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**Sports Diplomacy of the USSR in the 1920s: Governing Institutions and  
Implementation Practices**

Dissertation Summary

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**Relevance and statement of the research problem.** Sports diplomacy today is one of the most common areas of foreign policy activity. Nowadays it is often used as part of sanctions policy or as a way of demonstrating a political position.

There are several concepts in historiography about the time of the emergence of sports diplomacy as a regular practice in international relations. A number of historians associate this with the revival of the Olympic Games in 1896<sup>1</sup> or the work of the British Foreign Office to establish economic ties with Europe during the 1908 Olympic Games in London<sup>2</sup>. But with this approach sport as a phenomenon does not play a role; the essence lies in the fact of holding a major forum which will be attended by representatives of countries from all over the world. In addition, such practices were not regular and systematically included in the foreign policy activities of states. The dominant position is that the establishment of sports diplomacy occurred only in the 1950s in the United States, where it acted as an important component of policies aimed at establishing the hegemony of American values<sup>3</sup>.

However, we find the first projects of the systematic use of both culture and sports in the foreign policy of the state, recorded at the official level, precisely in the diplomatic practice of the USSR in the 1920s. Already in 1921 the Red Sports International (RSI) was created - formally a supranational body, which was entrusted with the management of all "red sports" on a global scale. His direct ideological opponents were all "bourgeois" (i.e. professional, non-proletarian) sports bodies (IOC, FIFA, etc.), as well as the social-democratic Lucerne Sports International

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*. (London, Routledge, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Beacom, "Sport in International Relations: a case for cross-disciplinary investigation", *The Sports Historian*. No. 20 (2) (2000): 1-23.

<sup>3</sup> Jérôme Gyax, "American Sports and Cultural Diplomacy: Persuasion and Propaganda during the Cold War", *Relations internationales*. No. 123 (2005): 87-106.

(LSI). RSI, in conjunction with the Supreme Council of Physical Culture (SCPC) of the USSR, had to implement the foreign policy tasks set for Soviet sports.

These tasks were consistent with the general imperatives of Soviet cultural diplomacy. This is, firstly, overcoming the political isolation of the USSR and establishing international contacts through a formally non-political institution. Secondly, with the help of sports victories and physical education propaganda, they sought to demonstrate to the world the advantages of life and the prospects for self-improvement of citizens of the Soviet state under the dominance of communist ideology and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Soviet athlete was supposed to become one of the brightest prototypes of the “new Soviet man”<sup>4</sup>. And, in connection with the threat of the “fascistization” of Europe in the late 1920s, began the transformation of sports sections of the RSI into the core of self-defense squads during political actions of local communist parties.

Thus it seems logical that sports diplomacy could appear precisely in the new political reality - with the emergence of the first state that declared itself proletarian and socialist, that is immediately opposing itself to the external environment. Consequently, the dominant narrative in historiography about the time of the emergence of sports diplomacy and its role in the system of international relations at the beginning of the 20th century needs significant additions and adjustments.

In addition, the regular use of sports diplomacy practices today causes a logical desire of scientists to trace the retrospective of the formation of this phenomenon<sup>5</sup>. However, the emphasis is usually on ideological confrontation in the context of Cold War studies. The 1920s account for a significantly smaller number of works. Meanwhile, according to sports historian Christiane Eisenberg, the key

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Fritzsche and Jochen Hellbeck, “«Novyj chelovek» v stalinskoj Rossii i nacistskoj Germanii”, *Za ramkami totalitarizma: sravnitel'nye issledovaniya stalinizma i nacizma* (Moscow, Fond "Prezidentskij centr B. N. El'cina": ROSSPEN, 2011), 417-418.

<sup>5</sup> Natal'ya Bogolyubova and Yuliya Nikolaeva, *Geopolitika sporta i osnovy sportivnoj diplomatii: ucheb. posobie dlya bakalavriata i magistratury* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Yurajt, 2018); Philippe Vonnard and Kevin Tallec Marston, “Playing Across the ‘Halfway Line’ on the Fields of International Relations: The Journey from Globalising Sport to Sport Diplomacy”, *Contemporary European History*. No. 29 (2020): 220-231.

research problem of the 21st century for this research area is the intertwining of the interests of sports associations and totalitarian regimes in the interwar period<sup>6</sup>. The combination of these factors determined the relevance of this dissertation.

### **The degree of scientific development of the topic**

In general, the works devoted to international sports relations in the 1920s can be divided into three groups, in accordance with the approaches to the problem that guided the researchers.

The first approach can be called ideological. The authors place sport in the context of the ideological conflict of the 1920s and consider sports confrontation as illustrative material for representing political struggle. The most striking example is the work of P. Arnaud and D. Riordan<sup>7</sup>. The authors examine the influence of ideologies and political conditions on sports in each of the major European countries, and also describe the development of the workers' sports in the interwar period. A number of other authors use a similar approach<sup>8</sup>. However, in this case, attention is not paid to the regular practices of holding sports meetings; the studies are characterized by a high degree of generalization. In addition, the principles of international activities in the field of sports, declared from the stands, often diverged from what subsequently happened in the course of everyday work. Sometimes public rhetoric harmed relations with potential allies or confused actual allies. Therefore, it is worth studying the public discourse regarding sports diplomacy of the USSR extremely critically, without assigning it the role of the basis of foreign policy work.

The second approach can be called institutional. Researchers focus on the relationships between leading sports organizations (International Olympic

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<sup>6</sup> Christine Eisenberg, "Otkrytie sporta sovremennoj istoricheskoj naukoj", *Logos*. No. 6 (73) (2009): 82-98.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Arnaud and Jim Riordan, *Sport and International Politics: Impact of Fascism and Communism on Sport* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Penelope Kissoudi, "Sport, Politics and International Relations in the Twentieth Century", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. Vol. 25. No. 13 (2008): 1689-1706; Gabriel Colomé and Jeroni Sureda, "Sports and international relations (1919-1939): the 1936 Popular Olympiad", *Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics UAB*. URL: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/13282849.pdf>

Committee, LSI, RSI and SCPC)<sup>9</sup>. This emphasis is logical, because it was the emergence of these opposing structures that largely determined the emergence of sports diplomacy itself, and the study of leading actors allows us to trace the evolution of relations within working-class sports and its connection with the “bourgeois” movement. Within the framework of this approach, key problems in the functioning of Red Sportintern, arising from the formal status of a supranational organization, are identified, and its complex relations with Soviet physical education management institutions are described. Much attention is paid to the heads of organizations that determined the appearance of Soviet physical education<sup>10</sup>: the first chairman of the RSI and the head of the SCPC in the early 1920s N.I. Podvoisky, the People's Commissar of Health N.A. Semashko, the secretary of the RSI I. Zholdak. However, in this case, the main attention is also paid to the declared provisions of the work of organizations (their charters, the rhetoric of leaders), which in fact were subordinated to changes in the positioning of the states themselves or higher bodies, and not to the sports agenda. The study of these large institutions would be more productive by referring to their applied regulations and reports on activities carried out.

