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Kseniya TSERASHKOVA*, Andrei VASHKEVICH**, Pavel DAROKHIN***

FOOTBALL IN THE BYELORUSSIAN SSR IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEWSPAPER “FIZKULTURNIK BYELORUSSII” IN THE 1950s–1980s

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Piłka nożna w Białoruskiej SRR w świetle gazety „Fizkulturnik Białorusii” w latach 50.–80. XX wieku

Streszczenie

Zgodnie z doktryną ideologiczną ZSRR sport miał służyć promocji osiągnięć ustroju socjalistycznego i radzieckiego modelu wychowania fizycznego zarówno na arenie międzynarodowej, jak i w obrębie Związku. Źródłami informacji były specjalistyczne wydawnictwa sportowe, działy sportowe w czasopismach i gazetach społeczno-politycznych, radio i telewizja, gdzie regularnie nadawano różnego rodzaju reportaże, felietony i wiadomości sportowe. Głównym wydawnictwem sportowym Białoruskiej Republiki był „Fizkulturnik Białorusii”. Opierając się na materiałach opublikowanych w gazecie, w opracowaniu przedstawiono analizę białoruskiej prasy radzieckiej jako źródła historii lokalnej piłki nożnej. Obejmuje ona okres od początku lat 50., kiedy powstała gazeta, a radzieccy sportowcy stali się stałymi uczestnikami wszystkich międzynarodowych zawodów, do końca lat 80., kiedy w warunkach polityki „Pieriestrojki” („Przebudowy”) i „Głasnosti” („Jawności”) środki masowego przekazu przeszły od radzieckiego paradygmatu intelektualnego do tematów skierowanych do masowego odbiorcy. W artykule przeanalizowano źródła pisane i wizualne dotyczące historii piłki nożnej w Białoruskiej SRR, publikowane w gazecie „Fizkulturnik Białorusii”, a także prześledzono tematy, które były najintensywniej poruszane na łamach czasopisma w latach 50. i 80. XX wieku.

Słowa kluczowe: białoruska piłka nożna, radziecka piłka nożna, prasa sportowa, karykatura piłkarska, kultura kibicowska, piłkarze, stadiony.

* <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2131-7443>; PhD; Faculty of History, Vilnius university, Vilnius, Lithuania; e-mail: kseniya.tserashkova@gmail.com (corresponding author)

** <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3091-4011>; MBA; Independent researcher, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

*** <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7944-1497>; PhD; Independent researcher, Vilnius, Lithuania

Abstract

In accordance with the ideological doctrine of the USSR, sport was intended to showcase the accomplishments of the socialist system and the Soviet model of physical education both on the international stage and within the union. The means of information were specialized sports publications, sports sections in socio-political magazines and newspapers, radio and television, where various reports, features and sports news were regularly broadcast. The main Belarusian republican sports publication was "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ("Physical culturist of Byelorussia"). Drawing on material published in the newspaper, the research presents an analysis of the Belarusian Soviet press as a source for the history of local football. Covering the period from the early 1950s, when the newspaper was founded and Soviet athletes became constant participants in all international competitions, to the late 1980s, when, under the conditions of the "Perestroika" and "Glasnost" policies, the mass media underwent a transition from the Soviet ideological paradigm to topics aimed at the mass consumer. The article analyzes written and visual sources on the history of football in the Byelorussian SSR, published by the newspaper "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii", and traces topics that were most reflected on the pages of the periodical in the 1950s–1980s.

Keywords: Belarusian football, Soviet football, sports press, football caricature, fan culture, football players, stadiums.

Introduction

The First World War, the dissolution of the Russian Empire, the Civil War, as well as the political, social and economic circumstances of the formation of the USSR, and the establishment of a completely new Communist ideology led to the fact that the inclusion of Soviet football into international competitions was postponed. The football section of the USSR (which was the direct predecessor of the Football Federation of the Soviet Union) was created in the All-Union Council of Physical Culture of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union in 1934. It was reorganised into the Football Federation of the Soviet Union in 1959, after becoming a member of FIFA and UEFA. The Soviet football championship was first played in 1936.

After the Second World War, Soviet athletes became participants of the main international competitions: the World and European Championships and Cups, the Olympic Games. In 1946, the year after a successful tour of FC Dinamo Moscow in Great Britain, the USSR Football Federation joined FIFA, and in 1954 it became a member of UEFA. In 1951, the Olympic Committee of the USSR was established. In 1952 the Soviet Union team took part in the Summer Olympics in Helsinki for the first time, and in 1956 in the Winter Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo.¹ The start of participation in the international sports movement took place during the beginning of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain. According to USSR ideological doctrine, sport was to highlight the achievements of the social-

¹ *Futbol v SSSR [Football in the USSR]*, Moscow, 1988, 32 p.

ist system and the Soviet system of physical education. Top professional sport was oriented towards the international arena (foreign consumers, external ideological rivals). Mass amateur sports and physical culture addressed to the Soviet population mainly served the mobilization of the population and motivation to work.²

The printed media was one of the main instruments of propaganda. The central Soviet press was represented by newspapers "Sovetskiy sport" ("Soviet Sport", 1924-1928, since 1933, Moscow; until 1946 "Red Sport"), weekly "Futbol" ("Football", since 1960, Moscow; since 1967-1990 – "Football-Hockey"). Among the republican publications, the most developed was the sports press in the Ukrainian SSR: "Sportyvna hazeta" ("Sports Newspaper", 1934-1939, 1949-2008, Kyiv; since 1937 – "Ready for Labour and Defense", in 1938-1965 – "Soviet Sport"), "Fizkultura i sport" ("Physical Culture and Sport", 1922-1999, Kyiv; since 1965 – "Start"), "Teoriya i praktyka fizychnoho vykhovannya ta sportu" ("Theory and Practice of Physical Education and Sports", 1968-1990s, Kyiv).

Among the publications of other Soviet republics were "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ("Physical culturist of Byelorussia", Minsk, Byelorussian SSR, since 1951), "Fizkulturnik Uzbekistana" ("Physical culturist of Uzbekistan", Tashkent, Uzbek SSR, since 1934), "Sport" (Alma-Ata, Kazakh SSR, since 1959), "Lelo" ("Sports Newspaper", Tbilisi, Georgian SSR, since 1934), "Idman" ("Sport", Baku, Azerbaijan SSR, since 1935), "Fizkulturnik Azerbaidzhan" ("Physical culturist of Azerbaijan", Baku, Azerbaijan SSR, since 1938), "Sportas" ("Sport", Vilnius, Lithuanian SSR, since 1956), "Sporte" ("Sport", Riga, Latvian SSR, since 1955), "Ayastany Fizkulturnik" ("Physical culturist of Armenia", Yerevan, Armenian SSR, since 1956), "Spordilekht" ("Sports Newspaper", Tallinn, Estonian SSR, since 1958), as well as other publications: magazines, sports supplements to newspapers, and local sports newspapers.³

The main Belarusian Republican sports publication was "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ("Physical culturist of Byelorussia"), whose first issue appeared on June 1, 1951. The newspaper was published in the Russian language except in 1952-1962, when it was simultaneously published in Belarusian. From 1968 to 1991, the editorial office of the newspaper was subordinated to the Committee on Physical Culture and Sports under the Council of Ministers of the Byelorussian SSR and Belarusian Republican Council of Trade Unions.⁴

² A. B. Kolesnikov, *Fizkultura i sport v SSSR kak sotsial'naya "laboratoriya" konstruirovaniya ideala sovetskogo cheloveka* [Physical education and sports in the USSR as a social "laboratory" for constructing the ideal of the Soviet person], *Istoricheskiy kuryer* [Historical courier] 2021, no 6 (20), pp. 171–172.

