

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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1. Tennis appeared in Russia a short while before World War I. It grew very little at that time, partly because of the war and partly because of the coup d'etat which the Bolsheviks carried out in October 1917. In the post-Revolutionary period, after the Soviet regime had established itself, not a single outstanding Soviet tennis player, male or female, appeared on the international scene. This might be explained by: the difficult economic position of the country, which was a result of the Revolution; the lack of contact the Soviet people had with the rest of the world; the isolation of Soviet athletes from the West; and the negative attitude which the Soviet regime had toward tennis, especially in the first years following the Revolution. They considered tennis a bourgeois game which could corrupt the people. Finally, the lack of tennis courts, racquets, balls, etc., was a reason for the absence of first-class Soviet players.
2. Tennis began to spread relatively fast during the first half of the 1930s. The fact that highly-placed Soviet functionaries were attracted to tennis was an important reason for this. These people were members of the newly emerging Soviet aristocracy who had contact with western countries and who had begun to recognize all the charms of mundane living since they possessed the necessary resources.
3. The following outstanding masters of tennis in all the history of Soviet tennis belong to this same period:
 - a. Boris Novikov of Moscow (now 45 or 46 years old), who was for many years champion of the Soviet Union and who has been able to keep himself among the ten best tennis players of the Soviet Union, even now, despite his

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advanced age and poor health (bad legs).

- b. The Leningrad tennis player, Eduard Negrebetskiy (46 years old), who captured the title of national champion as recently as three years ago.
- c. The former Moscow ballerina, Nina Teplyakova (now about 48 years old), who is employed as a tennis coach by the Dynamo Sports Club.

4. Sometime around 1936 or 1937, and to everyone's amazement, the internationally known tennis star Henri Cochet was invited to come to Moscow from France. He organized a tennis school in Moscow where the most talented young tennis players were trained. Several of these former students now rank among the ten best players in the country. Veteran Soviet tennis players who knew Cochet acknowledge openly that Cochet must be given his due for the enormous amount of help he gave, as a coach, to the development of Soviet tennis. Unfortunately for many Soviet tennis players, Cochet was not able to stay in the Soviet Union very long. Under a [redacted] pretext, he was forced to leave the USSR [redacted]

[redacted] Several of the Soviet tennis players who were in contact with Cochet were accused of espionage in behalf of France, arrested, and liquidated during the famous purges which took place between 1936 and 1939.

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5. Polish tennis players, who found themselves under the Communist regime after the partition of Poland between Hitlerite Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, also assisted in the development of Soviet tennis. Tennis players from the Baltic republics, which became victims of Soviet aggression in 1940, also gave some help.
6. During the years of World War II, tennis was almost completely forgotten in the Soviet Union. Tennis competition was resumed at the end of the war, and developed as follows:

- a. Individual championships of the Soviet Union:

The best tennis players of the cities of the RSFSR and of the Union Republics (in addition to the Baltic republics, tennis is actually played in only two republics, the Ukraine and Georgia), take part in these individual championships, beginning with the First Class. Tennis players are divided into three classes: the Third Class, consisting of the weakest players; Second Class; First Class; and, finally, Master's Class. In order to move to the next higher class, a tennis player must beat six players of his own class during an official match for the championship of the tennis section of a sports club, for example, or in competition for the tennis championship of a city or republic. In order to get into the Master's Class, a player must keep the title of champion in such cities as Leningrad or Moscow for two or three consecutive years, or he must remain among the country's top ten for several years. Both men and women participate in the national championships, in singles, doubles, and mixed doubles.

- b. All-Union youth and young people's competition - ages 14 to 16, and 16 to 18 [similar to U.S. boys and girls tournaments and junior championships].
- c. Cup of the Soviet Union - elimination according to the Olympic system.
- d. Championships of cities and republics.
- e. Championships of the All-Union Council of Labor Unions.
- f. Soviet Army championships.
7. There are also such tournaments as the Moscow-Leningrad match, national indoor championships, and the tournament of the "Ten Strongest". During the summer

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season, lasting from late April until September, the tennis sections of the Dynamo, Spartak, and other sports clubs play off their championships.

