resolution was hidden behind numerous secret classifications for many years. It is unknown what arguments were used, but even the leader of the clandestine Spanish Communist Party Dolores Ibarruri made clear that "the Communist Party of Spain had no objection to the Games in Madrid."¹³

At the last minute, however, when the Soviet delegation was already participating in the IOC session in Rome, it received fresh instructions from the Kremlin to vote for Munich. The archival documents suggest that this 180-degree turn was made by Brezhnev, who had his own plans in this regard. The USSR received considerable dividends from this decision. For Bonn it was extremely important to hold the Games in the new Germany, especially during the negotiations on the German problem in the early 1970s. West Germany's leaders remembered Soviet support for the candidacy of Munich and expressed their sincere gratitude to Brezhnev.¹⁴ The Soviet team in Munich was greeted with unusual warmth and hospitality. Brezhnev's peace-loving policy contributed to the signing of a peace treaty with Germany. That atmosphere extended to the playing fields, with the Soviet secret service reporting to the Kremlin, "West German fans more often supported Soviet than American athletes."¹⁵ In response to the wishes of the Soviet Union, the organizers concluded a secret agreement with the anti-Soviet radio station Radio Free Europe, located in West Germany. In return for accreditation to the Games the representatives of the station pledged "not to interview any of the participants from Eastern Europe."¹⁶ The Soviet Union justified its decision to vote for Munich by saying that it was a part of a larger compromise agreement, which, with all its limitations, opened the path to formal international recognition for East Germany. East Berlin was well aware of all this but still expressed its displeasure and made various demands on Moscow. In particular, the ambassador of the GDR to the Soviet Union refused to let the traditional Olympic torch relay go through his nation.¹⁷

International sports competitions during the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrated a new political line pursued by Brezhnev. Soviet policy became more flexible and less ideological. There was a military coup in Greece that brought a military junta to power in 1967. Moscow condemned the regime of the "black colonels" but did not cut either diplomatic or sporting ties with Greece.¹⁸ Competitions with Greek teams continued, but if they took place in the USSR,

they were not held in Moscow. These events were staged in the provinces, and almost nothing was reported in the Soviet press.¹⁹ It is, however, true that the entire Soviet leadership did not share the general secretary's views on sports. When the World Cup in Athletics was held in Athens in 1969, a large number of international organizations (including Communists) made an appeal to boycott the competitions. Soviet leaders decided to discuss this issue at a Politburo meeting, where Brezhnev's point of view won, and a special decree approved by the Politburo repeated the 1968 slogan "sport out of politics." The Politburo noted that the Soviet athletes would go to the event in Greece because this is an "international rather than a national event," and the victory of Soviet athletes would cause a favorable international response and "provide moral support for democratic forces in Greece."²⁰

These and similar actions of the Soviet leadership were ultimately aimed at removing the long-standing obstacle to bringing the Olympic Games to the USSR—the obligation to invite all members of the Olympic Movement regardless of their political relationship (or lack thereof) with the Soviet Union. At the same time, Brezhnev tried to convince the orthodox forces in the Central Committee and his international allies to sacrifice old principles. No steps along this path were easy. Israel was invited to the 1973 University Games in the Soviet Union, a decision that led to protests from many Arab countries. A year later, also for the first time, a team from Taiwan came to the Soviet Union to participate in the Biathlon World Cup. Information about this visit was kept to a minimum. The event was held in the Belarusian town of Raubichi, near Minsk, rather than Moscow. Yet it was a secret only for the majority of Soviet citizens. Outside the USSR, the topic of Taiwanese biathletes in the Soviet Union occupied the headlines of the sports pages for a long time. Mainland Chinese propaganda paid special attention to this matter with sharp anti-Soviet comments. At this time too, various teams from South Korea began to arrive in the Soviet Union for international competitions, which provoked protests from their northern Socialist neighbors. All of these athletes came to the USSR to participate in large international rather than dual competitions. Nevertheless, a precedent was created. These countries still had no diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and the invitations were clearly a rehearsal for a Moscow Olympics.