³ Yu. O. Sazonova, *Sportyvna zhurnalistyka Ukrayiny: istoriya, evolyutsiya, transformatsiya: monohrafiya* [Sports journalism of Ukraine: history, evolution, transformation: monograph], Mykolaiv 2021, p. 174–175.

⁴ Sportivnaya panorama [Sports panorama], [in:] G. P. Pashkov and others (ed.), *Bielaruskaya entsyklopedyia* [Belarusian Encyclopedia]: In 18 volumes, vol. 15, Minsk 2002, p.120.

Research methods and problems

This article is devoted to the analysis of the newspaper as a source for researching the history of Belarusian Soviet football. The basis of the problematic and thematic analysis of the newspaper materials is a continuous review and selection of materials related to Belarusian football. The methodological basis of the research is the principles of objectivity, historicism, systematicity and the principle of value in history.

The chronological boundaries of the study cover the 1950s-1980s. In the early 1950s, Soviet athletes became regular participants in all international competitions, and a specialized sports publication appeared in the Byelorussian SSR that covered international, USSR-wide and republican (held in Byelorussian SSR) sports events. In the social and socio-economic development of the country, the studied period is associated with softening of the system after the death of Joseph Stalin (1953) and the further development of the processes of building a socialist society with a complete state monopoly of mass media. In the second half of the 1980s, under the conditions of the “Perestroika” and “Glasnost” policies, the mass media underwent a transition from the Soviet ideological paradigm to topics aimed at the mass consumer. In 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted the law “About the printed media and other media”, which eliminated the state’s monopoly of media and abolished censorship.⁵

Theoretical approaches to the study of sports as a propaganda instrument in the USSR (both within the union and in the international arena) are developed in monographs of R. Edelman,⁶ J. Riordan,⁷ J. Parks,⁸ M. Zeller,⁹ L. E. Holmes,¹⁰ C. Viñas,¹¹ J. Etty¹² and other authors. But their peculiarity is the focus on the central media and clubs of the USSR’s top league, while the peculiarities of the republican media and sports remain outside the scope of coverage. An important contribution to historiography is the research of Ukrainian historians

⁵ “Vedomosti Syezda narodnykh deputatov SSSR i Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR” [“Bulletin of the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR”] 1990, no 26, art. 492, pp. 690–700.

⁶ R. Edelman, *Serious Fun: A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR*, New York 1993, 307 p.

⁷ J. Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR*, New York 1977, 435 p.

⁸ J. Parks, *The Olympic games, the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War: Red Sport, Red Tape*, Lexington 2017, 205 p.

⁹ M. Zeller, *Sport and Society in the Soviet Union: The Politics of Football after Stalin*, translated by N. Challerger, London 2018, 336 p.

¹⁰ L. E. Holmes, *Win or Else: Soviet Football in Moscow and Beyond, 1921–1985*, Indiana 2024, 230 p.

¹¹ C. Viñas, *Football in the Land of the Soviets*, London 2022, 176 p.

¹² J. Etty, *Graphic Satire in the Soviet Union: Krokodil’s Political Cartoons*, Mississippi 2019, 266 p.

I. Svistelnik¹³ and Yu. O. Sazonova,¹⁴ who analyze sports media in the Ukrainian SSR and present trends in the development of the press in other union republics.

Due to the lack of special studies of the local sports press in the 1950s-1980s in Belarusian historiography, the article is based on newspaper materials. In addition to studying written sources for the preparation of the article, visual sources were also analyzed. In particular, more than one hundred and thirty caricatures on the topics of football players, fans and football infrastructure, and fifty photographs of stadiums were identified on the pages of the newspaper and used to study the display of domestic football in this media. The authors put forward the following research problems: 1. What sources on the history of football in the Byelorussian SSR were published by the newspaper "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii"? 2. What topics were most reflected on the pages of the periodical in the 1950s -1980s?

The structure of the article is determined by the topics of materials devoted to Belarusian football, where, along with the coverage of the matches, much attention was paid to ideological work with athletes and fans, as well as the condition of stadiums and other sports facilities. The newspaper contains not only written but also numerous pictorial sources: caricatures, drawings and photographs. The peculiarities of information transmission and ideological influence in the newspaper necessitated the analysis of football caricatures, which were actively used in the 1950s and 1960s, both as independent semantic objects and for visualization of publications.

The newspaper "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" as a source for the history of football

The newspaper contains various sources on the history of Belarusian football in the 1950s-1980s. Among the written sources were materials of analytical (correspondence, articles, reviews, reports), artistic, journalistic (essays, feuilletons, humorous) and epistolary genres (letters, telegrams), as well as legislative documents and other types of sources. Pictorial sources include photographs, drawings and caricatures. The newspaper published fixture lists, results and tables of the USSR Championship, Byelorussian SSR Championship, USSR Cup and Byelo-

¹³ I. Svistelnik, *Knyhovydannya ta periodychna presa u haluzi fizychnoyi kultury i sportu: monohrafiya* [Book publishing and periodicals in the field of physical culture and sports: monograph], Kyiv 2010, 148 p.

¹⁴ Yu. O. Sazonova, *Sportyvna zhurnalistyka Ukrainy: providni personaliyi ta osnovni hazetno-zhurnalni vydannya (XIX–XXI st.): monohrafiya* [Sports journalism of Ukraine: leading personalities and main newspaper and magazine publications (19th–21st centuries): monograph], Mykolaiv 2020. 256 p.; Yu. O. Sazonova, *Sportyvna zhurnalistyka Ukrainy: istoriya, evolyutsiya, transformatsiya: monohrafiya* [Sports journalism of Ukraine: history, evolution, transformation: monograph], Mykolaiv 2021, 276 p.

russian SSR Football Cup, as well as other football tournaments, reviews of important matches, results of meetings of the Presidium of the Byelorussian SSR Football Federation. Each football season featured preseason and postseason analysis. Essays on the history of football appeared regularly in separate articles.¹⁵