The third approach can be called a case approach. These works are dedicated to specific work-sports forums or outstanding athletes<sup>11</sup>. They analyze the process

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<sup>9</sup> David Steinberg, “The Workers’ Sport Internationals 1920-28”, *Journal of Contemporary History*/ Vol. 13. No. 2 (1978): 233-251; Andre Gounot, “Sport or Political Organization? Structures and Characteristics of the Red Sport International, 1921-1937”, *Journal of Sport History*. No. 28 (2002): 23-39; Aleksandr Vasil'ev, *Zarozhdenie i razvitie mezhdunarodnykh svyazey sovetskogo sporta v 1920-e gg.* (PhD diss., Saratov State University, 2001); Artem Filippov, “Mezhdunarodnye kontakty sovetskogo sporta 1920-h-1930-h godov: protivostoyanie Krasnogo i Lyucernskogo Sportinternacionalov”, *Bulletin of Kostroma State University*. No. 1 (2012): 338-341; Anna Khorosheva, “Deyatel'nost' Krasnogo sportivnogo Internacionala v konce 1920-h – nachale 1930-h gg.”, *Lomonosov History Journal*. No. 5 (2018): 86-105.

<sup>10</sup> Anna Khorosheva “Sejchas nado sobirat' sily dlya sverzheniya fashizma”. Zapis' besedy predsedatelya Byuro Socialisticheskogo rabocheho sportivnogo internacionala Yu. Dejcha i sekretarya Krasnogo Sportinterna I. Zholdaka. 1935 g.”, *Historical archive*. No 2 (2019): 80-89; Ibid. “Stanovlenie sovetskoy fizkul'tury i protivostoyanie N.A. Semashko i N.I. Podvojskogo”, *Reformy v povsednevnoj zhizni naseleniya Rossii: istoriya i sovremennost'. Materialy mezhdunarodnoj nauchnoj konferencii*. (Saint Petersburg, LGU im. A.S. Pushkina, 2020): 79-84.

<sup>11</sup> Anna Khorosheva, “‘Proletarskaya’ Spartakiada 1928 g. i ‘burzhuaznoe’ Olimpijskoe dvizhenie”, *Svobodnaya mysl'*. No. 2 (2018): 5-22; Konstantin Bakeshin, “K 90-letiyu pervoj mezhdunarodnoj zimnej rabochej Spartakiady v Norvegii,” *Scientific notes of the Lesgaft National*

of preparing and holding competitions in the unity of organizational, propaganda, financial aspects. But the focus is on the competition itself: its results and records. And although such victories are part of the formation of national prestige, this component, in the context of the total dominance of the USSR in proletarian competitions, should not be overestimated.

Thus, in the historiography of the topic there is an obvious gap - behind the ideological discussions and official intentions of the leaders, the practical aspects of the work of Soviet sports diplomacy remain poorly studied. The regulatory documents of the SCPC and RSI on the organization of sports meetings, the evolution of non-competitive forms of interaction in the second half of the 1920s, and the attitude of the athletes themselves to the practices of sports diplomacy were practically untouched. Without addressing these issues, it is impossible to talk about sports diplomacy as a systemic political practice because the ideological position often encountered objective difficulties when trying to transfer it in a dogmatic form to the level of everyday interaction.

It is necessary to highlight several categories of works that are adjacent to the reviewed studies on our topic.

Works that analyze the foreign policy of the USSR in the 1920s make it possible to determine whether sports diplomacy acted in line with the key imperatives of Soviet foreign policy of the period in question: ending the international isolation of the USSR, pursuing a course toward proletarian internationalism and creating strong footholds for further revolutionary work in Europe, and, at the same time, establishing regular contacts with the external environment to temporarily maintain peaceful coexistence<sup>12</sup>.

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*State University of Physical Education, Sport and Health*. No. 1 (2018): 30-34; Konstantin Bakeshin, "K 90-letiyu pervoj Vsesoyuznoj Spartakiady", *Scientific notes of the Lesgaft National State University of Physical Education, Sport and Health*. No. 6 (2018): 15-17.

<sup>12</sup> Iskander Magadeev, *V teni Pervoj mirovoj vojny: dilemmy evropejskoj bezopasnosti v 1920-e gody* (Moscow, Aspekt Press, 2021); Ekaterina Romanova, "Sovetskaya Rossiya/SSSR i transformaciya sistemy mezhdunarodnyh otnoshenij v pervoj polovine 1920-h godov", *Bulletin of Moscow State University. International Relations and World Politics*. No. 3 (2022): 11-52.

Research on the social history of the 1920s allows us to place the identified positions of ordinary athletes in the context of the mass sentiments of Soviet society during the period under study: people's attitudes toward power, ideology, propaganda work, and the politicization of everyday life<sup>13</sup>.

Works on the history of world<sup>14</sup> and Russian sports<sup>15</sup> make it possible to place the problem under study in the context of the development of sports as such, to determine the place of working sports in the 1920s and to trace how the paradigm of perception of physical education changed from the Russian Empire to the USSR.

Through research on sports diplomacy in international relations throughout the 20th century<sup>16</sup> it was possible to identify different approaches to the periodization of this phenomenon, the evolution of its tools and identify current methods for studying this practice.

Monographs on the role of sports and physical culture in the social policy of the Soviet state<sup>17</sup> made it possible to compare the positions of the RSI and SCPC with the intentions of the state, which saw the physical culture modernization of the country as part of the formation of a new type of human in the USSR.

