

LEARNING FROM THE SOVIET
BIG BROTHER

The Early Years of Sport in the People's
Republic of China

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When Soviet gymnast Nina Bocharova mounted the balance beam during an exhibition performance in Beijing in 1953, a Chinese team captured her impressive strength on newsreel. As she gracefully lowered herself onto the beam, the newsreel narrator introduced her by listing her most impressive accolades: “fifteenth Olympic team champion, fourth World Festival of Youth and Students absolute champion, merited athlete—Nina Bocharova.”¹ Following her cartwheel dismount, the camera captured Bocharova’s broad smile for the crowd of Chinese spectators. The same newsreel then presented several other top Soviet gymnasts in much the same manner; showcasing highlights from individual performances, the narrator listed each athlete’s highest achievements. At the end, the Soviet athletes were paraded onstage to applause as their Chinese hosts brought them large bouquets of flowers.

Bocharova, who turned ninety-one in September 2015, may not have been aware of it, but her performance and that of a Soviet gymnastics team in China during 1953 helped usher in a new era in Chinese sport during the first phase of intense, nationwide efforts in Socialist construction. When Mao declared the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in October 1949, the country was in ruins from years of war. Embargoes imposed by Europe, the United States, and Japan on Chinese goods, combined with the advent of Chinese involvement in the Korean War, produced a society “stretched beyond its limits.”² At the same time, Mao decided China would adopt the “lean to one side” policy, which accepted the Soviet Union as the leader of the international

Socialist movement and provided for a Sino-Soviet alliance in foreign affairs. It also included Soviet assistance to numerous Chinese domestic policies related to the arts, culture, education, and sciences.³ PRC leaders sought Soviet advice from the beginning in building a centralized state structure for sports and physical culture (*tiyu*),⁴ and they called on the entire Chinese sports world to “learn from the Soviet Union” (*xuexi Sulian*). Soviet sports models and athletes saturated the official Chinese media. Soviet experts went to China, and official sports delegations became conduits for those involved to forge new connections. Most sports historians of China today have little doubt that Soviet assistance in this period greatly influenced Chinese sport.⁵ The Chinese sports world also acquired specialized knowledge from the Socialist Bloc. When leaders of the new People’s Republic sought international recognition, sports exchanges helped improve political relations with these new allies.

Yet we need to rethink the role of these international sports exchanges in the context of a nascent Socialist state. How the new regime employed sport domestically as a means of establishing its legitimacy and building a new state from the ground up is often overlooked. Although national sports development in China was generally “controlled and managed by the state,”⁶ I question the reach of this centralized rule in the early 1950s. The Communist Party was still in the process of consolidating its power in many localities,⁷ and the State Sports Commission was not officially established until June 1952. Party leaders nevertheless saw sport as an important conduit for gaining legitimacy from the beginning because of its close connection to Chinese nationalism and its potential to reach the masses. For decades Chinese nationalists of all backgrounds had identified the weakness of China corporeally as a fragile, effeminate “sick man of East Asia.”⁸ The party leadership, Mao in particular, correlated this “sick man” image with the physical deterioration of the bodies of the Chinese population.⁹ The immense population was considered the most valuable state resource for the future of the nation,¹⁰ but its weakness could be overcome only by producing physically fit bodies. National sports development in China throughout the 1950s was thus not “largely elite pursuits.”¹¹ Rather, it focused on establishing grassroots programs that would build a strong and healthy citizenry and a new Socialist state.

National sports development in the early 1950s, sports exchanges in particular, aimed to teach Chinese citizens the important connection between their own physical training, Socialist construction, and China’s image worldwide. The leadership initiated large-scale “thought reform” projects across society in the

early 1950s to teach citizens how to “interpret the world within the ideological framework favored by the Communist Party.”¹² It stressed China’s new position in the world, and cultural exchanges helped “reshape the nation’s identity.”¹³ The saturation of official Chinese media with Soviet and Socialist Bloc sports models was part of the project to elucidate China’s new position as part of the Soviet-led Socialist world. Glowing portrayals of foreign athletes in the media were often accompanied by introductions to broader sports developments in “fraternal countries,” as Chinese sports leaders worked hard to implement Soviet-inspired sports programs like the “Ready for Labor and Defense” system—which emphasized all-round training for the masses and existed throughout the Socialist Bloc. One goal was to create a base from which competitive athletes could later be drawn, and Chinese media often directly connected the success of top Soviet and Socialist Bloc athletes to the development of this system at the grassroots level. Sports exchanges showcased the fruits of these Soviet sports programs to ordinary Chinese, demonstrating how through them individuals could transform their bodies for the purposes of building a strong Socialist state and improve its international reputation.