The first reports on football matches were different from today's standards of the genre. The authors did not include basic information: lineups, goal scorers and goal minutes, cautioned and sent off players, missed penalties, number of spectators present, names of referees. A fixed reporting standard was established quite late and may have been related to the demand for information from fans. For example, in the article "Game Score" the lineup of FC Dinamo Minsk was reported "at the request of the readers" (1975).¹⁶ Over time, the reports evolved into a more modern format. In the early 1980s, team lineups with substitutions and the basic information became mandatory. Along with the technical part, the literary part also developed: already in the 1950s, elements of match analysis were present in the reports, for example, evaluation of refereeing.¹⁷ From time to time, critical comments of the authors on the quality of the match appeared, they noted a neglectful approach of coaches, poor pitch quality and other issues.¹⁸ In the reports of the FC Dinamo Minsk games in the late 1970s, team compositions, the progress of the game, comments of players and analysts, as well as more literary writing appeared.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Za sorok let (1917-1957). Futbol v Belorussii [For forty years (1917-1957). Football in Byelorussia]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1957, no 77 (660), p. 3; no 78 (661), p. 3; *Dostoyaniye millionov [The wealth of millions]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1958, no 30 (718), p. 4; *Vpervyye... [For the first time...]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1968, no 63 (2209), p. 3; *U istokov belorusskogo futbola [At the origins of Belarusian football]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1959, no 62 (854), p. 3.; *Za godom god... [Year after year...]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1967, no 58 (1949), p. 2; "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1967, no 62 (1953), p. 2; "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1967, no 69 (1960), p. 2; "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 196, no 173 (2064), p. 2; "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1967, no 182 (2073), p. 2; "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1967, no 184 (2075), p. 3; "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1967, no 188 (2079), p. 2.

¹⁶ *Schet po igre [The score reflects the game]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1975, no 187 (4107), p. 4.

¹⁷ *Kogda sudya ne presekayet grubost [When a referee does not stop rudeness]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1955, no 47 (422), p. 3.

¹⁸ *Gosti prepodayut urok [Guests teach a lesson]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1960, no 75 (971), p. 4; *Futbolisty traktornogo zavoda – chempiony Minska [Footballers are Minsk champions]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1960, no 91 (987), p. 4; *Futbolisty... v pyli [Footballers... in the dust]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1975, no 144 (4064), p. 4.

¹⁹ *Eto – volya! [This is will!]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1979, no 98 (5020), p. 1.

At the end of each tournament in the Byelorussian SSR, the results were analyzed in separate articles. This concerned not only the performances of professional teams, but also amateur tournaments (championship of the city of Minsk, veteran competitions, youth tournaments and others). The most serious volumes were allocated to the final materials about the performances of the FC Belarus and later FC Dinamo Minsk at the nationwide Soviet level. These articles were accompanied by statistics (lineups in all games, total number of matches and goals, number of spectators) and other information.

The outcome of the 1982 season, in which FC Dinamo Minsk became the champion of the USSR for the only time in history, was most vividly presented. Other successes of Belarusian football include third place in the USSR Championship in 1954 (at that time FC Spartak Minsk), 1963 and 1983. FC Dinamo Minsk became a finalist of the USSR Cup in 1965 and 1987. The club also represented the USSR in the UEFA Champions Cup (quarterfinalist in 1983/84), UEFA Cup (quarterfinalist in 1984/85) and Cup Winners Cups (quarterfinalist in 1987/88). Several Belarusian players from FC Dinamo Minsk played for the USSR national team, including Sergei Aleinikov and Sergei Gotsmanov who were in the lineup of the USSR for EURO'88 final vs the Netherlands. Aleinikov went on to become the only Soviet footballer to play in UEFA Cup final (for Juventus in 1990).

Unlike Dinamo Minsk, other Belarusian clubs never reached top Soviet levels. The closest was FC Dnepr Mogilev, which won USSR Second League (third tier of Soviet football structure), but failed to establish itself in the First league (finished 20th out of 22 and relegated). FC Dinamo Brest, FC Gomel, FC Neman Grodno and FC Vitebsk during the Soviet era mostly played in the Second League (third tier of USSR football).

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the coverage of the events of FC Dinamo, the flagship Belarusian team has occupied the main place in the newspaper: the team's return from the holidays, matches, interviews, advertisements of upcoming games became mandatory. The XXII Summer Olympic Games in 1980 in the USSR caused an increase in interest in sports in general, and in football in particular. From the end of the 1970s, the pages of "Fizkulturnik" published articles devoted to the training of athletes, preparation of infrastructure, equipment and even merchandise. The capital of the Byelorussian SSR hosted six games of the group stage and one quarter-final match of the Olympic football tournament, which were widely covered in the main sports publications of the country.

Ideological pressure on football players

The newspaper argued the advantage of training Soviet athletes and emphasized the role of party and political work in the sports environment. Victories

and achievements in sports were explained as an advantage of the entire Soviet education system. The ideal image of the Soviet man was broadcast in the mass media, consisting only of positive characteristics. An important feature of the athlete was “moral character”. In addition, the Soviet football player had to “constantly acquire knowledge”, have “high discipline in work and sports”. The newspaper published the names of the teams and the names of the players who did not correspond to the image of the Soviet athlete:

Some football players of the FC Dinamo masters team behave incorrectly in everyday life... [...] The public of the republic has repeatedly drawn attention to their behavior, but these athletes do not listen to criticism, and the sports organizations of Dinamo and the Institute of Physical Education have not taken proper measures to educate them.²⁰

Football players were criticized for their great popularity among fans. In the article “FC Belarus in the new season” the following was reported: “Having found themselves in the center of public attention, some of our football players imagined themselves to be stars of the first magnitude.” And they also quoted the names of the football players: “The goalkeeper Denisenko, the defenders Radunsky, Manko, who started the season well, came to such a position in the team.”²¹ The material of the senior teacher of physical education of the Minsk Law Institute “About the culture of speech of an athlete” notes as follows:

Among athletes there are many lovers of slang words. Their speech is peppered with such pearls that it is often simply incomprehensible to an inexperienced person what the speaker wants to say.²²

Attention was drawn to unsportsmanlike behavior and rough play, as well as bad habits.²³ The appearance and interest in fashion were also criticized.²⁴

²⁰ *Kultura sovetского sportsmena* [The culture of a soviet athlete], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1953, no 10 (176), p. 1.

²¹ “Belarus” v novom sezone [“Belarus” in the new season], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1961, no 2 (1003), pp. 3-4.

²² *O kulture rechi sportsmena* [On the culture of an athlete’s speech], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1953, no 59 (225), p. 3.

²³ *Etika sovetского sportsmena* [Ethics of the soviet athlete], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1951, no 41, p. 2; *Khuligany na futbolnom pole* [Hooligans on the football field], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1953, no 49 (215), p. 3; *Po materialam “Fizkulturnika Belorussii”* [Based on materials from “Fizkulturnik Belorussii”], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1953, no 50 (216), p. 3; *Borotsya s nekulturnostyu i khuliganstvom* [To fight against uncultured behavior and hooliganism], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1957, no 49 (632), p. 2; *O futbole i vospitanii* [About football and education], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1963, no 81 (1290), p. 2; *Nikakikh poblazhek khuliganam* [No mercy for hooligans], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”], 1961, no 71 (1072), p. 4.

²⁴ *Na temy mod* [On the topic of fashion], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1959, no 55 (847), p. 4.