Works devoted to the practices of cultural diplomacy in other areas of activity (mainly international tourism) help to compare their tools with sports-diplomatic

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<sup>13</sup> Vladimir Buldakov, *Utopiya, agressiya, vlast'. Psihosocial'naya dinamika postrevolyucionnogo vremeni. Rossiya, 1920–1930 gg.* (Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2012); Sergej Yarov, *Chelovek pered licom vlasti, 1917-1920-e gg.* (Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2014); Ol'ga Velikanova, *Razocharovannye mechtateli: sovetskoe obshchestvo 1920-h godov* (Moscow, Politicheskaya enciklopediya, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Laslo Kun, *Vseobshchaya istoriya fizicheskoy kul'tury i sporta* (Moscow, Raduga, 1982); Evgenij Gik, *Istoriya olimpijskih igr* (Moscow, Eksmo, 2014); Vladislav Stolyarov, "Idei P'era de Kubertena i sovremennoe olimpijskoe dvizhenie," *Theory and practice of physical culture*, no. 1 (2014): 57-60.

<sup>15</sup> Oleg Kucherenko, *Sto let rossijskomu futbolu* (Moscow, Gregori Page, 1997); Georgij Demeter, *Ocherki po istorii otechestvennoj fizicheskoy kul'tury i olimpijskogo dvizheniya* (Moscow, Sovetskij sport, 2005); Aleksandr Sunik, *Rossijskij sport i olimpijskoe dvizhenie na rubezhe XIX - XX vekov* (Moscow, Sovetskij sport, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Mihail Prozumenshchikov, *Bol'shoj sport i bol'shaya politika* (Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2004); Aleksandr Naumov, "Sportivnaya diplomatiya kak instrument 'myagkoj sily'", *Global politics*. No. 4 (2017): 32-43; Aleksandr Kupriyanov, Elena Zubkova, Timur Mahamatulin and Mihail Prozumenshchikov, *Sovetskij sport v kontekstah holodnoj vojny* (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Ves' Mir", 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Robert Edelman, *Ser'yoznaya zabava: Istoriya zrelishchnogo sporta v SSSR* (Moscow, Sovetskij sport, 2008); David Hoffmann, *Vzrashchivanie mass: modernoe gosudarstvo i sovetskij socializm. 1914-1939* (Moscow, NLO, 2018).

ones to determine whether sport was a special area of work with clear specifics or was subject to general patterns of cultural-diplomatic practices<sup>18</sup>.

Works on the sociology of sports<sup>19</sup> and the role of physical culture in the process of cultural exchanges<sup>20</sup> made it possible to determine how well the strategies of governing institutions corresponded to the psychology of athletes and the demands of the spectator masses, and to evaluate the effectiveness of using culture as a propaganda tool during sports competitions.

**The object of the study** is the complex of written sources about the role of sports and Soviet athletes in the international relations of the USSR in the 1920s.

**The subject of the study** is the political, administrative and social aspects of sports diplomacy in the context of foreign policy relations of the USSR in the 1920s.

**The chronological framework of the study:** 1921 – 1930. The lower limit is determined by the creation of the Red Sportintern, with the work of which the theoretical and methodological formulation of sports diplomacy as a systemic practice begins. The choice of the upper limit is associated with the sharp increase in the processes of militarization of the workers' sports movement in 1929-1930, determined by the imperative of the need for an active fight against the 'fascisation' of sports in Europe.

**The purpose of the work:** to identify the mechanisms of functioning of the USSR sports diplomacy at the ideological, institutional and practical levels of

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Hollander, *Politicheskie piligrimy (puteshestviya zapadnykh intellektualov po Sovetskomu Soyuzu, Kitayu i Kube 1928-1978)* (Saint Petersburg, Lan', 2001); Igor' Orlov and Aleksej Popov, *Skvoz' "zheleznyj zhanes"*. See *USSR: inostrannye turisty i prizrak potemkinskih dereven'*. Moscow, Izd-dom Vyssh. shk. ekonomiki, 2018); Aleksandr Golubev and Vladimir Nevezhin *Formirovanie obraza Sovetskoj Rossii v okruzhayushchem mire sredstvami kul'turnoj diplomatii: 1920-e – pervaya polovina 1940-h gg.* (Moscow, Institut rossijskoj istorii RAN: Centr gumanitarnyh initsiativ, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Norbert Elias, "Genezis sporta kak sociologicheskaya problema", *Logos*. No. 3 (2006): 41-62; Hans Gumbrecht, *Pohvala krasote sporta* (Moscow, NLO, 2009); Vitalij Lukashchuk, "Sociologiya sporta: obzor tradicionnykh zarubezhnykh sociologicheskikh paradigmat i teorij", *Moscow State University Bulletin. Series 18. Sociology and Political Science*. No. 2 (2020): 49-69.

<sup>20</sup> Natal'ya Bogolyubova, *Sport v palitre mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenij: gumanitarnyj, diplomaticheskij i kul'turnyj aspekty* (Saint Petersburg, St. Petersburg State University, 2011); Michael David-Fox, *Crossing borders: Modernity, Ideology, and culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).



implementation and to determine the place of this phenomenon in the foreign policy relations of the Soviet state in the 1920s.

In accordance with the purpose, the following **tasks** were set:

1. To determine whether the Soviet government perceived sports and physical culture as a tool for the systematic establishment of international relations in the 1920s.

2. To study the process of formation of governing bodies of Soviet sports and to determine the nature of their interaction with the supranational Red Sports International and non-sports departments.

3. To study the forms of interaction between Soviet and foreign athletes: international sports forums, trips of Soviet teams abroad and the reception of foreign athletes in the USSR, agreements on sports patronage and socialist competition as components of the toolkit of Soviet sports diplomacy.

4. To determine the attitude of Soviet athletes who participated in foreign competitions to their new diplomatic role.

5. To analyze the contradictions in the ideological attitudes that accompanied the implementation of sports-diplomatic practices, and also to determine how ideological requirements for Soviet athletes influenced their interaction with the authorities.

6. To identify regional features of the work of Soviet bodies in the sphere of sports contacts.

### **Methodology and research methods**

The methodological principles are determined by the studying within the framework of several areas: the history of practices, the history of sports and the history of international relations. At the same time the study of sports is not the purpose of the work, it will be considered as a special diplomatic practice.

Two important terms of the study - physical culture and sport - are not identical. Physical culture in the work is understood as a set of all physical practices aimed at strengthening the body, the purpose of which was declared to be the participation of athletes in the further revolutionary struggle and the defense of the

state from external threats. Sport implies directly competitive practices, the victory in which contributed to strengthening the positive image of the Soviet project, the formation of the opinion abroad that the socialist system is the most suitable for the physical improvement of man. It is worth noting, however, that in the 1920s in the USSR, a clear terminological difference had not yet been formulated, and in public discourse "proletarian" physical culture was rather contrasted with sport as a "bourgeois" phenomenon<sup>21</sup>.