Leaning to One Side

Deference to the Soviet elder brother meant that Chinese leaders often copied Soviet models without significant adaptation, even though there had been a rich history of *tiyu* in China before 1949.¹⁴ Most discussion on sports and physical culture in the early PRC likewise centered on how to learn from and implement Soviet sports models in the PRC rather than encouraged a locally built system.

Coverage of Soviet athletes and programs in Chinese sports publications increased following Joseph Stalin’s death in 1953, as part of Nikita Khrushchev’s mission to strengthen the Sino-Soviet relationship.¹⁵ *Xin tiyu* (New sport) magazine often translated articles directly from Russian on topics ranging from political theory to mass sport in the Soviet Union and elite athletic achievements and international success. Articles on technical skills or movements within specific sports often taught readers through precise descriptions and depictions. In August 1953, *New Sport* covered the training of elite Soviet athletes in track and field, accompanied by photographs or hand drawings illustrating proper technique. One article depicts the Soviet national record holder for the women’s eighty-meter hurdles in thirteen still shots.¹⁶ A reader could put these skills

into practice without much further guidance. Each issue of the magazine also included a section called "International Sports News in Brief" that highlighted recent elite athletic events in the Soviet Union and notable Socialist Bloc sports achievements worldwide. This section appeared in nearly every issue of *New Sport*; some months a reader would be hard pressed to find any article in the magazine that did not mention the USSR.

In *New Sport*, Soviet experts, techniques, theories, and models saturated the entire realm of sports and physical culture. Soviet documentaries and books were translated, and an official directive from the Ministry of Higher Education in April 1953 called for the recruitment and hiring of Soviet specialists. The Beijing Sports and Physical Culture Research Institute, also established in 1953, hired a Soviet theorist in sports and physical culture, as well as experts in physiology, athletics, soccer, gymnastics, swimming, anatomy, and hygiene.¹⁷ These experts helped build what would become the nation's central training institute for athletes, coaches, and sports leaders.

Media coverage of athletes and officials from other countries in the Socialist Bloc reached its apex during this period. Such exceptional athletes as the great Czechoslovakian distance runner Emil Zátopek merited extensive coverage. Zátopek won three gold medals in track and field at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics,¹⁸ setting the Olympic record in the five thousand-meter and ten thousand-meter races. He then decided to enter the marathon, having never run one in his life, and beat the reigning British champion while setting a new Olympic record.¹⁹ He was frequently referenced in Chinese articles on running, including two prominent pieces in the January 1953 issue of *New Sport*. One of these included a photo of him in running gear and a detailed description of his innovative interval-training methods.²⁰ Ironically, a hand drawing of proper running technique accompanying the article does not seem to resemble Zátopek's style at all,²¹ which was notorious in the running world for being sloppy and labored.²²

Zátopek was also held up as a model athlete because of his dedication to the army and devotion to Communism. Accompanied by a photo of Zátopek in his military uniform, another article in the same issue of *New Sport* profiled his army background and noted his loyalty.²³ The Chinese Communist Party also considered the People's Liberation Army an important part of its continued success and often encouraged youth to join. Many Chinese competitive athletes in the 1950s came from the army,²⁴ a trend not unusual for Socialist Bloc sport. Articles like these on Zátopek thus forged a close link for readers between his athletic duties and obligations to the army, nation, and Communist Party.

Most central to this period of learning were regular sports delegation visits between China and the Socialist Bloc. Foreign visits featured prominently in the official newspapers, portraying hosts and guests as friends, comrades-in-arms, and seekers of common goals through international Socialism, offering tangible proof to the general public that there was a growing relationship between China and the Socialist world. When foreign delegations visited China, Chinese officials also often produced numerous classified reports exclusively for internal use. These ran the gamut from detailed preparations on receiving a specific delegation and their meticulously planned daily activities, to periodic summaries that noted competition results, issues that arose, and alleged comments made by guests. Less important than the veracity of every detail and comment are the choice of content and their very existence.²⁵ What officials chose to record unequivocally demonstrates the importance Chinese leaders placed on gaining recognition from and strengthening political solidarity with particular foreign guests—at whatever expense. From these reports, distributed to officials at municipal and national levels, we also see clearly the explicit attempt to connect foreign recognition and support for the new Chinese Socialist state to the implementation of Soviet-inspired sports programs nationwide.