During the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the attitudes formed in pre-war times – amateurism, collectivism and high moral qualities – continued to be preserved in football. Both the most popular domestic football players (“star disease”) and “bourgeois”, “Western” athletes and sports officials acted as antagonists. In the 1980s, the newspaper became more focused on the readers’ needs. Since the second half of the 1980s, the amount of ideological material has noticeably decreased.

Football fans and the “correct” forms of team support in the stadium

Within the Soviet state, football was part of physical culture and a phenomenon around which an original subculture formed. Special importance was attached to football matches as a competition and a place for the release of social energy. Great attention was paid to the moral image of stadium visitors – this topic runs through the entire researched period. In the article “FC Belarus in the new season”, the senior coach of the team is indignant at the behavior of some fans:

...there are still fans of a “special kind”. Some of them drink vodka in the stands, drink to a goal or a miss, they whistle, curse, not paying attention to the fact that children and women are sitting nearby, and insult the referees and players. [...] Such “fans”, who interfere with spectators, referees, and players, must be educated both by administrative measures and, especially, by measures of social influence.²⁵

Whistling during games was especially disapproved. The author of the article “Cheering at the stadium should be a cultural thing” was disgusted by such a reaction of the fans:

Remember how some of the spectators had a rule of whistling when they entered the pitch. Needless to say, this lack of culture and savagery must be eradicated. [...] They talked about not throwing bottles at the players (on the stadium radio – note), but as for elementary culture, greeting visiting players with applause, to put it mildly, they were embarrassed.²⁶

The same criticism is heard in the article “You came to the stadium”:

Whistling and insulting shouts from the so-called “wits” accompany the decisions of the referees, the football player’s mistakes when performing this or that technique, etc. and so on.²⁷

²⁵ “Belarus” v novom sezone [FC Belarus in the new season], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1961, no 2 (1003), pp. 3-4.

²⁶ “Bolet” nado kulturno [You have support in a cultural way], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1964, no 33 (1347), p. 4.

²⁷ Vy prishli na stadion [You came to the stadium], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1985, no 210 (6822), p. 4.

Active fans were accused of being an obstacle to visiting stadiums:

...the majority of our team's fans sit at home watching TV only because of these hooligans in the stands. Is it really possible to go to our stadium with a wife?²⁸

At the same time,

...a lot of random people with a low cultural level end up there, who, having little understanding of football, see attending a match only as an excuse to drink and yell.²⁹

And they were also blamed for failures on the football field:

Inappropriate remarks and whistling at individual players throw them off balance. [...] Spectators turn the referee against the team, the players against the referee, and an unhealthy atmosphere is created on the field."³⁰

Another question raised by football fans was "How to deal with smokers, of whom there is a clear majority?" And immediately they offered to conduct an experiment at the Dinamo Minsk stadium with the allocation of sectors for those who do not smoke.³¹

Among the forms of support for teams on the football field, which were approved by ideological employees and ordinary spectators, thunderous applause, as well as "...banners calling for victory, flags with the colors of their favorite club" were offered. They also proposed to take the rules of behavior in the theater and create "...an impenetrable barrier to all kinds of violations of socialist morality."³² It was emphasized that raising a fan is a difficult task, which should begin at school, pioneer unit and Komsomol organization, and it will end in sports halls and stadiums – "exhortations on the radio and influence, in extreme cases, by the police and brigades of the people's squad."³³ In the article "In the museum" the disappearance of hooligan fans under socialism was generally announced.³⁴ Among the proposals to restore order are "equipping special satirical stands on the territory of the stadiums with portraits and lists of those who like

²⁸ *Khuliganam net mesta na tribunakh* [There is no place for hooligans in the stands], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1981, no 189 (5591), p. 2.

²⁹ *Na stadion, kak v teatr* [To the stadium, like to the theatre], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1986, no 3 (6865), p. 2.

³⁰ *"Bolet" razumno* [To support for the team wisely], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1959, no 59 (851), p. 4.

³¹ *Na stadion, kak v teatr* [To the stadium, like to the theatre], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1986, no 3 (6865), p. 2.

³² *Vy prishli na stadion* [You came to the stadium], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1985, no 210 (6822), p. 4.

³³ *Trenirovka vyderzhki* [Endurance training], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 33 (1034), p. 3.

³⁴ *V muzeye* [In the museum], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 94 (1095), p. 4.

to play pranks", as well as "strictly punishing and fining hooligans who prevent people from watching football or relaxing at the stadium."³⁵

A well-known place for informal meetings of football fans in Minsk was the so-called "Birzha" ("Exchange") near the Dinamo stadium. Such gatherings caused dissatisfaction and were repeatedly criticized in the newspaper.³⁶ The author, a retired member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, I. Pavlov, was excited by the activity of the fans:

Between games (and immediately after games), groups of football fans gather at the stadium. There are heated debates. Assumptions, predictions, criticism, advice without an address – there is no end to it. Such "forums" can sometimes be lengthy. [...] How should we react to these spontaneously arising conversations?³⁷

In the material "Hooligans and drunkards – get out of the stands!" a senior inspector of the Leninsky Police Department of Minsk gives the names and surnames of the fans who misbehaved in front of the representatives of the law enforcement agencies:

Here is a worker at the Bolshevik plant, Vladimir Peshkov. On May 2, during a football game, he made noise at the stadium, pestered the spectators, used foul language, and swore. He was drunk and was sentenced to seven days of arrest. [...] Nikolai Turgin does not want to work. He doesn't miss football matches. However, he apparently loves to overcome obstacles and climbs into the stadium over the fence. [...] Bus depot worker Nikolai Karnatsky and driver of the same depot Georgi Tarasik felt cramped in the stands during a football match on May 12. They decided to express their feelings at a closer distance from the players, ran onto the pitch and headed towards the players with loud screams.³⁸

Despite constant criticism of football fans, reports in the media about specific incidents involving fans on the territory of the USSR are an exception. For example, the article "From the courtroom: "Fans"" was reprinted from the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union. It reported that on November 3, 1988, a group of fans (about 200 people) came from Moscow to Vilnius for the match between FC Zalgiris and FC Spartak Moscow. A group of twenty people boarded a trolleybus heading towards the stadium and blocked the exits. When the members of the Lithuanian SSR cycling team, Romuald Blakewich and Kestutis Stakenas, tried to get out of the bus, the hooligans threw fists and bottles at

³⁵ *Vy prishli na stadion* [You came to the stadium], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1985, no 210 (6822), p. 4; *Na stadion, kak v teatr* [To the stadium, like to the theatre], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1986, no 3 (6865), p. 2.

³⁶ *Karikatura* [Caricature], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 28 (1029), p. 3.

³⁷ *"Bolet" nado kulturno* [You need to support the team wisely], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1964, no 33 (1347), p. 4.