Brezhnev's time in power could also be called a golden age for Soviet athletes. As the general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and leader of the largest Socialist state, Brezhnev dealt with a huge number of foreign and domes-

tic political problems. Nevertheless, he did not neglect sports.²¹ During his rule, Soviet athletes received maximum support from the state, new stadiums were built, and numerous national and international sports events were organized. Brezhnev himself appeared at many competitions, especially ice hockey. Despite the sensational defeat of the so-called Red Machine at the Winter Olympic Games of 1980 in Lake Placid (the "Miracle on Ice"), Brezhnev insisted that the Soviet players be awarded governmental medals.²² The main task of elite Soviet sport, to advertise the Soviet way of life with the help of victories and medals, continued. Yet much also changed. Under Brezhnev, losing athletes did not suffer repressive consequences as in the past, when teams were disbanded and defeat in sports was regarded almost as state treason. Instead, different levers of influence were deployed, including administrative resources. After the Summer and Winter Olympic Games of 1968, when Soviet athletes were unsuccessful, occupying only second place, the Central Committee mobilized ministries, departments, and public organizations to work in the field of sport. All of these bodies were supposed to report on a monthly basis to the Soviet leadership on the preparations for the next Games, and thanks to these measures, the USSR was the top-ranked nation at both the Winter and Summer Olympics of 1972.

In late 1969, the Politburo finally decided to proceed with the official nomination of Moscow to host the Games of the XXI Olympiad in 1976. The letter addressed to IOC president Avery Brundage contained the key phrase that "all participants of the Games, representatives of international sports federations, the press, radio, television and all those involved in the organization of the Olympic Games, will be provided with free entry to the USSR."²³ However, despite the great work done over the next six months, the Soviet bid failed, as did a rival one from Los Angeles. Instead, at the IOC session in May 1970 in Amsterdam, Montreal was chosen as a compromise candidate. After that defeat, Brezhnev had to fight yet again for his Olympic dream, this time with his internal opponents. Some members of the Soviet leadership regarded the results of the voting in Amsterdam as a "capitalist conspiracy against the Soviet Union." Accordingly, the Soviet leader began to receive such radical proposals as the elimination of the IOC or the organization of the so-called Spartakiads of workers instead of the Olympic Games.²⁴ In the early 1970s, these proposals appeared absurd, but Brezhnev and his supporters had to work hard to dampen emotions and start a new pre-Olympic campaign, which this time led to winning the Moscow Games of 1980. In the conditions of the Soviet authoritarian system, this success became possible largely because there was a man at the

head of the Soviet state who was personally interested in having the Olympic Games take place in his country.

At the end of 1975, when Moscow had already been named host of the 1980 Games, Brezhnev was working on a summary report for the upcoming Twenty-Fifth Congress of the CPSU. For this report, he and his assistants received broad and extensive information on the country's situation, which led many to conclude that the economy of the Soviet Union was on the verge of serious crisis. After reading these documents, Brezhnev took an unexpected action. While he had always dreamed about the Olympics in Moscow, he wrote a note to his closest colleague, Konstantin Chernenko, inviting him to consider rejecting the Games. "It was," he wrote, "not too late," noting that the main argument would be the "enormous cost" the Soviet state would have to bear. In conclusion he proposed discussing the issue at a meeting of the Politburo.²⁵ This note remains the only documentary evidence of Brezhnev's doubts about the correctness of his Moscow decision. These doubts were never again raised or discussed, and preparation for the Moscow Games picked up momentum rapidly.

Some scholars, however, refer to the memoirs of Anatoly Chernyaev, who was one of Brezhnev's assistants and who describes the heated discussion on this issue among Soviet leaders at the dacha in Zavidovo in early 1976.²⁶ With all due respect to memoirs, one should treat the entries made in them with a certain degree of caution because of their specifics, especially when it is impossible to verify exactly when they were created and whether any changes or additions were made to them subsequently. Still, there is a difference between the records, for example, made by Vladimir Malin, head of the general department of the Central Committee of the CPSU during the time of Khrushchev, and the notes by Chernyaev. The former were stored in the archive from the very moment they were created, it is easy to verify their authorship and the terms of their creation, and there is an official document recording their provenance. That cannot be said with certainty about Chernyaev's memoirs. Moreover, no other archival document mentions that this problem was discussed at one of the meetings of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee (as Brezhnev insisted).