In August 1950, less than one year after the establishment of the PRC, Chinese basketball and volleyball teams visited Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the USSR. An article in *New Sport* by a Chinese volleyball player described his team's visit that summer to Czechoslovakia in glowing terms, recounting the overwhelming generosity that the team had experienced over the course of the visit in and out of competition. A large contingent of people had met them at the Ostrava airport and thrown a welcoming party before escorting the delegation downtown in a motorcade that included a broadcasting vehicle at the front and "three very new Czech cars" for the Chinese athletes.²⁶ Local news discussed the Chinese team for a week; people greeted them everywhere they went and shouted slogans like "Stalin, Gottwald, Mao Zedong!" The team competed in a brand-new facility built by the labor of Czech youth groups. The author seemed especially impressed by the Czech youths' "high level of internationalist warmth toward us" as well as their "labor spirit."²⁷ As far as volleyball itself was concerned, the team gained valuable playing experience against a factory team in an industrial city.²⁸ Following a grand welcoming ceremony that included a band playing and an audience of more than a thousand people, the Chinese team lost to the Czech factory workers. Nonetheless, they were honored with a banquet complete with song and dance and good wishes from

the factory head, along with souvenir photos. Visits like these presented in such publications as *New Sport* and *People's Daily* taught readers about what international Socialist solidarity entailed and categorically positioned China within the Soviet-led world.

Chinese leaders tagged the 1953 Soviet gymnastics team visit as a significant opportunity to “study the Soviet advanced experience” and raise the nation’s gymnastics skill levels.²⁹ The visit was also timed so that the guests could attend national track-and-field, cycling, and gymnastics competitions held in Beijing.³⁰ Presumably members of the delegation could offer pointers on improving sport in China. However, the visit also took place following the Soviet Union’s decision to strengthen Sino-Soviet relations following Stalin’s death.³¹ Chinese leaders decided to follow the Soviet path of development and launch the first five-year plan.³² In addition to boosting sports knowledge, Chinese leaders took advantage of the visit to convince their own citizens that strong relations existed between the two nations and that following in the steps of Soviet sport would be the best path for China’s development.

Media coverage of sports delegation visits also often promoted Soviet sports programs as the correct path to follow through watching, reading about, or even interacting with champion athletes. Such visits offered the ideal method of directly showcasing model athletes and teams to Chinese audiences. This was especially true during the Soviet gymnastics team’s visit and the Hungarian soccer team’s visit in 1954, since both had done exceptionally well at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. In addition to Nina Bocharova, the Soviet gymnastics delegation included other well-known gymnasts from the men’s and women’s gold-medal-winning teams at Helsinki, as well as rising stars and future Olympians.³³ Over the next month, they held exhibition performances in Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang, Nanjing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Wuhan.³⁴ The visit was widely covered in the official media.

Chinese sports leaders hoped their athletes would gain invaluable technical skills and knowledge through practicing or playing against top athletes from the Socialist Bloc. Visits thus often included a component of hands-on learning. The main purpose of inviting the Hungarian soccer delegation to China for a month in February 1954 was to showcase and learn from one of the best soccer nations in the world. The Hungarian national team in the 1950s, famously known as the “Golden Team” and the “Magical Magyars,” had recently beaten England 6–3 in what became an unforgettable match at Wembley Stadium.³⁵ Such a prominent team gained the attention of Chinese sports leaders who

desperately wanted to improve national soccer skills. Although internal reports from Shanghai suggest that Hungary sent only third- and fourth-tier players, the skill level was far above that of any team in China. The visit was clearly important, as seating plans from some of the matches suggest the chairman himself was present. A study group of nearly one hundred people—from the State Sports Commission, the August 1 (army) team, the Central Training Institute team, and a group of referees and leaders—followed the Hungarian delegation to several cities. In each place, they played matches with the regional team (such as the Huadong team in Shanghai). In addition, the August 1 and Central Training Institute teams traveled from Beijing to play exhibition and practice matches against the Hungarians.³⁶ The State Sports Commission instructed local sports committees to set up formal discussion sessions with Hungarian leaders and players.³⁷ Occasionally this also happened less formally. In Shanghai over a meal between Chinese and Hungarian sports leaders, one of the Hungarians made specific comments about the lack of Chinese offensive tactics (“when near the goal [players] forget what they’re doing . . . and bounce [around] without purpose”). He also suggested how to position defenders.³⁸ In April 1954 a Chinese delegation went to Budapest for a year and a half of intensive training and skills development.³⁹

Even if Chinese soccer skills seemed lacking and there was no guarantee of Chinese success in competitive sport, leaders considered these visits important enough to their overall Socialist project to spend precious state resources on them. Payment for all expenses during visits between China and the Socialist Bloc was usually the responsibility of the host. When the Chinese soccer team went to Budapest in 1954, the Hungarian government covered their lodging and daily living expenses,⁴⁰ and when delegations visited China, the Chinese government paid. Beyond organizing sports activities, meals, and lodging, preparation for a delegation visit often required meticulous planning at the local level, with the participation and cooperation of a range of committees and subcommittees for evening activities, sightseeing, transportation, translators, small gifts, and the distribution of spending money to guests.