It is important to determine what was the model of sports diplomacy of the USSR as part of cultural diplomacy. Of the many theoretical frameworks proposed, the division into models of suppression or recognition is the most suitable for our work. The criteria in this case are the role of the state (monopoly or compromise), sources of financing for work (only the state or with the involvement of third-party funds), methods of implementation (propaganda or mutual information), style of interaction (monologue or cooperation).

The practices of receiving foreign delegations to the USSR will be compared with the concept of "Soviet hospitality", developed by the American sociologist P. Hollander and included, first of all, intensive care for the visitor in order to encourage him to note only positive aspects about his stay in the country and a selective representation of reality<sup>22</sup>.

The historical-genetic method was used to demonstrate that the tools of sports diplomacy in the 1920s were not static. He instantly absorbed innovations from Soviet domestic politics (the practice of patronage and socialist competition). The set of interaction tools by the end of the 1920s was very different from what could be observed at the beginning of the decade. The historical-comparative method made it possible to identify common and different aspects of the work of sports diplomacy in different regions of the world, each of which required special solutions. Thanks

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<sup>21</sup> Svetlana Ul'yanova, "Fizkul'turniki protiv sportsmenov (Problemy terminologii v izuchenii massovogo sporta v SSSR v 1920 – 1930-e gg.)", *Tvorcheskaya laboratoriya istorika: gorizonty vozmozhnogo (k 90-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya B. G. Mogil'nickogo). Materialy Vserossijskoj nauchnoj konferencii s mezhdunarodnym uchastiem* (Tomsk: Nacional'nyj issledovatel'skij Tomskij gosudarstvennyj universitet, 2019), 352-354.

<sup>22</sup> Hollander, *Politicheskie piligrimy*, 74-76.

to this method, radical contradictions between the Red and Lucerne Sports Patterns were identified, which caused a conflict within the workers' sport, as well as points of contact, which would become the basis for joint work since 1932.

The dissertation is based on the principle of historicism. The foreign policy relations of Soviet sports are considered in the context of the changing situation in the international arena, the public rhetoric of the USSR, changes in regional priorities of work, metamorphoses in the management of physical culture within the country. The evolution of sports diplomacy of the USSR has been studied against a broad historical background, the role of the studied period in the development of sports diplomacy in the XX century has been determined.

### **The novelty of the research**

At the moment there is no comprehensive work in historiography devoted to the sports diplomacy of the USSR in the 1920s due to the fact that the practices of its functioning have not been sufficiently studied. This dissertation is the first to examine in detail the geographical features of Soviet sports diplomacy and non-competitive forms of sports interaction between the USSR and foreign countries. The relations were traced between the authorities and athletes, who in the 1920s were acted as actors in the mechanism of international contacts. The self-positioning of athletes and how it manifested itself in relations with foreign colleagues is considered. The everyday practices of Soviet sports diplomacy are studied, including such issues as economic support, transport and communication difficulties, methods of work of Soviet structures and organizations of foreign countries as receiving and sending parties. An assessment is made of the effectiveness of sports diplomacy of the USSR in the 1920s, the degree of correspondence between the expectations of governing bodies and the real situation on the competitive fields.

For the first time, a set of unpublished archival documents is being introduced into scientific circulation: regulations of the RSI and SCPC on the rules for organizing international trips and recruiting representative delegations, agreements on patronage and socialist competition, correspondence between Soviet officials and foreign colleagues within the framework of these agreements, official reports on

trips of sports teams abroad, interdepartmental correspondence between the RSI and the SCPC concerning the assessment of the behavior of Soviet delegations and specific athletes abroad.

**The source base of the study** can be systematized as follows.

1. Official documentation of RSI (RGASPI, F. 537), Central Committee of the Komsomol (RGASPI, F. M-1) and SCPC (GA RF, F. 7576), materials of the head of the RSI - Comintern<sup>23</sup>. The archival funds of the sports departments of the Komsomol Central Committee for the 1920s, which are especially valuable for understanding international sports work in individual republics and regions of the USSR (Ukraine, Belarus, Transcaucasia), have not previously been studied due to the fact that their declassification began only in 2020s. Some materials of the RSI in RGASPI (F. 537, op. 2) were also rarely used despite the fact that the correspondence of the RSI and the SCPC with foreign cells contained in them is an indispensable source for studying the everyday practices of sports diplomacy which is the main task of this work.

Documents in this category can be divided into several types:

- regulations (charters of organizations, rules for holding sports meetings and recruiting teams, orders);
- reports on trips abroad and visits of foreign delegations to the USSR concern both individual visits and major international competitions, for example, the 1928 Spartakiad. The content of these documents ranges from a short and purely formal communiqué for the press to closed reports of extended content, which included information about receptions in each city, places visited by the delegation, transport movements, the diet of the team and, finally, a general assessment of the trip with detailed comments from accompanying officials;
- bilateral agreements on socialist competition, patronage and sports cooperation, which were concluded in the 1920s;

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<sup>23</sup> *Kommunisticheskij Internacional v dokumentah. Resheniya, tezisy i vozzvaniya Kongressov Kominterna i Plenumov IKKI* (Moscow, In-t Marksa-Engel'sa-Lenina pri CK VKP(b), 1933).

- correspondence of the Secretariat of the RSI and the Commission for External Relations of the SCPC with foreign bodies. This is the most extensive type of documentation on a wide range of issues - from ideological coordination to financial and methodological support for foreign sections.

A characteristic feature of the dissertation's source base is the significant predominance of office documentation over other types of materials, primarily due to the almost complete absence of personal sources. At the same time office documentation makes it possible to compensate for these gaps and explore the grassroots level of sports interaction and its practices. Thus a large array of closed reports recorded the opinions and proposals of Soviet and foreign athletes. Despite the bureaucratic nature of these materials, their closed nature, as well as the needs of the apparatus to identify real problems in organizing events and understanding the mood of athletes, suggest that the reports generally adequately recorded the practices of sports diplomacy.

Careful study and comparison of such sources makes it possible to balance their shortcomings. On the one hand, it can be assumed that the athletes restrained the flow of critical comments without going beyond what was permitted. On the other hand, due to the large number of reports, one can expect that one way or another they included those important pain points in the organization of competitions that really worried the athletes. Finally, even isolated cases of criticism, collected together, make it possible to build a kind of hierarchy of sentiments. For example, the negative reaction of athletes in relation to the propaganda demands of the RSI, more often mentioned in documents and the rarer complaints about poor support and control over the delegation abroad allow us to assume with what frequency these problems arose in sports and diplomatic everyday life.

