

March 31, 1967

**Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCz), Intra-party
Information Concerning Public Response to
USSR-Czechoslovakia Match at the Ice-hockey World
Championship in Vienna**

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Summary:

Report describing the polarized public response in Czechoslovakia to the Soviet-Czech hockey match during the World Championships in Vienna. The match (which Czechoslovakia lost 2-4) involved multiple fights and when the Soviet anthem played during the final ceremony it was accompanied by deafening boos and catcalls from the audience.

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Response to the USSR - CSSR ice-hockey match among the population

The general public in our country was very interested in this year's Ice-Hockey World Championship; the achievements of the Czechoslovak team in Canada the same as articles and commentaries from the sports section of our press contributed to this. Part of the sporting public hoped that Czechoslovakia would become World Champion.

The match between the USSR and CSSR was awaited with great interest; it should be noted that particularly part of the sporting public even made improper (unsportsmanlike) forecasts: the USSR could let us "win" the match; on the other hand, there were sharply contrasted views that can be characterized as follows: the Soviets will not deliberately lose if for nothing else than because of prestige.

Views on the events that took place during the match, and especially at the end of the game, are quite unfavourable and, based on the data we have received for the time being (the department did not organize any special comment campaign), it is possible to roughly divide these comments as follows:

A considerable proportion of the public condemns the match, recognises the priority of Soviet ice-hockey, feels bad about the match and evaluates the end of the game as unworthy of two best friends among socialist states and points out that millions of spectators from all over the world will not have a good impression of us (i.e. the USSR and CSSR). At the same time, it warns that this will make mass political work more difficult, especially among young people.

Another part of the public (however, it cannot yet be quantified) likewise condemns the final part of the match, but it roots for our team and reckons that we will get even with the Soviets at the earliest possible opportunity.

The third part of the public, generally individuals however, exploits the final part of the game for anti-Soviet diatribes and for ironizing our friendship.

This characteristic can be illustrated by the following facts:

In the Uranium Mines, Shaft 3 - the Region of West Bohemia - comrades were outraged by the conduct of Soviet hockey players and said that the skirmishes did not serve the friendship between our nations and its strengthening that we had been building for years. A brief moment will disrupt what we have been building. Millions of people worldwide saw it and that causes harm to us. Similar opinions can be found in the Region of West Slovakia or in Southern Bohemia, and these can be summed up as follows: it is incomprehensible that two countries in fraternal unity can push it so far, especially in sport. Furthermore, rumor has it that the match was virtually no big deal for the Soviet Union and that at the score 4:2 they had no reason to act in such an undignified manner. Agrostroj [Agricultural Machinery Company] Jičín criticised the Soviet team and said it was Canada that used to be condemned for this behavior.

According to the information of the Municipal Council in Prague, most people rate the match adversely and even consider the last part of the game as shameful and unworthy of both teams, which will not contribute to the reputation of both countries. It likewise did not contribute to the deepening of relations between our two nations.

According to the report of the North Moravian Regional Committee of the CPCz, the match adversely affected even school children who insultingly commented on the Soviet Union, and other citizens expressed themselves in a similar way while adding: You see, it is always like this with them.

According to the information of the Central Slovakian Regional Committee of the CPCz, the match sparked outrage among many workers, and some further expressed the view that the friendship between us is not quite as cordial as openly and officially proclaimed.

Certain cases of exploitation of the event, however rare, have already emerged as well. For instance, the following slogan was ridiculed in the Prague 7 district: "With the Soviet Union forever - even if they beat us." Ironic remarks on how the Soviets contributed to the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution were pronounced in Czech Shipyards. In a similar way, the slogan "the USSR - our example" is mocked.

Some people expect the whole matter will be explained in a television discussion,

others (Agrostroj Jičín, the former chairman of the Prague 10 branch of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship) suggest that the responsible and competent highest circles address the issue.

Objective evaluation of the match in the Rudé právo daily is appreciated; in contrast, many disagree with the writings of the Večerní Praha daily.

Those who criticise our team (although this is rare) for playing the too hard as well are among those voices.

Information coming from the regional committees [and] the Central Committee of the CPCz concludes that most people see the mistake especially on the Soviet side and that particularly the embarrassing end of the game will make mass political work much more difficult.