Extraordinary athletes such as the Soviet gymnasts and Hungarian soccer team also garnered more attention, and better treatment and facilities, than the average guests. Food and meals during the Hungarian soccer team visit required meticulous preparation, and these guests also received a few small extras. In addition to providing coffee, fruit, and sweets to the players, at breakfast every day each one was offered a lemon, one hundred grams of chocolate,

and Zhonghua brand cigarettes.⁴¹ The Soviet gymnastics team visit required “professional research” as well as cultural activities and sightseeing for the guests. Study groups were organized to watch the exhibitions and arrange for local sports workers to participate in question-and-answer sessions with their Soviet comrades.⁴² Prior to the team’s arrival, the State Sports Commission sent explicit instructions to municipal and regional sports committees regarding standards of gymnastics apparatus for the visiting team. The commission asked each locality to provide a detailed report regarding whether such standards could be met.⁴³ Such equipment was an impossible request to fulfill. It simply did not exist in China. Instead, the Soviet team brought a set with them and gifted it to their hosts when they left.⁴⁴

Chinese leaders sought to impress their foreign guests in numerous ways. In addition to sightseeing, most visiting delegations received the grand tour of local sports facilities. Official delegation reports, written by Chinese sports leaders to be read by higher-ranking government officials, often recorded positive comments made by foreign visitors on new construction. The Hungarian reporter who accompanied the soccer delegation in 1954 to Shanghai was apparently “very satisfied” with the newly built pool and the sixty thousand-person capacity of the Jiangwan sports stadium.⁴⁵ From these visits he concluded that one could “see China’s great construction, [and] China is making great achievements not only in politics and the economy but also in sport.”⁴⁶ Comments from a foreign guest stating future sports possibilities on as grand of a scale as the Olympics supported the notion that Chinese sports development was headed in the right direction.

Nevertheless, these positive comments about sports stadiums stood in stark contrast to the general impoverished state of facilities and equipment in China at the time. Throughout the 1950s, Chinese sports leaders at all levels constantly complained that they did not have the resources necessary to carry out the demands made of them.⁴⁷ Local sports leaders used international delegation visits as leverage when asking for money from the municipal or central government for facilities and equipment. In October 1952 the Beijing Education Bureau complained to the municipal government that, although Beijing had thirty years of experience in sports and similar cultural activities, the city’s facilities were still underdeveloped and the manpower and budget were incapable of bearing the burden of current needs—particularly in exchanges with fraternal countries. Officials cited the example of the “crash job” made for the Polish basketball team that visited Beijing in the summer of 1952. They argued

that the event had resulted in a lot of time wasted on preparing living quarters for the athletes and maintaining sports grounds.⁴⁸ This apparently included an attempt to improve drainage facilities in the Xiannongtan stadium, requiring workers to spend entire mornings using pumps to remove storm water before afternoon competitions could take place.⁴⁹ Sports leaders estimated that at least ninety-eight hundred million yuan were needed to repair Xiannongtan stadium and add enough room for thirty thousand more spectators.⁵⁰ They also asked for another forty-nine hundred million to add approximately ten thousand bleacher seats and make improvements in Beihai stadium for basketball and volleyball.⁵¹ Fearing that the Beijing municipal budget could not handle such a request, local sports leaders suggested that the report be submitted to higher authorities. Prior to the Hungarian 1954 visit, the Shanghai Sports Committee asked the State Sports Commission for eighty billion, ten thousand yuan to fix the locker room's heating stoves and the "somewhat serious contamination" in the showers and toilets. The committee decided to "paint over [the contamination] to clean [it]."⁵²

Sports leaders stressed a visiting team's influence on the character formation of Chinese athletes. By interacting with model athletes, Chinese athletes had improved their sporting ethics. The final report on the Polish basketball delegation visit to Shanghai in 1952 stated that the visit had especially helped in the area of "ethical style" (*daode zuofeng*), decreasing the "bad habit of purposely injuring the opponent."⁵³ Furthermore, official reports often held Socialist Bloc athletes in the highest esteem as examples of how to be good citizens. The Hungarian players were regarded as "very lively" with an "upright and honest style."⁵⁴ They also loved "being near the masses,"⁵⁵ walking around the city to meet ordinary people and watch kids play. In fact, by the mid-1950s Chinese athletes at the national level were required to interact with ordinary people on a regular basis. According to a former captain of China's gymnastics team, who had also participated in the Soviet gymnastics team's visit, every Chinese sports team in the 1950s performed at the grassroots level many times each year, and it was considered "very important work."⁵⁶ Model athletes from the Socialist world were thus always portrayed as those who practiced good sportsmanship while living honest lives and devoting free time to the masses.

Official claims about the ethical values of the Hungarian visitors must have seemed questionable, however, given that some players did not always behave the way Chinese leaders would have liked. In Shanghai, for example, the Hungarians decided to skip a morning stroll in the park and go shopping instead. A report produced during the visit—and designated as "top secret"—

also noted that the guests had complained about not having enough spending money, even though each player had received five hundred thousand yuan; each leader, eight hundred thousand; and the doctor, seven hundred thousand.⁵⁷ These acts did not portray the guests as good model athletes—or good Communists for that matter—and thus went unmentioned in the official media.