Moreover, in the 1920s the ideological pressure on the Soviet bureaucracy was lower than in the following decade, so even the supervisory documentation of this period is more numerous, detailed and, as far as possible, objective<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Velikanova, *Razocharovannye mechtateli*, 28.

This type of source is more productive for studying the moods and attitudes of sports functionaries, from accompanying officials to the heads of the SCPC and RSI commissions. The varying degrees of condemnation of individual deviant statements or actions of athletes can be interpreted as the presence of a certain hierarchy of problems of sports relations in the understanding of Soviet officials. In general, from the documents it is possible to understand which claims sports leaders considered unfounded and sought to suppress and which problems they recognized. With regard to inter-institutional interaction, this type of source is quite representative, since it vividly reflects the contradictions between the RSI, SCPC and sections of different countries, which did not hesitate to express them in departmental correspondence.

It is also worth considering that a characteristic feature of Soviet office documentation is its critical nature, problems come to the fore, and the description of positive aspects is usually absent or expressed in standard bureaucratic clichés.

2. Works by figures of the sports movement, usually in the form of conference papers or pamphlets on key issues. They summed up the results of work in the field of physical culture and sports and set tasks for the subsequent period<sup>25</sup>, provided data on the dynamics of the growth of the workers' sports movement and adjusted the directions and tasks of sports work in accordance with the general political course of the USSR, Comintern and the general situation in the world.

3. Sources of personal origin in the form of published memoirs of athletes and functionaries related to international sports relations in the 1920s are few and less informative in the context of our topic<sup>26</sup>. For example, in the memoirs of N.P. Starostin, at that time a football player who visited Germany for games, information

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<sup>25</sup> Nikolaj Podvojskij, *Mezhdunarodnoe krasnoe sportivnoe dvizhenie i ego ocherednye zadachi: Stenogramma doklada v Minske v iyune 1925 g.* (Leningrad, 1925); Boris Kal'pus, *Krasnyj internacional fizicheskij kul'tury* (Moscow, Izd-vo Vyssh. i Mosk. sov. fiz. kul'tury, 1924); Nikolaj Semashko, "Fizicheskaya kul'tura i zdravoohranenie v SSSR", *Hygiene and epidemiology*. No. 1 (1927): 24-30.

<sup>26</sup> Boris Bazhanov, *Vospominaniya byvshego sekretarya Stalina* (Saint Petersburg, Vsemirnoe slovo, 1992); Nikolaj Starostin, *Futbol skvoz' gody* (Moscow, Centrpoligraf, 2018).

about international trips is limited to mentioning the very fact of their holding. There are no diaries of athletes and coaches who were active in the 1920s.

As a result, the most important information for studying the trips of Soviet athletes abroad turned out to be that of A.M. Kollontai, who had no connection with sports, but kept a diary and, as a responsible person, recorded the visits of Soviet athletes to Scandinavia, in the organization of which she herself took part<sup>27</sup>.

The archival collections of athletes<sup>28</sup> and sports functionaries<sup>29</sup> represent a collection of their libraries (mostly methodological sports literature), office documentation (passports, credentials) and personal photographs and therefore cannot significantly expand the substantive context of the topic.

4. Periodical press. There are departmental printed organs (SCPC bulletins and RSI news releases containing an overview of the state of the sports movement), sports press, primarily the newspaper “Red Sport”, which has covered all significant meetings of Soviet and foreign athletes since 1924, as well as excerpts from foreign communist journals (*Rote Fahne*, *L'Humanité*, etc.) with information about the visits and short interviews with athletes or heads of delegations.

The most important source is the newspaper “Red Sport”, which has covered all significant meetings of Soviet and foreign athletes since 1924. The newspaper was created as a monthly magazine in 1922 under the name “*Izvestia Sporta*”, and since 1924 it was renamed and transferred to the format of a weekly newspaper. It was “Red Sport” that was the mouthpiece of the USSR's victories abroad, while the magazine “*Izvestia Fizicheskoy Kultury*” (published since 1924) concentrated on the methodology of physical education and detailed coverage of domestic competitions. The circulation of the newspaper varied greatly from issue to issue (averaging approximately 15,000 copies in the 1920s) depending on the intensity of sports work. Although “Red Sport” was the printed organ of the Supreme Council

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<sup>27</sup> Aleksandra Kollontaj, *Diplomaticheskie dnevniki. Vol. 1. (1922-1930 gg.)* (Moscow, Academia, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Ippolitov Platon Afanas'evich. State Archive of the Russian Federation (GA RF), F. A654. Op. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Zholdak Ivan Afanas'evich. GA RF. F. P8542; Podvojskij Nikolaj Il'ich. RGASPI. F. 146.

of Physical Culture of the USSR, the post of editor-in-chief of the newspaper from 1924 to 1937 was occupied by A.G. Ittin, affiliated with both the SCPC and the RSI, and therefore institutional neutrality was formally maintained.

Print materials allow us to fill in the gaps in archival sources and make observations about the perception of Soviet athletes abroad by both proletarians and ideological opponents - bourgeois and social democratic circles. Turning to periodicals also allows us to trace the attitude of the authorities to sports in the international context: in which years more attention was paid to foreign policy interaction, when bourgeois sports were covered more intensively, which aspects of the competition were reflected most fully (ideological, sports, everyday) and which were hushed up.

Thus, the existing source base, especially thanks to the synthesis of information from the sources of the first and fourth groups, allows us to solve the assigned problems, analyze the international relations of the USSR in the 1920s, highlighting the mechanisms of the emerging sports diplomacy and its everyday practices.

### **Conclusions put to defense**

1. The uniqueness of the political position and ideological basis of the Soviet state, the need to break through the international isolation of the USSR and, at the same time, demonstrate to the external environment the advantages of the socialist system led to the emergence of systemic, regular and regulated by state bodies practices of sports diplomacy as part of cultural diplomacy.

2. The structure of institutions responsible for the implementation of Soviet sports diplomacy that emerged in the 1920s ensured the establishment of regular ties with foreign countries and the establishment of the USSR as the leader of the revolutionary wing of the workers' and sports movement in the world, but laid the foundation for a deep conflict between the RSI and the SCPC. No compromises were found regarding the model of interaction with foreign countries (the primacy of sports or propaganda), the staffing of teams (sending the best athletes or mass



delegations), the admissibility of meetings with "bourgeois" and social democratic associations. This reduced the effectiveness of work on the sports-diplomatic line.