³⁸ *Khuliganov i pyanits – von s tribun* [Hooligans and drunkards – out of the stands], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 41 (1042), p. 4.

them: "Stakenas stumbled from the blow from the bottle. Then they started kicking him. His comrade was also beaten." The court found both FC Spartak Moscow fans guilty of hooliganism causing bodily harm, sentencing 17-year-old evening school student Andrey Kulikov to 2.5 years and 18-year-old unemployed Uladimir Iofe to three years of imprisonment. Execution of the sentence was postponed for two years.³⁹

At the same time, only ideological work on the pages of the newspaper and police inspections at the stadium were not enough, and in 1983 the order "On strengthening the responsibility of football team leaders, coaches, referees, doctors, instructors, stadium workers during football matches of the championships and Cups of the Byelorussian SSR and the USSR at the stadiums of the republic" was published. The newspaper explained that the order contained a number of recommendations of the football department of the Sports Committee of the Byelorussian SSR and the republican football federation aimed at ensuring order and discipline in stadiums. However, no details were given on the pages of the newspaper.⁴⁰

In the second half of the 1980s, with some liberalization of the printed media, letters from readers who were dissatisfied with the actions of the police at the Dinamo Stadium appeared in "Fizkulturnik". The article "Respect the fan" quotes a letter from a member of the Union of Journalists of the USSR Rzhetskaya from Borisov:

Tell me where, in what document on the fight against drunkenness and alcoholism it is written that people who come to the stadium are to be searched. In Minsk they do this without any hesitation. I walked with a small bag made of fabric like plastic. Suddenly, at the entrance to the stand, a policeman grabbed it, began to touch it, and looked inside. I had fan stuff there: an umbrella, a newspaper, binoculars, a couple of sandwiches for the return trip by train. I asked why they were searching me, who gave them this right? Response: "If I want to, I'll force you to take out everything, maybe you have a bottle there." The journalist was also outraged by the fact that "...after the match the police do not allow you to take an autograph from your favorite footballer. Although the players themselves willingly give them to fans."⁴¹

The article "Why don't people go to the stadium" contains excerpts from a letter from a FC Dinamo fan with a ten-year experience: "...at the entrance you are greeted by a reinforced police squad. I, of course, have nothing against this. But the suspicion of some policemen simply starts to irritate and humiliate your human dignity. At the sector you are greeted by double security: there was one

³⁹ *Iz zala suda: "Bolelshchiki"* [From the courtroom: "Fans"], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1989, no 55 (7667), p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Za poryadok i distsiplinu na stadionakh* [Supporting order and discipline in stadiums], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1983, no 13 (5925), p. 2.

⁴¹ *Uvazhat bolelshchika* [Respect the fan], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1986, no 99 (6961), p. 4.

at the entrance and then immediately in front of the sector entrance. For what? Haven't I been checked already before I got to the sector? Are there too many extra people in the stadium, passing here for free? And again you feel the complete distrust of these inspectors." Among the big disadvantages, as noted by the fan, are the closed buffets and the absence of a separate sector for people who do not smoke.⁴²

Women's football coverage

Until the end of the 1980s, women's football was mentioned in the newspaper only episodically in connection with the international agenda. As the article "Arguments for doubters" reports, in November 1987, the first city women's tournament organized by "Znamya yunosti" ("The Banner of Youth") newspaper took place in Minsk. In February 1988, the Minsk city team participated in inter-city competitions in Kaunas, where they faced teams from Lithuania and Moldova. Women's football teams were created at Lokomotiv Stadium. Having won the first republican tournament on a standard 11 vs 11 pitch (teams from Minsk, Mogilev and Brest participated), the women footballers of the "Orbita" sports club took part in the nationwide tournament in Kashira, Moscow region, where the strongest teams of the USSR participated. Next, new teams were created and football tournaments were held in Mogilev and Grodno, and the second "Znamya yunosti" tournament was held in Minsk, where the "Orbita" team won.

In 1990, three Belarusian teams took part in the USSR women's football championship, as reported in the article "Women's football in all seriousness": FC Nadezhda (Mogilev) and FC Niva (Grodno) – in the top league, FC Elektronika (Minsk) – in the first. The best result was achieved by Mogilev players, who came fifth. Among the results of the season, the entry of Belarusian women into the USSR national team, which in 1991 was supposed to participate in the European Championship for the first time, is mentioned. The author of the article, the referee of the republican category Sharbur, proposes that the football federation of the Byelorussian SSR should create another committee for women's football, which was supposed to take control of the opening of training groups for girls in the children's and youth sports schools, the organization of the women's championship of the republic and other events.⁴³

⁴² *Pochemu ne idut na stadion* [Why they don't go to the stadium], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1989, no 189 (7801), p. 3.

⁴³ *Zhenskiy futbol na polnom seryeze* [Women's football in all seriousness], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1990, no 241 (8103), p. 4.

Condition of stadiums and other sports facilities

The newspaper contains information about the construction of football stadiums in Minsk, as well as in other Belarusian cities and towns. Much coverage was given to several reconstructions of the main arena of the republic – the Dinamo Stadium. The reconstruction of the Dinamo Stadium before the XXII Summer Olympic Games of 1980 was recorded in detail.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the newspaper repeatedly reported on the bad pitch condition or other issues of the Minsk stadiums Krasnoye znamya, Sputnik, Lokomotiv, Belarusian State University, Pishchevik and other stadiums and pitches. Stadiums in regional capitals were not in the best condition either: Vitebsk Stadium and its reserve pitch, the stadium of the fine cloth factory in Grodno, the city stadium and the Lokomotiv stadium in Gomel. There was information about the problems of the stadiums in Dobrush, Dokshitsy, Rechitsa, the Metallist stadiums in Baranovichi and Lokomotiv in Zhlobin, the stadiums in the villages of Bragin and Ostrino, as well as in other rural areas.⁴⁴

In the 1970s, the Belarusian football grounds were in “stagnation” according to the newspaper. This was how the situation in Vitebsk was described: “For many years, FC Dvina has not had their own training ground, and matches have been played at the stadium, which, in the end, has fallen into complete disrepair, and this year FC Dvina, apparently, will be forced to host rivals not in their hometown, but in the stadiums of Orsha and Novopolotsk.” Conditions in Mogilev were not the best: “The team of FC Dnepr Mogilev is also in a difficult situa-

⁴⁴ *Zabroshennyi stadion* [Abandoned stadium], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1951, no 33, p. 4; “Kruglosutochnaya rabota” stadiona [“Round-the-clock operation of the stadium”], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1955, no 57 (432), p. 4; *Gde byl stadion, tam burenka pasetsya* [Where there was a stadium, there a cow grazes], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1960, no 60 (956), p. 3; *Gde nuzhno vlast upotrebit* [Where power should be used], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1969, no 99 (2486), p. 4; “Zhlobinskaya sirota” [“Zhlobin orphan”], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1968, no 198 (2344), p. 3; *Pastbishche, bazarnaya ploshchad ili stadion?* [Pasture, market square or stadium?], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1951, no 23, p. 2; *Stadion-nevidimka* [Invisible stadium], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1965, no 70 (1488), p. 2; *Novyye khozyayeva...* [New owners...], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1958, no 78 (766), p. 2; *Stadion stroitsya* [The stadium is being built], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1964, no 43 (1357), p. 2; *Khleboroby stroyat stadion* [Grain growers are building a stadium], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 112 (1749), p. 2; *Stadion pod ugrozoy* [The stadium is under threat], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 54 (1691), p. 3; *Kazhdomu kollektivu – stadion ili ploshchadku* [A stadium or a site for each team], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1965, no 61 (1479), p. 2; *A yesli prislushatsya k Mayakovskomu* [And if you listen to Mayakovsky], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1968, no 91 (2237), p. 2.