Sports leaders and official media often used delegation visits to educate the masses on China's new international position and get them more involved in sport. When Poland sent a representative team of about thirty-five people from men's and women's basketball to China in the summer of 1952, leaders of the welcoming committee for the delegation in Shanghai aimed to show how the visit "further promoted friendship between the Chinese and Polish people, sports and physical culture workers, and athletes."⁵⁸ Leaders also intended to use the games during the visit to carry out a kind of "thought education" on internationalism and patriotism and promote among the masses "the ethical style of new *tiyu*." The committee called on local work units to develop "mass basketball activities."⁵⁹ Basketball had in fact already long been a popular sport in China, especially in urban factories. Yet official media made every effort to connect this high-profile visit of an internationally competitive sports team from the Socialist Bloc to sport at the grassroots level. The same day that *People's Daily* published a front-page article introducing the Polish delegation, it also ran a longer article that covered sports development in the eight years since the establishment of the Polish People's Republic.⁶⁰ Poland had made achievements in sport because the party had placed great emphasis on the promotion and development of sport, especially among workers and youth in factories, trade unions, schools, enterprises, the army, and rural areas. Although basketball was not as popular as soccer in Poland, basketball teams had proliferated and continued to improve through studying the techniques and "advanced experience of the Soviet Union."⁶¹ Media coverage of the visit thus connected for ordinary Chinese citizens how sport at the highest level indicated solidarity and friendship with the Socialist Bloc.

In fact, the leadership believed the key to successfully building Socialism in China was the adoption of Soviet-inspired sports programs at the grassroots level, most notably the Ready for Labor and Defense system. This system aimed to extend sports participation and raise the level of all-round physical fitness among ordinary citizens. The system's main goal was ostensibly to cultivate physically fit individuals who in their spare time voluntarily engaged in regular exercise. To accomplish this, participants trained regularly to pass fitness

tests and receive badges at various levels. But it was more than just fitness: the system included the development of paramilitary skills, as well as courses on hygiene, health, and first aid.⁶²

Although the system's core provided a general fitness program that aimed to connect all-round bodily training to national labor and defense goals, its various levels also provided a way to build a nationally ranked system of competitive athletes.⁶³ By the 1950s, the Ready for Labor and Defense sports system had become a de facto marker of sports and physical culture in the Socialist Bloc. Chinese sports leaders had high hopes for adopting this model not only to show a reverence for learning from the Soviet Union but also to join the rest of the Soviet-led Socialist Bloc on the same playing field.

Chinese sports leaders and media often linked the implementation of this system at the grassroots level to national athletic achievements. A January 1951 article in *New Sport* outlined how the system extended across society from schools to workplaces, villages, and even to elite athletes.⁶⁴ These connections were reinforced during delegation visits. When the Hungarian delegation leader spoke to local Chinese sports leaders in Shanghai, he traced the history of soccer in Hungary back to British influence in the nineteenth century. Yet he ended his speech by crediting Soviet influence and the Ready for Labor and Defense system—rather than this previous history—as the main reason for recent athletic success.⁶⁵ A *People's Daily* article published during the Polish basketball delegation visit similarly connected the growing number of students receiving Ready for Labor and Defense badges to a twofold increase in extracurricular sports activities in one year.⁶⁶ Participation numbers in national competitions had also steadily increased, national records improved, and more athletes competed internationally. Following this trajectory from training at the lowest levels to international sports competitions, the Chinese reader learned how average citizens became connected to the larger Socialist world through individual athletic pursuits. This link was strengthened through actual participation in China at the grassroots level: in 1951 sports leaders rolled out trials of the Ready for Labor and Defense system in some urban schools, and beginning in 1954 the system was promoted nationwide through local work units.

Conclusion

In China, international sports visits in the early 1950s supported broader foreign policy goals by building relations with the Soviet-led Socialist Bloc.

Official media projected this new geopolitical position back to Chinese citizens as a priori Socialist solidarity and friendship. By the 1950s, most Socialist Bloc countries had adopted the Soviet sports structure in some form. They regularly participated in sports exchanges and competitions with one another. China became a member of this Socialist world of sport when PRC leaders decided to follow the lead of the Soviet Union in sports development at home. They also participated in regular competitions and exchanges with the Socialist Bloc under the banner of international Socialism.

Yet when the country was economically impoverished, early PRC leaders sought to emulate Soviet models in sports and physical culture for reasons beyond training competitive athletes for international competitions. The new regime saw sport as a crucial step toward gaining legitimacy and building a new Socialist state. Party leaders understood China's problems in corporeal terms and believed that one of China's chief assets and woes was its enormous population: the body politic was a "sick man" because the people's physical bodies were weak. They also firmly believed that sports and physical culture would transform the masses and create a strong and healthy populace. Out of these masses would emerge competitive athletes who could represent a strong Socialist nation on the world stage.