It is important to emphasize that to the end of his life Brezhnev remained a principled opponent of political boycotts of sports competitions. On such rare occasions when boycotts did happen during his leadership—for example, the refusal of the USSR's football team to play a World Cup qualifying game in Chile two months after the military coup in 1973, a stance that ultimately disqualified the USSR from the 1974 finals in West Germany—he regretted the necessity of

observing certain rules in sports and politics during the Cold War. One can only imagine how the history of the Olympic Games might have worked out if Brezhnev had not died in 1982. So far we have not found any document in which Brezhnev officially or unofficially talked about a possible boycott of the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Despite the boycott organized by the Western countries during the Moscow Olympics, it appears Brezhnev was prepared to allow athletes from the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries to travel to the United States in 1984.

Of course, it would be wrong to make one person responsible for everything (even if he was at the summit of Soviet power for eighteen years). But the Soviet Union had its own specific power structures. As is well known, since the time of Stalin a political system developed in which the head of the party not only was the leader of the country but also determined its general policy by his actions, habits, and preferences. The leader's closest circle tried to please him, copying his habits or interests, and then things snowballed throughout the country. Sometimes it was useful; sometimes it was base stupidity. Khrushchev liked corn, for instance, so corn was grown immediately in all regions of the country, even in the north. However, Khrushchev tried to fight with the party bureaucrats and invented the Committee of People's Control for this purpose. Accordingly, the officials had to create branches of this committee throughout the country. Party functionaries were not fond of these committees, since they acted largely independently and could also control the activities of the party leadership. However, while Khrushchev was in power, they were forced to tolerate these organizations and to praise them at every opportunity. When Khrushchev was removed from office, party functionaries immediately liquidated these committees.

It was the same with Brezhnev. Wanting to please the leader of the country, party and state officials tried to play on his weaknesses and preferences. He was very proud of his active participation in World War II, for instance, so as soon as he came to power, the military theme began to prevail in the USSR: the annual celebration of Victory Day, increased care for war veterans, new awards, and so on. The general attitude to sport also changed, as everyone knew that Brezhnev was a fan (his diaries published in 2016 record the many times he attended sporting events and watched football and hockey matches on television, for example). Accordingly, in this situation Soviet officials also tried to show their love of sport. A great deal of money was allocated to the construction of new stadiums; athletes began to receive much larger salaries

(by Soviet standards), new apartments, and cars; the most famous athletes were constantly awarded state orders and medals; and athletes could make requests that party bosses, worried for their careers, found hard to turn down. Therefore, in the Soviet Union, love (or vice versa, the indifferent attitude) of the party leader to sports was of great importance for the development of sport and the athletes themselves.

5

SOCCER ARTISTRY AND THE SECRET POLICE

Georgian Football in the Multiethnic Soviet Empire

Erik R. Scott

An official fan guide published for Dinamo Tbilisi in 1960 depicted the stars of Soviet Georgia's leading soccer team in stylized sketches that showed them singing while engaged in acrobatic leaps toward the ball. The guide's illustrators knowingly linked Georgian football to the explosive, colorful, and competitive style of male folk dancing that the small republic was famous for throughout the Soviet Union. On one page, Avtandil Ghoghoberidze, the team's striker, was depicted performing the *kartuli*—a Georgian wedding dance—with his hands while balancing on the ball. Throughout, the guide implied that the dazzling techniques of Georgian football and the ethnically distinctive movements of Georgian dance were facets of the same national repertoire of body culture.¹ The intimate association of football and dance worked both ways. Around the same time that the guide was published, the Georgian State Dance Ensemble introduced a piece whose playful choreography included passes of a ball made between the dancers.²

Football was the most popular sport in the USSR, and it reflected and sometimes reinforced social and national divisions in the multiethnic Socialist state. Although the game received government sponsorship, it presented Soviet citizens with a diverse array of competing imagined communities, each with its own symbols, heroes, myths, and grievances.³ Separate communities formed around Moscow's strong club teams, the largest rivalry being between Dinamo Moscow, patronized by the secret police and state functionaries, and Spartak Moscow, supported by trade unions and large segments of Moscow's working

vol. 150, MG 26 O 19, Pierre Elliott Trudeau Papers, LAC. I thank Alix McEwen at the LAC for this document.