tion in this regard – it also does not have its own training ground.” The conditions for football in Grodno were described as follows: “FC Khimik players conduct training sessions at a suburban base, which does not yet meet the necessary requirements.”⁴⁵

Reports from Bobruisk said there were 17 football pitches, however, as stated by a member of the presidium of the Mogilev Region Football Federation: “...only two can be used for games and fruitful training sessions (FanDOK and Spartak stadiums).” The main venue for training was the stadium of the factory named after Dzerzhinskiy, which fell in disrepair:

The football pitch, which does not have drainage, has become completely unusable due to heavy exploitation and non-compliance with maintenance rules. The FanDOK stadium is under a threat of demolition: according to the master plan for the development of the city, a highway is to be built on the territory of the stadium.⁴⁶

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were 131 stadiums in Byelorussian SSR, of which 20 were in Minsk.⁴⁷ As of 1983, there were 135 stadiums and 3,650 football pitches in the Republic.⁴⁸ At the joint meeting of the Sports Committee of the Byelorussian SSR and the presidium of the football federation of the Republic, following the results of the 1979 season, the situation in the teams of the second league was again criticized. In particular, FC Dvina Vitebsk, FC Dnepr Mogilev, and FC Gomselmash Gomel had difficulties both with infrastructure and personnel, as well as with the training process. This is how the situation in FC Dvina was described:

The professional team still does not have their own training ground outside of the city. [...] The pitch of the football stadium in Vitebsk does not stand up to criticism.⁴⁹

The Mogilev sports committee was accused of issues regarding infrastructure: “The planned construction of a complex of football pitches in Mogilev, a ‘football town’ and a training ground for FC Dnepr team is not being done.”⁵⁰ The biggest achievement of Belarusian clubs other than FC Dinamo Minsk in USSR competitions was the promotion of FC Dnepr Mogilev under the coach Anatoly Baidachnyi to the first USSR league. Unfortunately, in the 1983 season, the

⁴⁵ *Zadacha ostayetsya prezhney* [The task remains the same], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1978, no 5 (4671), pp.1, 3.

⁴⁶ *V roli pasynka, ili o baryerakh na puti razvitiya futbola v Bobruyske* [In the role of a stepson, or about barriers to the development of football in Bobruisk], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1978, no 77 (4743), p. 3.

⁴⁷ *Kak sluzhish lyudyam, stadion?* [How do you serve people, stadium?], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1981, no 133 (2521), p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Kachestvo – tema aktualnaya* [Quality is a topical issue], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1983, no 108 (6020), p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Podarite boleshchikami ulybki* [Give the fans smiles], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1979, no 226 (5128), p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Pochemu “Dnepr” techet vspyat?* [Why does the Dnieper flow backwards?], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1979, no 227 (5129), p. 2.

club returned to the second league, where it played until the collapse of the USSR. In February 1989, FC Dnepr Mogilev became the first economically sustainable club in the Byelorussian SSR.⁵¹

During the 1980s, the newspaper continued to publish materials about the difficulties of Belarusian clubs participating in the second Soviet league. Often journalists paid attention to FC Dvina Vitebsk, that did not have "... basic conditions for educational work with football players."⁵² In 1980-1986, Dinamo Stadium in Vitebsk was closed for reconstruction:

When playing away vs FC Dvina, the rivals were forced to book tickets to Novopolotsk. It was here that the team from Vitebsk held home matches.⁵³

And their bus was "breathing its last breath."⁵⁴ In the 1982 season, the matches were moved to Polotsk, where the attendance was even worse:

In the match reports, in the column "number of spectators", the eye-piercing number "100" became familiar.⁵⁵

The stadiums of the Byelorussian SSR championship participants were in a poor condition as well. In 1974, an article "Geese... on the football pitch" appeared in the newspaper. It was dedicated to the stadium of the FC Shakhtyor football club from Soligorsk. The condition of the stadium, whose construction began back in 1965, was described as follows:

The first thing that caught my eye was huge geese that were peacefully nibbling, browsing the grass in the center of the pitch. [...] Goals as such also do not exist. The stands... present a pitiful sight. They began to subside, and the walls of the utility rooms became covered with huge cracks.⁵⁶

In 1977, in the material for the Miner's Day, it was reported that the stadium in Soligorsk was already completed and operational.⁵⁷

In the column "Readers write to us" a football fan named Shapovalov talks about the stadium in Rechitsa: "The stadium is becoming more and more ne-

⁵¹ *Komanda uchitsya schitat* [The team learns to count], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1989, no 28 (7640), p. 3.

⁵² *Pereotsenka tsennostey* [Revaluation of values], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1982, no 16 (5668), p. 4.

⁵³ *Lyubopytnyy "pasyans"* [A curious "solitaire"], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1982, no 243 (5905), p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Staryye problemy novogo sezona* [Old problems of the new season], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1983, no 32 (5944), p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Ozhidaniya i realnost* [Expectations and Reality], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1983, no 214 (6226), p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Gusi... na futbolnom pole* [Geese... on the football field], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1974, no 149 (3815), p. 3.

⁵⁷ *Gornyaki na stadione* [Miners at the stadium], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1977, no 169 (4599), p. 1.

glected every year. But alcohol lovers found shelter there.” The spectator describes football matches for the championship of the city in 1975 as follows:

There is no information at the stadium (it is impossible to even find out who is playing). The referee runs in the pitch in a training suit, and the linesmen are random people who are involved in performing these duties a minute before the start of the match.⁵⁸

In response, a special correspondent of the newspaper went to the city:

The stadium of the Rechitsadrev Factory makes a pitiful impression. The sports season is in full swing, but the running tracks are torn up, there are no fences, not a single sports poster or stands. There is a footpath across the entire football field, and the goals are dumped in the far corner of the stadium.⁵⁹

A report from 1975 “Homeless” stadium” contains information about Neman Stadium in Mosty:

Over the summer, the stadium fell into a deplorable state without supervision. [...] The wooden stands on one side had to be demolished due to the emergency condition.⁶⁰

In the seasons of 1986 and 1987, the Mosty team played in the championship of the Byelorussian SSR, but could not continue on the republican level. In 1988, it participated in the championship of the district and region:

These competitions are not advertised anywhere in the city, matches are often canceled due to teams not showing up, not all games are attended by referees, and conflict situations arise.⁶¹

The special correspondent of the newspaper reports on the neglected state of the stadium in Novogrudok:

...fans crowd lonely at the edge of the sports ground. Because the benches in the stands, which had seen more than one generation in their lifetime, could not withstand the usage load and collapsed almost two years ago.⁶²

The questions raised were answered by the first secretary of the Novogrudok district committee of the Communist Party of Belarus, who said that the renovation of the stadium would be included in the plan for 1981.⁶³

⁵⁸ *Pozabyt, pozabroszen...* [Forgotten, abandoned...], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1975, no 139 (4059), p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Neuyutno v Rechitse futbolu* [Football feels uneasy in Rechitsa], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1976, no 106 (4282), p. 2.