8. Soviet propaganda has claimed that tennis, which had been a sport for the rich before the Revolution, has been made available to the working man during the Soviet era. In spite of such claims, it must be admitted that, for the moment, only a very limited number of people can actually play this game. That is to say, only the rather well-to-do who can afford to participate in this sport, which is very expensive in the USSR. By "working man" we must understand that they mean those people who belong to the well-to-do classes of Soviet society, those who have material resources. As far as the masses of the population are concerned, they do not have the opportunity to engage in this sport. This is one of the most serious reasons for the weakness of tennis in the USSR. Outstanding, internationally known players can be developed only when there is an enormous number of participants as, for example, in Australia or the USA.
9. It should be noted that after World War II, just as it occurred in the period mentioned above, tennis became very popular among the top drawer of Soviet society — the children of Party and administrative functionaries, outstanding writers, scholars, actors, and artists, and so forth. The children of several Soviet leaders play tennis, such as, Malenkov's son, A. Andreyev's son, Kuybyshev's son, Mikhaylov's son, and others. Most of these people have first-class courts at their villas near Moscow and their villas along the Black Sea coast. The enthusiasm shown by this class of Soviet society for tennis serves as a solid additional source of income for Soviet tennis professionals.
10. Even taking into consideration the most recent official data published by the Soviet press, the number of participants in tennis scarcely reaches the pre-war level and includes only about 0.15 percent of the athletes in the country. Tennis is played only in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, the Georgian SSR, and the Baltic republics. In all other parts of the USSR, the people have no idea what tennis is.
11. If we can believe the official Soviet figures, the total number of tennis courts in the USSR is only 800 (primarily of clay) for a population of 200 million. Besides, judging from the condition of the tennis courts in the Moscow Tennis Center itself, many of these are not quite suitable for play because of their poor condition. There is not a single grass court in the USSR. The better courts are in Tallinn and Riga. The only two indoor courts are in Moscow and Leningrad, at the Dymamo Stadium in Moscow and at the Menyesh in Leningrad. Characteristically, it is for the most part the highly placed officials and their families who use the Moscow indoor court during the winter, not the tennis-playing "working man".
12. The Soviets have not yet learned how to make satisfactory tennis goods in the Soviet Union. Only one small company (artel) in Estonia makes tennis racquets. Tennis balls decent enough to play with did not appear in Moscow shops until 1948, and then they were expensive. In that same year they began to import tennis racquets from Czechoslovakia. The best tennis players in the Soviet Union, whose fondest dream it is to have a foreign "Maxply" or a "Slazenger", are forced to resort to all sorts of stratagems to obtain racquets from abroad, and they pay big money for them.
13. There is almost no development of young tennis players in the Soviet Union. Their game is not nearly as good as that of the old school. It is virtually impossible to find a single young player among the best players in the country, whether women or men, who breaks into the first ten. To illustrate this, the following examples of the ages of outstanding Soviet tennis players can be cited:
 - a. Men who have constantly, for many years, been among the first ten in the

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country: B. Novikov, 45 or 46 years old; E. Negrebetskiy, 45; N. Ozerov, 32; Y. Korbut, 37; M. Korchagin, 35; Belets-Geyman, 35; and S. Andreyev, 30.