50. William Thomas Warden, "Kosygin Visit/Conversations," telegram 968, October 29, 1971, FCO 82/20, National Archives, Kew Gardens, UK.

51. Macintosh and Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy*, 30. Even Brundage, however, admitted that it "seem[ed] ridiculous" for the best Soviets, Czechoslovaks, and Swedes to participate in IIHF tournaments while the Canadians were deemed ineligible. John Soares, "'Our Way of Life Against Theirs': Hockey and the Cold War," in *Diplomatic Games: Essays on the International History of Sport and Foreign Relations Since 1945*, ed. Heather Dichter and Andrew Johns (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 261.

52. "Soviet Canada Hockey Relations," memorandum from A. Chernushenko to L. A. D. Stephens, November 19, 1971, File 55-26-HOCKEY, pt. 16, vol. 10920, RG 25, LAC.

53. Canadian Embassy, Moscow, "CDA-USSR Hockey Relations," telegram 4021, December 1, 1971, File 55-26-HOCKEY, pt. 16, vol. 10920, RG 25, LAC.

54. A. Chernushenko, "Canada/USSR Hockey Relations," November 22, 1971, File 55-26-HOCKEY, pt. 16, vol. 10920, RG 25, LAC.

55. Letter from CDEA to Canadian Embassy, Moscow, message no. FAI-2557, November 23, 1971, File 55-26-HOCKEY, pt. 16, vol. 10920, RG 25, LAC. The Canadian foreign ministry presumed Kovalski received his instructions from Sergei Pavlov, chairman of the Committee on Physical Culture and Sports, rather than Andrei Starovoitov, head of the Soviet Hockey Federation.

56. D. B. Hicks, draft memorandum, November 25, 1971, enclosed with letter from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Canadian Embassy, Moscow, November 26, 1971, FAI-2605, File 55-26-HOCKEY, pt. 16, vol. 10920, RG 25, LAC.

57. Letter of agreement, enclosed with letter from L. A. D. Stephens to J. W. Willard (Deputy Minister, National Health and Welfare), April 19, 1972, File 55-26-HOCKEY-1-USSR, pt. 1, vol. 10920, RG 25, LAC.

58. Letter from Kosygin to Trudeau, October 10, 1972, File 55-26-HOCKEY-1-USSR, pt. 4.2, vol. 10921, RG 25, LAC; letter from Trudeau to Kosygin, September 29, 1972, enclosed with telegram GEA 956 from CDEA to Canadian Embassy, Moscow, September 29, 1972, File 55-26-HOCKEY-1-USSR, pt. 4.1, vol. 10921, RG 25, LAC. For the Canadian ambassador's more measured contemporary private analysis of the series' impact on bilateral relations, see esp. Robert Ford, "Hockey and Soviet-CDN Relations," telegram 2281, October 4, 1972, File 55-26-HOCKEY-1-USSR, pt. 4.1, vol. 10921, RG 25, LAC.

59. Red Fisher, "Summit Series 40th Anniversary: Clark's Game 6 Slash on Kharlamov Was Turning Point for Team Canada," *Montreal Gazette*, September 24, 2012, <http://www.montrealgazette.com/sports/Summit+Series+40th+anniversary+Clarke+Game+slash+Kharlamov+turning+point+Team+Canada/7287054/story.html>.

60. Jacob D. Beam (US Embassy, Moscow), "Soviet-Canadian Hockey—Blood on the Ice?," airgram A-577, August 30, 1972, CUL 13-3 USSR 1/1/70, Box 384, RG 59, US National Archives, College Park, MD.

61. Canadian Embassy, Moscow, telegram 2194, September 25, 1972, File 55-26-HOCKEY-1-USSR, pt. 4.1, RG 25, LAC.

62. Ibid.

63. Ford, "Hockey and Soviet-CDN Relations."

CHAPTER 4

1. Bureau of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee, "On L. I. Brezhnev," November 19, 1952, list (l.) 27, delo (d.) 1200, opis (op.) 1, fond (f.) 80, Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Moscow.