⁶⁰ *“Besprizornyy” stadion* [“Homeless” stadium], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1975, no 225 (4145), p. 2.

⁶¹ *Gorkaya pilyulya* [A Bitter Pill], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1988, no 194 (7556), p. 2.

⁶² *Trevoga nad stadionom* [Alarm over the stadium], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1980, no 210 (5362), p. 3.

⁶³ *Po materialam FB: “Trevoga nad stadionom”* [Based on materials from FB: “Alarm over the stadium”], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1980, no 249 (5401), p. 2.

In 1981, the newspaper reported on the Gorodskoi stadium in Borisov:

A grassy dirty running track, unpainted benches in small stands, a barn-like administrative building. The only decent place is the football pitch.⁶⁴

The situation of football pitches and playgrounds in Baranovichy (1988) caused concern: “According to statistical reports, there are more than 10 of them. But can the empty land plots behind the factory, the parking lot and other places be considered to be football pitches?” The ongoing renovation of the main sports arena of Baranovichy – Lokomotiv stadium was described as follows:

... the reserve pitch, where the games of the Byelorussian SSR championship are held, does not stand up to criticism. The pitch is very tough, and one has to wonder how referees still allow games to be played here. [...] Only beer lovers, having placed rows of bottles under the bench, drink to their heart’s content.⁶⁵

In 1991, journalists reported that the grandstand at the capital’s “Traktor” stadium was in a state of emergency.⁶⁶

Football caricature

In addition to written sources, the newspaper contains pictorial sources: caricatures, drawings and photographs. Pictures were most often used to illustrate editions dedicated to holidays. Caricature was an important component of ideological work. It was especially actively used in the 1950s and 1960s, and after the 1970s it gradually became an exception. Sports in the caricature of the USSR in the 1950s and 1980s were more humorous than satirical. Of course, sports, including football, were an integral part of Soviet propaganda, but one must take into account the context of the late USSR, where more and more spheres of private life fell out of ideological control.

Purely humorous caricatures touched the sphere of everyday life and human relations. They could make fun of misunderstandings in connection with football terminology, for example, a wife is surprised by her husband’s negative reaction to the fact that a football player gets into the “post” several times, and yet considered to be a “loser”, or a fan uses the football term “send off the pitch” in relation to women who, in his opinion, talk loudly.⁶⁷ The subject of humor were

⁶⁴ *Futbolom yediny...* [Football alone...], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1981, no 144 (5546), p. 2.

⁶⁵ *V nezavidnom odinochestve* [In unenviable solitude], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1988, no 154 (7516), p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Chto luchshe – basseyn ili stadion?* [What is better, a swimming pool or a stadium?], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1991, no 127-128 (3670), p. 2.

⁶⁷ *Karikatura* [Caricature], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 70 (1707), p. 3; *Vokrug chempionata mira po futbolu* [Around the World Cup], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 147 (1784), p. 4.

funny or, on the contrary, inventive actions of football players on the pitch, foul play, problems with team organization, extremely active reaction of fans both at the stadium and at home. A picture in which a wife wants to go to play hockey, and a husband to play football, or the spouses cannot draft a “cultural program” – a trip to the theater, because of the world cup – is a typical humorous plot.⁶⁸ The universal passion for football was illustrated, also through the images of atypical fans, for example, old cabbies.⁶⁹ As a comic technique, the appearance or age of football players is used, for example, to show those who have been playing for too long (through beards) or football veterans (through big bellies).⁷⁰

Television, which at that time became common in everyday life and a source of information about the world, including sports, played an important role in broadcasting football-themed images. Thus, the connection “television – football” was one of the symbols of free time, at least for the male part of Soviet society. Extreme popularity of football was mocked in the form of the game’s symbolism (usually in the form of a ball) in unusual situations, such as in a picture where a fan is tested by an optometrist and asked to “read” balls of different sizes, or in an X-ray room when it turns out that the fan literally has a football heart, or in the football player’s family, the baby’s clothes are in the shape of a ball.⁷¹ The ball is also shown as a road sign as a place where fans gather. Typical phrases or images of culture are associated with the football context in a comical way, for example, the expression “don’t beat a lying person” coming from the goalkeeper’s mouth, or the giant head of brother of Chernomor from Pushkin’s “Ruslan and Lyudmila” placed in the goal.⁷²

The caricature in the “no comment” genre, which was new at the time, was frequently used for the football theme. A traditional Soviet caricature usually requires a caption, without which it is difficult to understand the plot, and the drawing itself is more like an illustration than a full-fledged work. The caricature

⁶⁸ *Karikatura [Caricature], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii”* [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 188 (1825), p. 4; *Karikatura [Caricature], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii”* [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 140 (1777), p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Karikatura “Trenirovka pered matchem” [Caricature “Training before the match”]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1965, no 62 (1480), p. 4.

⁷⁰ *Karikatura “Ottsy i deti” [Caricature “Fathers and Sons”]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1959, no 41 (833), p. 4; *Karikatura “Futbol” [Caricature “Football”]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1959, no 53 (845), p. 4.

⁷¹ *Bez slov [Without words]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1967, no 49 (1940), p. 4; *Karikatura “V rentgenkabinete” [Caricature “In the X-ray room”]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1958, no 42 (730), p. 4; *Karikatura “V semye futbolista” [Caricature “In the family of a football player”]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1977, no 209 (4639), p. 3.

⁷² *Karikatura [Caricature], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii”* [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1979, no 202 (5104), p. 3; *Veselyi karandash [A merry pencil]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1986, no 115 (6977), p. 3.

of the “new wave” operates with internationally understandable images, for understanding of which only a graphic depiction is enough. Football, as an international phenomenon, has become a fruitful topic for such caricatures. As an example, we can cite a plot where the “wall” is built from players in the shape of bricks, across, instead of vertically, as it is in reality, or football players attack with several balls at once.⁷³

One can even find manifestations of regional patriotism, which is rare for a sufficiently unified Soviet caricature. This is expressed in the desire for success for a club or national team. For example, in one of the cartoons in the caption, the author is worried that the USSR Cup will finally get to Minsk. There are caricatures in the genre of “positive humor” addressed to individual Minsk teams, such as FC Spartak and FC Dinamo.⁷⁴ The picture dedicated to FC Dinamo uses a technique traditional for Soviet caricature, which is very rare, however, in the sports theme – humanization, or the creation of an anthropomorphic creature. In this case, such a creature is represented by the Dinamo Stadium itself, which throws up a player of his team. This is a kind of metonymy in the graphics.⁷⁵ Specific events in football were relatively rarely caricatured and were usually associated with a positive, exceptional occasion. For example, in the picture of 1966, a policeman is carrying a television into a booth so as not to miss a broadcast from England. It was this year that the World Cup took place, when the USSR team achieved its best result in the history of the world championships (fourth place).⁷⁶

A separate version of the caricature was a “friendly” cartoon. Such cartoons usually do not make fun of the hero, but are presented as an illustration of his positive qualities. In the case of the Soviet caricature, these are caricatures of Eduard Malofeev or (less often) of Eduard Zarembo and Mikhail Mustygin, the absolute stars of Belarusian football in the 1960s Malofeev, for example, is shown with a cannon that shoots balls, thus playing with the ambiguous definition of “scorer”.⁷⁷ The genre of “positive humor”, characteristic of Soviet post-

⁷³ *S ulybkoy [With a smile]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1978, no 87 (4753), p. 4; *Veselyi karandash [A merry pencil]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1979, no 120 (5042), p. 4.