Regular discussions and direct interactions with the Soviet Union and Socialist Bloc thus served several purposes: they established the PRC's position among its allies, projected this new position and its meaning back to Chinese citizens, and demonstrated to ordinary citizens the connection of sports programs at all levels. The introduction of the Soviet-inspired Ready for Labor and Defense system, which was often cited in official media as vital for overall sports success, helped reinforce these connections in people's everyday lives. As the main PRC sport and physical education program in the 1950s, the system acknowledged Chinese deference to Soviet knowledge on training the entire citizenry in transforming their bodies through sport while also teaching them how their individual participation linked to the construction of a Socialist state.

72. McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*, 101.

73. This theme was taken up with gusto by newsmagazines like *Focus* and *Der Spiegel*. See, for example, “Stasi: Mit Sex und Peitschen,” *Focus Magazin*, March 11, 2002, http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/stasi-mit-sex-und-peitschen_aid_203726.html; and “‘Liebe öffnet jeden Tresor’: Wie die Ost-Berliner Staatssicherheit Frauen für ihr Gewerbe mißbrauchte,” *Der Spiegel*, February 25, 1991, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13489944.html>.

74. See the long discussion of these TV shows in Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005), 141–176, esp. 165–166.

75. *Ibid.*, 170.

76. Harald Martenstein, “Schön war die Zeit,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 23, 2003, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/schoen-war-die-zeit/441630.html>.

77. Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 170.

78. *Ibid.*, 251.

79. Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix, *Sport Under Communism: Behind the East German “Miracle”* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

CHAPTER 10

1. “Sulian tiyu daibiaotuan zai Beijing shouci biaoan” [The Soviet sports delegation’s first performance in Beijing], *Xinwen jianbao* 1953 nian 40 hao [News bulletin number 40, 1953], DVD accompanying Zhongyang xinwen jilu dianying zhipian yingshi ziliaobu, eds., *Xinwen jianbao Zhongguo: Tiyu, 1950–1977* [China news bulletins: Sports and physical culture, 1950–1977] (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu wenxian chubanshe, 2009).

2. Rebecca Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World: A Concise History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 77.

3. Thomas P. Bernstein and Hua-Yu Li, eds., *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949–Present* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011); Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 31–33; Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After Learning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 118.

4. The Chinese term *tiyu* does not have a sufficient single-word translation in English. As used by Chinese leaders in the 1950s, *tiyu* encompassed physical education, fitness and exercise programs, martial arts, recreational games and activities, and paramilitary “national defense” activities (*guofang tiyu*). The term is perhaps closer to the Soviet term *fitzkultura*, but it is not a direct translation.

5. Dong Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 36.

6. Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895–2008* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 7–8.

7. Recent social histories of this period reveal “an astonishing degree of variations and exceptions” to notions of a “swift military takeover” in 1949 and the local impact of land reform or other campaigns on consolidating party control. Jeremy Brown and Paul

Pickowicz, eds., *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 7–8.

8. Amanda Shuman, “The Politics of Socialist Athletics in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1966” (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2014), 31–32.

9. *Ibid.*, 3.

10. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, 85.

11. Xu, *Olympic*, 7–8.

12. Aminda Smith, *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes: Reeducation, Resistance, and the People* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 4.

13. Nicolai Volland, “Translating the Socialist State: Cultural Exchange, National Identity, and the Socialist World in the Early PRC,” *Twentieth-Century China* 33, no. 2 (2008): 52.

14. Modern *tiyu* had grown alongside Chinese nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century, and by the time of the establishment of the PRC the nation already had a solid base of experienced sports and physical education experts. Andrew Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

15. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 69.

16. Ge Wu, “Ye-lin-na.Ge-ji-hao-li ba shi gongchi dilan de jishu” [Elena Gokiel's technique in the 80-meter hurdles], *Xin tiyu* [New sport], August 1953, pp. 24–25.

17. Beijing tiyu xueyuan xiaozhi, ed., *Beijing tiyu xueyuan zhi* [Beijing *tiyu* research institute records] (Beijing: Beijing tiyu xueyuan xiaozhi bianxiezu, 1994), 176–177.

18. Ma-he Ya-luo-mi-er, “Shijie wenming de changpao jianjiang Za-tuo-pei-ke: Yi ge yisheng xinmu zhong de Za-tuo-pei-ke” [World-famous long-distance runner Zátópek: Zátópek in the eyes of a doctor], *Xin tiyu*, January 1953, pp. 18–19.