2. "Report of Administrative Bodies Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the Approval of Major General L. I. Brezhnev Deputy Chief of the General Political Department of the Ministry of Defense," May 1953, l. 109, d. 4, op. 108, f. 5, RGANI.

3. Note from Sports Committee of USSR to Central Committee of CPSU, March 30, 1956, ll. 115-116, d. 29, op. 16, f. 4, RGANI.

4. Ibid. Formally, Brezhnev was not in charge of sport in the Central Committee of the CPSU, yet he frequently engaged in sports-political matters. For example, in early 1957, he had to resolve the issue when some European sports organizations refused to take part in competitions in the Soviet Union in protest against the Soviet invasion of Hungary in the autumn of 1956. See "The Information by Departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the Relationship with the Leadership of the Danish Athletic Union," February 1957, l. 15, d. 220, op. 47, f. 5, RGANI.

5. Commission of the CPSU Central Committee, "On the Preparations for the Participation of Soviet Athletes in the World Olympic Games, 1956," January 14, 1955, ll. 36-37, d. 192, op. 8, f. 3, RGANI.

6. Note from Sports Committee of USSR to Central Committee of the CPSU, l. 116.

7. Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, "On the President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR," May 4, 1960, l. 49, d. 1200, op. 1, f. 80, RGANI.

8. Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, meeting minutes, June 21, 1963, l. 86, d. 1200, op. 1, f. 80, RGANI.

9. Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, "On the Comrade L. I. Brezhnev," July 11, 1964, l. 61, d. 1200, op. 1, f. 80, RGANI.

10. Committee for State Security (KGB), report to Central Committee of the CPSU about preparation of XIX Olympic Games in Mexico, 1968, l. 28, d. 48, op. 62, f. 5, RGANI.

11. Ibid.

12. Departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU, report on attitude of the GDR to holding the XX Olympic Games in Munich, 1971, ll. 172, 174, 186-187, 190, d. 103, op. 63, f. 5, RGANI.

13. Quoted in CPSU Central Committee Propaganda Department, report on the Communist Party of Spain's position on the 1972 Olympic Games, April 19, 1966, l. 84, d. 2, op. 20, f. 4, RGANI.

14. Meanwhile, in 1970 the president of the Organizing Committee of the Summer Games 1972, Willi Daume, told reporters at a press conference that the Soviet Union was always positive about the idea of the Olympics taking place in Germany and voted for

Munich at the IOC session. See Willi Daume, transcript of press conference with Soviet and foreign reporters in Moscow, 1970, l. 141, d. 48, op. 62, f. 5, RGANI.

15. Record of conversations between USSR Sports Committee Chairman S. Pavlov and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, June 1971, l. 180, d. 103, op. 63, f. 5, RGANI.

16. Ibid. During his visit to the United States in 1971, federal chancellor Willy Brandt specifically discussed this issue with President Richard Nixon and the minister of internal affairs of Germany, Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Brandt reassured the Soviet Union that on this issue West Germany would make a decision “that will satisfy both sides; though you may not regard it as ideal.” Ibid.

17. Record of conversations between CPSU and Ambassador Bittner, September 22, 1970, ll. 121–123, d. 1097, op. 20, f. 4, RGANI. See also Christopher Young, “Carrying a German Flame: The Olympic Torch Relay and Its Instrumentalization in the Age of Ostpolitik,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 32, no. 1 (2007): 116–136.

18. Conversation between Koryukin V. D. (Soviet ambassador in Greece) and member of the new Greek leadership, April or May 1968, l. 17, d. 65, port. 3, op. 51, f. 167, Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation.

19. In particular, in 1967 the USSR and Greece had to face each other in the qualifiers for the European Football Championship. The first game was scheduled for the middle of summer in Moscow and the second in the fall in Athens. The Soviet leadership decided not to boycott the competition, but under the conditions that the first game would take place in Tbilisi rather than Moscow, there would be no preadvertising, and information about the match would be minimized. See Sports Committee of USSR, report to secretary of the CPSU on preparation for qualifying matches of European Football Championship, 1968, July 4, 1967, l. 31, d. 951, op. 20, f. 4, RGANI. The same attitude prevailed in subsequent competitions involving Greek athletes.