3. The toolkit of Soviet sports diplomacy developed dynamically during the period under study, including both competitive (bilateral competitions, physical education festivals, the Spartakiad-1928) and non-competitive practices (agreements on patronage and socialist competition, inviting foreign instructors and sports doctors, exchanging methodological literature), and by the end of the decade it had basically formed.

4. Soviet athletes did not perceive the dissemination of communist ideology as the main goal of their activities. They focused on achieving victories and raising the level of sports, which in itself demonstrated the advantages of the Soviet system.

5. Both within the USSR and abroad, the most popular were meetings between Soviet and "bourgeois" athletes, not internal labor competitions. But this demand for rivalry between two sports systems was rarely realized and only in those sports where the Soviet authorities could be confident of the victory of their athletes.

6. Foreign trips of Soviet delegations allowed to confirm the status of the USSR as the undisputed leader of workers' sports due to the achieved results. However, due to the weak financial situation of foreign sections and the RSI, the level of organization of such trips varied significantly. They were often accompanied by problems with the accommodation of teams, insufficient financial support for the delegation abroad, regular delays, difficult transfers between cities in low-class carriages and mediocre food, which, in the opinion of the athletes themselves, could affect the results of the competitions.

7. The reception of foreign sports delegations in the USSR did not have clear regulations and therefore brought different results depending on the competence of the responsible bodies on the ground. This was typical for the reception of foreign guests in the USSR as a whole in the 1920s. But the unspoken principle of the ideal visit was the combination of four components during the trip: sports (the competition itself), culture (theater, cinema, excursions), everyday life (direct communication with Soviet workers) and rest of the team.

### **Theoretical and practical significance of the research**

The theoretical significance of the study lies in the fact that the phenomenon of the emergence of sports diplomacy was studied for the first time not only at the level of institutional and ideological struggle, but from the point of view of everyday practices and applied strategies for its implementation, which did not always coincide with the official ideological basis. This identified dichotomy can be applied as a methodological basis for the study of sports diplomacy in the coming decades.

The materials and results of the study can be used to prepare lectures and practical classes on the history of international relations, cultural diplomacy, special courses on the history of sports and the institutional history of the USSR. The identified sources can serve as an addition to the history of Soviet everyday life during the 1920s.

### **Structure and summary of the thesis**

The dissertation consists of an introduction, a first chapter divided into three paragraphs, a second chapter divided into four paragraphs, a conclusion, a list of sources and literature.

*The first chapter*, “Institutes and organization of sports diplomacy of the USSR in the 1920s”, is devoted to the institutional aspects of the work of Soviet sports diplomacy - the creation and strengthening of its governing bodies, the process of division of powers between them, conflicts on ideological, financial, organizational issues, interaction with other institutions within the USSR and abroad, as well as the regional characteristics of their activities.

*The first paragraph*, “Creation and functions of the Red Sports International and the Supreme Council of Physical Culture of the USSR”, traces the process of creation and formation of two bodies responsible for managing Soviet sports diplomacy in the 1920s, and also determines their place among other institutions of the USSR and the world.

Workers' sport in the 1920s, due to the political situation, was divided into two wings, led by the social democratic Lucerne Sports International on the one hand and the Red Sports International on the other. Despite brief periods of thawing in

relations in the middle of the decade, the gap could not be bridged, and Europe's proletarian athletes had to choose one of the camps, guided not by sporting but political convictions.

In the 1920s USSR sports diplomacy took institutional form. The model looked like this: Red Sportintern became the consolidating body and communication center of the movement, the Soviet section represented by the SCPC became its main resource support in establishing and maintaining connections with abroad.

We can call Soviet sports diplomacy of this period part of cultural diplomacy only based on modern concepts. Institutionally they were separated: neither RSI nor SCPC interacted with VOKS (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries), although the goals of this association were similar: “popularization of the culture of the USSR abroad, promoting the development and strengthening of friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of the USSR and other countries”. But the sports sphere, due to the complex management hierarchy, the presence of its own International and extreme mass participation, was singled out as a separate area of work.

*The second paragraph*, “RSI and SCPC as leaders of Soviet sports diplomacy: cooperation and confrontation”, is devoted to both common positions and numerous contradictions between these institutions, which reduced the effectiveness of sports diplomacy and ultimately led to a change in the management model in the 1930s.

In the 1920s the binary priorities of institute leaders emerged: either propaganda work (RSI) or sports achievements (SCPC) were put at the forefront. It was not possible to resolve the issue of the admissibility of meetings with bourgeois teams. The RSI, despite attempts to prohibit any contacts of this kind, could not succeed. The recruitment of delegations for foreign trips also ended up in the hands of the SCPC, which sent the best athletes abroad, regardless of the RSI’s calls for “class consistency” in the composition of the teams.

However, common ground was found. They were the desire to constantly increase the number of sports meetings and the course towards the militarization of physical education, setting combat tasks for it. The thesis about the working athlete

as a front-line fighter of the world revolution and defender of the achievements of socialism began to dominate first in the Soviet Union, and by the turn of the 1920s-1930s in the European discourse of workers' sports organizations.

Despite internal disagreements, RSI and SCPC were able to successfully establish work with bodies in the USSR and abroad to achieve maximum density of connections. Financial issues of the RSI were resolved with supranational bodies and the SCPC, which, in turn, was subsidized by the state. For logistics and visa issues they contacted the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and the People's Commissariat of Railways. The attention to the registration of trips of sports teams abroad, the provision of an expedited procedure for issuing visas shows that sport was considered by the authorities precisely as a tool for strengthening diplomatic contacts.

The initial model of managing sports diplomacy, which implied the formally dominant status of the RSI, turned out to be conflicting due to the fundamental opinion of the SCPC about its sole right to manage sports within the country, the financial weakness of the Sportintern and the ideological and propaganda demands of the RSI, which were inadequate for the mentality of athletes. The initial model provided the formalization of the apparatus of the new diplomatic practice and the worldwide coverage of activities thanks to the communication work of the RSI. But in the 1930s the key role will be played by the Soviet section with the formal approval of the RSI.

*The third paragraph*, "Regional features of USSR sports diplomacy", analyzes the USSR's sports contacts with various macro-regions of the world (Europe, Asia, North Africa, North and South America): their intensity, features and specific methods of interaction. Activities in Europe have had mixed results. The harshness of political regimes in a number of countries that persecuted communist groups played a role, as well as the influence of LSI, who was the first to unite proletarian athletes under less radical slogans. More successful work in the countries of Central and Northern Europe was associated with the success of Soviet athletes in winter sports and the general high level of development of working sports in the

region.