19. Tim Noakes, *Lore of Running*, 4th ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2003), 382–385.

20. A. Bu-jia-qie-fu-si-jii, “Za-tuo-pei-ke de changpao lianxifa” [Zátópek's long-distance training methods], *Xin tiyu*, January 1953, pp. 20–21.

21. *Ibid.*, 21.

22. Allison Danzig, “Going the Distance,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1952, http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/packages/html/sports/year_in_sports/0727.html. Danzig wrote, “This little phenomenon of almost super-human endurance and with the most agonizing running style within memory sped 26 miles, 385 yards 6 minutes and 16 seconds faster than an Olympic marathon had ever been traversed before.”

23. Ma-he Ya-luo-mi-er, “Shijie wenming de changpao jianjiang Za-tuo-pei-ke.”

24. Two athletes from the army who became well known for their international achievements in the mid- to late 1950s were weightlifter Chen Jingkai and female high jumper Zheng Fengrong. However, even in the early 1950s, the army became the source of athletes for many sports. For example, of fourteen top track-and-field athletes profiled in a *New Sport* article in November 1953, eight came from the army, three were students, and three were workers. Diao Yi and Li Youkun, “Chuangzao quanguo zuigao

jilu de yundongyuanmen” [Athletes creating the highest national records], *Xin tiyu*, November 1953, pp. 10–11.

25. That these reports are readily available in Chinese archives also speaks to their continued importance as part of the official narrative on *tiyu* state-building projects in the early PRC.

26. Li Ange, “Zhongguo xuesheng lanpaiqiu daibiaodui zai Jieke” [Chinese student basketball and volleyball delegations in Czechoslovakia], *Xin tiyu*, November 1950, p. 17.

27. *Ibid.*

28. The transliterated name in Chinese is Su-Ke-Wei. My best efforts to locate this city based on the transliteration have thus far been unsuccessful.

29. Zhongyang renmin zhengfu tiyu yundong weiyuanhui [State Sports Commission], “Tongzhi Sulian ticao daibiaodui jianglai Hua zhi gedi zuo ticao biao yan shi” [Notice on Soviet gymnastics delegation coming to East China for gymnastics exhibitions], September[?] 1953, B126-1-53, Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA).

30. *Ibid.*

31. Khrushchev considered building the Sino-Soviet alliance a crucial part of spreading Soviet influence in the Third World, which he felt Stalin had largely ignored. Westad, *The Other Cold War*, 67.

32. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, 84–85.

33. “Sulian tiyu daibiaotuan jieshao” [Introducing the Soviet *tiyu* delegation], *Xin tiyu*, October 1953, pp. 20–21. This included Olympic team members Galina Urbanovich, Ekaterina Kalinchuk, Valentin Muratov, and Viktor Chukarin, as well as future stars Sofia Muratova, Albert Azaryan, and Boris Shakhlin.

34. “Shelun: Xuexi Sulian ticao yundong de xianjin lilun he jingyan” [Editorial: Studying the advanced theory and experience of Soviet gymnastics], *Xin tiyu*, October 1953, p. 15.

35. Andrew Handler, *From Goals to Guns: The Golden Age of Soccer in Hungary* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1994), 44–49.

36. “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di er hao” [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team’s visit to Shanghai: #2], February 18[?], 1954, B126-1-86, SMA.

37. Untitled document, February 1954, B126-1-86, SMA. Although this document is untitled, the format and content indicate that it is a State Sports Commission notice sent to the *tiyu* and hospitality committees of the East China and Central China districts about the upcoming visit.

38. “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di si hao” [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team’s visit to Shanghai: #4], March 1[?], 1954, B126-1-86, SMA.

39. “Ke Lun,” in *Gongheguo tiyu: 110 wei jianzheng zhe fangtan* [PRC Sport: 110 witness interviews], ed. Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi di er bian yanbu (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2008), 95. The delegation also included swimmers.

40. *Ibid.*, 95–96.

41. “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di er hao.”

42. “Sulian tiyu daibiaotuan lai Hu biaoyan gongzuo jihua (cao’an)” [Work plan for the Soviet *tiyu* delegation coming to Shanghai for exhibitions (draft)], October 7, 1953, B126-1-53, SMA.

43. Zhongyang renmin zhengfu tiyu yundong weiyuanhui, “Tongzhi Sulian ticao daibiaodui jianglai Hua zhi gedi zuo ticao biaoyan shi.” Each of the parallel bars, for example, had to be between 1.6 and 1.7 meters off the ground, 3.5 meters in length, and only 42–48 centimeters apart from each other.

44. Chen, “Shang shiji 50 niandai Sulian ticao dui wo guo xiandai ticao de yingxiang,” 126.

45. “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di si hao.”