20. Note from Sports Committee of USSR to Central Committee of CPSU on participation of Soviet athletes in 1969 World Championships in Athletics, 1969, l. 89, d. 153, op. 19, f. 4, RGANI.

21. Repeated mention of Brezhnev’s interest in sports can be found in the diaries, which he kept his whole life. For example, in the 1970s one can often read notes about hockey: “May 16 [1975]. I did not go anywhere—nobody called, I was the same. It looked like CSKA lost to ‘Spartak.’ Fine fellows, well played.” Leonid Brezhnev, diary, May 16, 1975, l. 280b (verso), d. 985, op. 1, f. 80, RGANI. “April 10, Tuesday [1977]. I watched the hockey: team of the USSR—Sweden: the result of 4–2 in favor of the USSR.” Leonid Brezhnev, diary, April 10, 1977, l. 200b, d. 986, op. 1, f. 80, RGANI.

22. In 1981 Brezhnev once again demanded that the hockey players be given state awards for their achievements. But this time, his colleagues in the Politburo expressed doubts, reminding him about the rewards the hockey players had received after the Games in Lake Placid. See Politburo of CPSU Central Committee, meeting minutes, September 17, 1981, l. 3, d. 47, op. 42, f. 89, RGANI.

23. Politburo of CPSU Central Committee, “On the Nomination of the City of Moscow to Host the XXI Olympic Games in 1976,” l. 27, d. 153, op. 19, f. 4, RGANI.

24. Departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU, report on Summer Olympics, August 1970, l. 193, d. 699, op. 20, f. 4, RGANI.

25. Note from L. I. Brezhnev to K. U. Chernenko (Secretary of the CPSU), December 25, 1975, l. 55, d. 317, op. 1, f. 80, RGANI.

26. See Anatoly S. Chernyaev, “The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev, 1976,” trans. Anna Melyakova, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB550-Chernyaev-Diary-1976-gives-close-up-view-of-Soviet-system/Anatoly%20Chernyaev%20Diary,%201976.pdf>.

CHAPTER 5

1. N. Dumbadze, M. Karchava, Z. Bolkvadze, and G. Pirtskhalava, “*Dinamo*” Tbilisi (Tbilisi: Soiuz zhurnalstov Gruzii, 1960).

2. *Dekada gruzinskogo iskusstva i literatury v Moskve: Sbornik materialov* (Tbilisi: Zaria vostoka, 1959), 247.

3. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

4. Robert Edelman, “A Small Way of Saying ‘No’: Moscow Working Men, Spartak Soccer, and the Communist Party, 1900–1945,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 5 (2002): 1441–1474.

5. On Dinamo Kiev, see Manfred Zeller, “‘Our Own Internationale,’ 1966: Dynamo Kiev Fans Between Local Identity and Transnational Imagination,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 1 (2011): 53–82.

6. I am grateful to Robert Edelman for his observation regarding Dinamo Tbilisi’s name.

7. On the history of Georgia’s folk-dance ensembles, see Erik R. Scott, *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

8. On the cultivation of football by Soviet and post-Soviet political leaders, see Régis Genté and Nicolas Jallot, *Futbol: Le ballon rond de Staline a Poutine, une arme politique* (Paris: Allary Éditions, 2018). The book’s authors, French journalists, draw on an earlier, unpublished version of this essay, as well as a podcast interview I gave in 2015, in their discussion of Georgian football. For the interview, see Erik R. Scott, “Georgian Football,” *Sport in the Cold War* (podcast), episode 8, aired December 2015, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/resource/sport-in-the-cold-war/episode-08-georgian-football>.

9. The term “beautiful game” entered international parlance with Brazil’s victory in the 1958 World Cup. Richard Giulianotti, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 26.

10. Eduardo P. Archetti, *Masculinities: Football, Polo, and the Tango in Argentina* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Roger Alan Kittleston, *The Country of Football: Soccer and the Making of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

11. Archetti, *Masculinities*, 162.

12. Damion Thomas, “Playing the ‘Race Card’: US Foreign Policy and the Integration of Sports,” in *East Plays West: Sport in the Cold War*, ed. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews (London: Routledge, 2007), 207–221.