When developing methods of interaction with other regions, the RSI and SCPC showed flexibility, even to the point of encouraging meetings with the local bourgeoisie. The work was most successful in North and part of South America, as well as in the Middle East, while the least successful was in Central America and the Far East. This distribution shows that the results of sports diplomacy depended on the level of general sports development of the region. For sports diplomacy, it was sport, not the strength of the communist movement in the country, that remained the key to successful activities, especially outside the Europe.

In the interaction of the USSR with foreign countries in the field of sports two models can be distinguished: suppression and recognition. If in Europe a model of suppression was used with an emphasis on propaganda work, the imposition of soviet values and a monologue form of communication, then in relation to the American continent and the East a model of recognition prevailed, including mutual information and adaptation to the local sports culture. This demonstrates the adaptability of Soviet sports diplomacy.

*The second chapter*, “Everyday practices of sports diplomacy of the USSR in the 1920s”, is devoted to the regular foreign policy work that was carried out by the heads of physical education and Soviet delegations. The main contradictions that arose when Soviet teams traveled abroad, the characteristic features and process of organizing such trips, models of receiving guests in the USSR, non-competitive instruments of interaction with foreign countries: various types of agreements, technological, medical, methodological work within the framework of sports diplomacy are considered.

*The first paragraph*, "Organization and forms of Soviet sports activity abroad," analyzes the process of preparing the team for departure and all aspects of its organization by both Soviet and foreign bodies. The contradictions noted in the first chapter between the RSI and the SCPC were also reflected in the level of everyday work. Regarding to the preparation of teams for foreign trips and the reception of delegations, the emphasis was placed on the union centers (Moscow,

Leningrad and Kharkov). This was due to both internal (the readiness of local teams and infrastructural advantages) and external factors – Western European sports societies wanted to compete with the strongest teams, which necessitated the need to send “national teams” of the USSR. The periphery was in practice isolated.

A similar situation has developed with regard to the propaganda role of sports trips. The demands for participation in propaganda events came across the rejection of the athletes themselves. The format of "propaganda through victories" and direct communication between Soviet athletes and foreign colleagues was chosen as an ideal model, which satisfied all participants in the process and ensured maximum return on trips.

The competitive tools of sports diplomacy varied in the 1920s. The Spartakiad projects did not occupy all the attention of the Soviet leadership. Greater emphasis was placed on small-scale, but regular competitions, which made it possible not to lose touch with foreign sections, conclude agreements with them, demonstrate the activity of the proletarian sports movement and maintain the competitive rhythm of athletes. Bilateral meetings remained the main form of interaction.

Police supervision and escort of officials were established for Soviet delegations abroad. Such attention to the visits of foreign teams, which included not only monitoring, but also meetings during visits with heads of state or major cities, indicate both the high importance of the new foreign policy practice and the perception by the authorities of sports visits as diplomatic acts.

The main identified applied problems of sports diplomacy are the weak economic provision of teams, the negligence of officials responsible for logistics and visa issues and the lack of professional translators. If the competitive authority of Soviet sports abroad was extremely high, then criticism of the organization of sports trips in the foreign press was constant and logical. The importance of sports diplomacy for establishing contacts, emphasized by the highest authorities, was regularly confronted by the incompetence of the official apparatus.

*The second paragraph*, “Soviet delegations abroad: athletes, accompanying officials, contacts”, is devoted to the team’s stay abroad: living conditions,

communication with foreigners, mutual perception of Soviet athletes and foreign athletes and fans during such visits.

When traveling, delegations regularly had to deal with problems with accommodation, food and transportation services. The unusual diet and lack of comfortable conditions for rest, however, did not affect the consistently high results of Soviet athletes. In addition, these issues were almost never made public, remaining on the pages of closed reports and the shortcomings were filled in by the constant employment of the teams and cultural impressions. Thanks to this a predominantly positive impression was formed about the state of proletarian sports movement.

When receiving Soviet teams abroad, the emphasis was on demonstrating cultural life and minimizing communication with local workers. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of local communist parties, it was often possible to organize several evenings of meetings with proletarians, the purpose of which was propaganda through live communication rather than political slogans.

The arrival of Soviet delegations abroad invariably caused widespread excitement and interest was expressed among various segments of the population, not just proletarians, due to the desire to see “others”, representatives of the state with a different political structure. Both the proletarian and bourgeois press wrote about such visits, especially in the Scandinavian countries.

Both abroad and in the USSR, the meetings of Soviet and bourgeois teams aroused particular interest among the public rather than proletarian competitions. But due to the rigid ideological positions of the RSI regarding bourgeois sports, it was not possible to fully realize the propaganda potential of a direct clash of systems anywhere except in the eastern direction.

*The third paragraph*, “Reception of teams in the USSR: behavioral patterns and cultural practices”, analyzes the organization, rules for receiving foreign delegations, the model of an ideal visit and the practical difficulties of its implementation.

In the USSR, unlike European countries, visitors were actively given

excursions to the factories (except for delegates from eastern countries). But the ideal reception in the Soviet version was not only propaganda, it had to combine four components: sport (the competition itself and the victory of Soviet athletes in it), culture (visiting places iconic for the USSR, theaters, cinema), everyday life (propaganda through communication with the working masses), rest of the team.

Only in this case it was possible to mask the objective shortcomings of the visit, which were due to the unpreparedness of the infrastructure (especially outside the largest cities) and the lack of proper experience among officials in organizing sports receptions at a high level. It is precisely because of the poor readiness for receptions in the 1920s that one cannot talk about the formation of the classical model of Soviet hospitality during this period, which included obsessive care for guests and demonstrating to them exclusively the positive aspects of the Soviet state. Work was carried out in this direction, but due to the lack of experience and infrastructural situation, these strategies could not be implemented. Officials made regular mistakes even in the “showcase” cities of the USSR - Moscow and Leningrad.

*The fourth paragraph*, “The evolution of non-competitive methods in sports collaboration”, focuses on the work that was being done outside of stadiums. Developing foreign policy ties, the leaders of Soviet sports actively borrowed forms of relations from the practices of Soviet political life - patronage and agreements on socialist competition. By the end of the 1920s there was a shift from the desire to unite the entire labor movement through large-scale competitions to a more realistic strategy - through bilateral treaties establishing links with new sections and solving specific practical problems in those regions where a common connection already seemed to be established.