- b. Women in the same category: N. Belonenka, 35 or 36; G. Kondratyeva, 45 or 46; G. Korovina, 46 or 47; O. Kolmykova, 38 to 40; K. Borisova, 35 or 36; Y. Chuvyrina, 36; and N. Leo, 40.
 - c. From among the young tennis players, N. Yemelyanova, 25 years old; Z. Kuzina, 23; and the very young Ukrainian tennis player, Kuzmenko, should be singled out. In spite of all their efforts, these young people have remained in a class weaker than the "old guard". Among the young male tennis players, scarcely a one stands a chance of becoming an outstanding player in the near future. The present national champion, S. Andreyev, whose game is not particularly sparkling, is still referred to as a young tennis player, although he can hardly be considered young by western standards.
14. In spite of the old age of the best tennis players in the Soviet Union, they continue to hold on firmly to their top ranks. The younger players are so weak that, in all types of All-Union competition, they are always knocked out of the eliminations, not getting even as far as the quarter-finals. Year after year, the championships are virtually always shared by the veterans.
 15. The lack of good coaches is another serious reason for the feeble level of this game. It is typical of many of the older tennis players, who share the first places, to harbor no great desire to pass on their experience. As they see it, the younger players could become dangerous rivals and, consequently, might take away from them their material well-being.
 16. In the Soviet Union there is a lack of any kind of easily digestible instructional literature on tennis which might be of help to young tennis players. In the existing books on tennis written by Soviet authors, it is difficult to find a clear explanation of the basic tennis strokes and of tennis tactics; each author tries to propose his own theory. In the past 20 years, not a single tennis manual written by a foreigner has been translated into Russian. The Soviet bosses in charge of sports consider that any book on tennis written in the free world, even if it gives only rudimentary explanations of the game, is of a reactionary character and might act negatively on the minds of Soviet athletes.
 17. The isolation of Soviet tennis players from western world players is a serious obstacle on the road of tennis progress in the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders, aware of the poor development of their players, prefer not to show them -- the same as in the cases of several other sports at the same level as tennis. They fear this might have a disadvantageous effect on the peoples of the western countries. Such a situation does not permit Soviet tennis players to learn techniques from the world's best players. They are deprived of the opportunity to receive any objective information on the state of tennis in other countries, particularly the USA. Soviet propaganda tries hard to represent the American people as a nation of barbarians with medieval customs, a people that have hardly passed the stage of using clubs as the tools of production. Almost nothing about western world sports, including, of course, tennis, appears in Soviet Sport, the one sporting newspaper which is published in the USSR. There are a few exceptions, all of them fantastic stories which explain why, for example, American tennis players are successful in the Davis Cup matches. The Americans and Australians hog the cup for themselves, not making it possible for the less wealthy European teams to travel to the western hemisphere.
 18. The results of the so-called "comradely training matches", a term used by Soviet sports promoters when Soviet athletes have no chance of winning, with the Czechoslovakian tennis players in winter 1948 revealed the low level of Soviet tennis. Jaroslav Drobny, who later fled to Czechoslovakia, took part

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in these matches. With his technique, he produced stunning impressions on Soviet tennis players, on Hungarian tennis players in 1949, and on Polish tennis players in 1950. All of these teams, especially the Czechs and the Hungarians, showed their absolute superiority over the Soviet tennis players.

19. Soviet propoganda asserts that there are no professional athletes in the Soviet Union. [redacted] this is not at all true [redacted]

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20. In the autumn, when all the year's tournaments are over, the All-Union tennis section chooses the ten best players of the Soviet Union. Conditions are perfected for them to master their tennis: specially appointed instructors; the best tennis courts are made available for summer and winter use; tennis racquets, balls, clothes, and shoes are provided; free trips to the southern shores of the Black Sea are offered for spring training and for the late autumn rest after the summer season. A personal salary is secretly paid to the first ten players by the All-Union Committee on Physical Culture and Sport. Tennis players and professionals in other sports must sign an oath that they will keep secret, under penalty of legal punishment, the fact that they are receiving wages, especially on the occasion of a trip abroad. This salary allows the first ten players to devote all their time to the sport. For deception purposes, these "amateurs" are given fictitious duties in the sports clubs to which they belong, such as Dynamo and Spartak. These duties do not require that they fulfill any official functions whatsoever. For example, Master of Sport M. Korchagin is listed as a physician in the Spartak Club. But he stopped practicing medicine as soon as he became a member of the top ten in the country and began receiving regular wages for his tennis. It is interesting to note that a continuous struggle goes on within the All-Union tennis section for a place among the first ten. Here, as well as on the tennis courts, the well-known Soviet method of blat (pull) comes into play.

21. It seems that in recent years Soviet tennis "experts" have found a way out of a difficult situation by inventing what they call malvy tennis (little tennis), like American paddle tennis, as a means of popularizing and developing tennis among the young people of the USSR. The use of a wooden racquet, a little larger than a ping-pong paddle, is suggested instead of the usual racquet. Old balls, no longer good for real tennis, are also used. The game is played on a court which is a little shorter than the normal tennis court. The inventors of this game are bold enough to assert that malvy tennis will help inoculate the young people with the germ of interest in tennis and develop talented players at no great material expense. They are completely right only in regard to the last five words of the previous sentence.

22. These "experts", following the old Stalinist saw which says, "there are no forts so strong that they cannot be taken by Bolsheviks", have the audacity to claim that a first-class international tennis player can be developed in the twinkling of an eye. With Soviet tennis in this state of affairs, it is very doubtful that any really important successes can be achieved in the immediate future.

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