46. *Ibid.*

47. Shuman, “The Politics of Socialist Athletics in the PRC,” 67, 176.

48. They also complained about entertainment expenses. “Guanyu qing Zhongyang bo zhuankuan xiujian: Xiannongzeng tiyuchang, beihai tiyuchang wenti de baogao” [Report concerning asking the central government for money for building and repairing Xiannongzeng stadium and Beijing stadium], October 14, 1952, 002-004-00126, Beijing Municipal Archives.

49. Zhang Qing, “Huiyi Beijing shi tiyu fenhui de chujian” [Remembering the beginnings of building the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee], *Tiyu wenshi* [Sports history], no. Z1 (1984): 13–14.

50. Although these numbers seem astronomical by today’s standards, even with inflation, these are prior to the currency revaluation that took place in 1955 at a ratio of 1:10,000 yuan.

51. “Guanyu qing Zhongyang bo zhuankuan xiujian.” It is unclear whether they received such money or any at all, as the original document has question marks scribbled over these estimates.

52. “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di yi hao” [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team’s visit to Shanghai: #1], February 16, 1953, B126-1-86, SMA.

53. “Guanyu huanying Bolan lanqiu daibiaodui de gongzuo xiang shiwei de baogao” [Report concerning work to welcome the Polish basketball delegation], August 1, 1952, B126-1-34, SMA.

54. “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di er hao”; “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di san hao” [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team’s visit to Shanghai: #3], February 25[?], 1954, B126-1-86, SMA.

55. “Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: Di er hao.”

56. Ci Xinwen, “Zhongguo ticao dui shouren duizhang he ta de shoucang guan” [China’s first gymnastics team captain and his collection], *Zhongguo qingnianbao* [China youth daily], March 16, 2014, http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2014-03/16/nw.D110000zqgnb_20140316_3-04.htm.

57. “Jianbao (jue mi)” [Report: Top secret], February 27, 1954, SMA B126-1-86. Although these numbers are prior to the 1955 currency revaluation, they still seem generous given that a monthly issue of *New Sport* cost sixty-six hundred renminbi.
58. “Huadong ji Shanghai huanying bolan lanqiu daibiaodui choubei weiyuanhui tongzhi” [Notice from the East China and Shanghai preparatory committee for welcoming the Polish basketball delegation], July 24, 1952, B126-1-34, SMA.
59. Ibid.
60. “Bolan lanqiu daibiao jieshao” [Introducing the Polish basketball delegation], *Renmin ribao* [People’s daily], July 22, 1952, p. 1; “Bolan tiyu yundong de fazhan” [Developments in Polish sport], *Renmin ribao*, July 22, 1952, p. 1.
61. “Bolan tiyu yundong de fazhan,” 1.
62. James Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 128–129.
63. Xu Yingchao, “Sulian tiyu de jidian jieshao” [Some introduction to Soviet *tiyu*], *Xin tiyu*, January 1951, p. 14.
64. Ibid., 11–14.
65. “Zhe shi Xiongyali guojia zuqiu lunhedui zai er yue ershiliu ri shangwu baogao-hui shang de baogao jilu, weijing zhengli, jingong cankao, buzhun fanyin” [This is the February 26 morning public lecture report records of the Hungarian national soccer mixed team, not yet confirmed, for reference only, do not reprint], February 1954, B126-1-86, SMA.
66. “Bolan tiyu yundong de fazhan.” In 1951, two hundred thousand students were awarded badges.

CHAPTER 11

1. Huang Jianren, “Haixia bei qiimi hui guoqi, dahui jingxia” [Fans at Straits Cup Basketball Invitational Tournament wave national flag, startle gathering], *Pingguo ribao* [Apple daily], September 7, 2007, <http://www.appledaily.com.tw/appledaily/article/headline/20070907/3797692>; “Pi guoqi zao zhizhi, Taiwan qiimi: Nandao yao na wu-xingqi?” [Prevented from flying national flag, Taiwan fans: Are we supposed to fly the (PRC) five-starred flag or something?], *Fanshuteng* [Yam], September 7, 2007.
2. Mo Yan-chih, “Ma in Backflip on Right to Fly the Flag,” *Taipei Times*, September 9, 2007, p. 3; “The New Ma Lacks Backbone, Too,” *Taipei Times*, September 14, 2007, p. 8.
3. Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895–2008* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 75–113. See also Liu Chin-ping, *Zhonghua minguo Aolinpike weiyuanhui huiji yanbian zhi lishi kaocha, 1949–1981* [A historical survey of the changes of ROC’s Olympic Committee membership from 1949 to 1981] (master’s thesis, Guoli Taiwan shifan daxue, 1995).
4. Liu Chin-ping, *Zhonghua minguo Aolinpike weiyuanhui*; Liu Chin-ping, *Zhanhou Zhonghua minguo ji guoji Aohui weiyuan gengti zhi lishi kaocha 1949–1981* [Research into the historical succession of postwar ROC IOC members, 1949–1981] (Taizhong: Hongxiang chubanshe, 2010).