The needs of sports diplomacy also included methodological exchange of literature, inviting foreign instructors and sending athletes abroad to improve their skills, using the achievements of European sports medicine and studying Western mechanical engineering. It can be stated that in the 1920s soviet sports diplomacy



acquired its own proven tools which were used depending on what tasks the RSI and SCPC faced in a certain region or individual country.

**In conclusion** results are summed up. The study showed that Soviet sports diplomacy is not just a term applied after the fact to attempts of establishing international sports contacts that the USSR made starting in the 1920s. By the end of the decade it represented a well-functioning system of interaction between the Soviet state and the outside world. It was based on certain principles, compromises and special forms of cooperation.

Departmental interaction within the framework of sports diplomacy was characterized during the 1920s by an abundance of conflicts and controversial positions. SCPC sought to raise the level of Soviet sports and, through victories, demonstrate the advantages of Soviet methods of physical culture. The RSI saw the main goal in diplomatic and propaganda work during the competition. Thus throughout the 1920s there was a struggle between two models - “success through victories” and “success through propaganda”.

Soviet athletes played a decisive role in determining which model would prevail. Most of them were trainees of the imperial physical education system in which nothing was required of them except victories. The RSI's settings did not correspond to the athletes' psychology, and participation in propaganda events took time away from preparing for competitions, which caused logical irritation. At the same time, Soviet athletes did not refuse to communicate with foreign colleagues, but they did not want and could not transmit socialist ideas on a professional level. Therefore, the SCPC success model, based on two components, came to the fore: sports victories, proving the existence of opportunities for self-improvement in the USSR, and direct communication of the team with the foreign masses.

The structure created to manage international cooperation in the field of sports looked logical. The KSI served as a communication center, finding new ways to expand contacts through correspondence, and the SCPC provided the material basis of work – financial support and assistance through its connections within the USSR. This combination made it possible to solve the initial tasks: to break through

international isolation and establish as many contacts with abroad as possible. But due to the different understanding of the content of the new practice, sports diplomacy fell into a situation typical for the Soviet type of management – after the rapid creation of an institutional system that did not have strict applied principles of functioning the authorities were forced to create new models of work abandoning the original methods.

The tools for establishing and maintaining international sports contacts have been expanded and improved. The main forms of interaction were bilateral visits by the invitation of one of the sides. Relations with Germany, Finland, Norway and Czechoslovakia were especially active. The 1928 Moscow Spartakiad was a key event that gave an impetus to the consolidation of sections around the RSI and increased the number of people wishing to join the Sports International. By the end of the 1920s relations between sections were formally bound by patronage and socialist competition agreements.

The global outcome of the confrontation with the Lucerne Sports International in the 1920s was twofold - having achieved success in consolidating workers' sports along a competitive line, due to the aggressive rhetoric of the RSI the ideological part of the work with the social-democratic movement was failed. As a result, by the end of the decade, European proletarian sport was in a deep internal division.

The study identified three levels of the functioning of sports diplomacy in the 1920s: ideological, the exponent of which was the KSI, the level of methodological developments, for which the SCPC was mainly responsible, and the level of practice, everyday work. Each of these levels had noticeable deviations in relation to the others. Particularly characteristic was the gap between strict ideological demands and their failed implementation in practice. But efforts of the SCPC and the position of the athletes in the 1920s managed to make interaction at the practical level quite successful. Joint competitions, meeting evenings and live communication with the proletarian masses abroad - all this made it possible to look at the socialist world as one of the alternatives to state development, bypassing the image of Soviet people as a “strangers” formed in the information field. Sport became one of the

“showcases” of the Soviet project, an unobtrusive form of broadcasting its paradigms to the population of foreign countries.

The efficiency with which the Soviet country, having barely established itself as a state, began to use sport to establish international relations testifies to an understanding of the great potential of this cultural sphere for building international interaction. This understanding was well ahead of its time.

In the future some Soviet developments will be adopted by foreign states and supranational bodies and with the recognition of sports as an important tool for implementing foreign policy in official documents in the United States in the 1950s a new round of confrontation between systems and states in the field of sports diplomacy will begin.

### **Degree of Reliability and Approbation of the Research Results**

The degree of reliability of the thesis is based on an extensive set of analyzed historical sources, relevant goals and objectives, as well as methods used in the work. The theses of the work were tested at two all-Russian scientific conferences with international participation.

1) VII All-Russian scientific conference with international participation ‘*Potemkinskie Chteniya [Potemkin Readings]*’. Sevastopol State University, Sevastopol, 26–28 October 2023. Report: ‘Evropejskoe napravlenie sportivnoj diplomatii SSSR v 1920-e gg.: dostizheniya i problemy [The European direction of sports diplomacy of the USSR in the 1920s: achievements and problems]’.

2) VIII All-Russian scientific conference with international participation ‘*Potemkinskie Chteniya [Potemkin Readings]*’. Sevastopol State University, Sevastopol, 23–24 October 2024. Report: ‘Rukovodyashchie instituty sovetskoj sportivnoj diplomatii v 1920-e gg. [Leading institutions of Soviet sports diplomacy in the 1920s]’.

**List of author’s main publications in the journals, included in the list of highlevel journals, recommended by NRU “Higher School of Economics”, as well as indexed by Scopus:**

1. Glushich, Anton. M. Stanovlenie sovetskoj sportivnoj diplomatii: struktury i praktiki [Formation of Soviet sports diplomacy: structures and practices], *Russian history*, no. 5 (2023): 139–153.

2. Glushich, Anton. M. Otkryvaya molodoe gosudarstvo: priyom zarubezhnyh sportivnyh delegacij v SSSR v 1920-e gody [Discovering a Young State: Foreign Sports Delegations in the USSR during the 1920s.], *MGIMO: Review of International relations*, no.16(6) (2023): 183–206.

3. Glushich, Anton. M. Sovetskie sportsmeny za rubezhom v 1920-e gg.: povsednevnye praktiki sportivnoj diplomatii [Soviet athletes abroad in the 1920s: everyday practices of sports diplomacy], *Historical bulletin*, no. 3(49): 108–137.

4. Glushich, Anton. M. Za kulisami sporta: nesorevnovatel'nye praktiki sportivnoj diplomatii SSSR v 1920-e gg. [Behind the Scenes of Sports: Non-Competitive Practices of USSR Sports Diplomacy in the 1920s], *Perm University Herald. History*, no. 4 (2024): 173–182.