⁷⁴ *Karikatura “Pervoklassniki” [Caricature “First-graders”]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1957, no 1 (584), p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Karikatura [Caricature]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1963, no 1 (1210), p. 4.

⁷⁶ *Karikatura [Caricature]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 140 (1777), p. 3.

⁷⁷ *E. Malofeev [E. Malofeev]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1963, no 91 (1300), p. 4; *E. Malofeev [E. Malofeev]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1966, no 135 (1772), p. 4; *E. Zarembo [E. Zarembo]*, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1963, no 38 (1247), p. 4; *Bezuslovno, Mustygin! [Of course, Mustygin!]*,

war caricature, continued to be found in the 1960s and 1970s, although in the 1950s a similar phenomenon was criticized in other works of art (the so-called "fight against the veneering of reality").

It would be a mistake to perceive a football-themed caricature only in the context of humor. The Soviet caricature was always perceived by the state as an effective means of propaganda, of fighting against a class or international enemy, or against "certain shortcomings". The fight against shortcomings was manifested in the definition of those phenomena, usually everyday ones that did not fit into the Soviet ideology. Despite, at times, universal prevalence of certain phenomena, they were defined as separate, random, exceptional. It was not the system as a whole that was criticized, but its specific manifestations (sometimes without names and places, but described in an ambiguous way as "some" or "individual"). Accordingly, the primary role was played not by a humorous, but by a satirical caricature, whose purpose was to define and stigmatize the vices of society.

In the Byelorussian SSR, there were practically no propaganda cartoons on international football topics. Rather, the idea of sports outside of politics, a phenomenon that unites nations, dominated. Therefore, local newspapers actively reprinted caricatures of foreign authors known as friends of the USSR. For example, the Danish cartoonist Herluf Bidstrup.⁷⁸ They also used reprints from more neutral publications ("France Football", "Sport im Bild" from the East Germany, "Stadion" from Czechoslovakia and others).⁷⁹ But sometimes football events related to "big politics" made it to the pages of the newspaper. For example, a cartoon with the image of Francisco Franco, who scores into the goal

"Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1963, no 1 (1210), p. 3; E. Malofeev [E. Malofeev], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1963, no 91 (1300), p. 4.

⁷⁸ *Karikatura "Bolelshchik"* [Caricature "Fan"], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1957, no 49 (632), p. 4; *Karikatura* [Caricature], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 33 (1034), p. 3.

⁷⁹ *Inostrannyi yumor* [Foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1956, no 35 (514), p. 4; *Iz inostrannogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1957, no 96 (679), p. 4; *Iz inostrannogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1957, no 98 (861), p. 4; *Iz inostrannogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1958, no 23 (711), p. 4; *Iz zarubezhnogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1958, no 75 (763), p. 4; *Iz inostrannogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1958, no 102 (790), p. 4; *Iz zarubezhnogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1959, no 82 (874), p. 4; *Iz zarubezhnogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 74 (1075), p. 4; *Iz inostrannogo yumora* [From foreign humor], "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1966, no 68 (1705), p. 4.

of Spain ("From the position of the right defender"). It was connected with the events at the European football championship in 1960, when the Spanish national team refused to play against the USSR.⁸⁰

One of the topics of the football satire was the disrespect from the representatives of the authorities or the organization that was responsible for the financial support of their own team or simply fans. The cartoons featured images of football stadiums that were in a state of neglect.⁸¹ For example, farm animals play football at the Lokomotiv stadium in Mogilev, cows, horses and geese graze day and night at the stadium in Dokshitsy, in another caricature the footballers of the collective farm team play on a pitch where the grass is waist-height and the ball is not visible, or on another – a football player mows tall grass in the stadium.⁸² Another variant of satire was related to bureaucracy, e.g. when one football player keeps all the results of the team, or the coach turns to the lost and found office to find good strikers there, or instead of taking care of the game, the chairman of the football club solves a crossword puzzle.⁸³

A football player had to be a role model both on and off the pitch. Therefore, the cartoon criticized, firstly, inappropriate behavior on the pitch, namely reckless play, or the use of a foul language.⁸⁴ Such behavior was considered to be hooliganism. In life outside of sports, a footballer was also supposed to be a role model for others. For example, "stylish" athletes ("stilyagi"), football players who enjoyed a lot of press attention were ridiculed.⁸⁵ Drunkenness and tobacco

⁸⁰ *Karikatura "Ispaniya" [Caricature "Spain"]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1960, no 44 (940), p. 4.

⁸¹ *Karikatura "Dym koromyslom" [Caricature "Smoke is huge"]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1957, no 11 (594), p. 3; *Koltovich ne razreshayet [Koltovich doesn't allow]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1957, no 14 (597), p. 4.

⁸² *Karikatura "Futbol'noye sostizaniye" v Mogileve [Cartoon "Football competition" in Mogilev]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1951, no 18, p. 4; *"Kruglosutochnaya rabota" stadiona [Round-the-clock operation of the stadium]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1955, no 57 (432), p. 4; *Uchastok vydelen [The plot has been allocated]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1965, no 115 (1533), p. 2; *Veselyi karandash [A merry pencil]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1981, no 228 (5630), p. 4.

⁸³ *Karikatura [Caricature]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1962, no 51 (1156), p. 4; *Karikatura [Caricature]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1966, no 154 (1791), p. 3; *Karikatura [Caricature]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1965, no 167 (1585), p. 4; *Dlya nikh doroga v kommunizm zakryta [For them the road to communism is closed]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 83 (1084), p. 4; *V muzeye [In the museum]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 94 (1095), p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Karikatura [Caricature]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1965, no 167 (1585), p. 4; *V muzeye [In the museum]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1961, no 94 (1095), p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Na temy mod [On fashion topics]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelorussii" ["Physical culturist of Belarus"] 1959, no 55 (847), p. 4; *Talanty... i poklonniki [Talents... and admirers]*, "Fizkulturnik Byelo-

smoking were criticized as unworthy of a Soviet sportsman.⁸⁶ Football fans were also depicted in satirical cartoons. These are the mentioned “stilyagi”, or excessively aggressive fans.⁸⁷ Phenomena that are not directly related to sports are ridiculed through football images. For example, in one of the caricatures a drunkard and a hooligan are presented as a midfielder, striker and in an offside.⁸⁸

Thus, the football theme, probably the most popular in the sports media, is widely represented both in the caricature of the USSR as a whole, and in the Belarusian caricature of that time, in the form of both humorous (and free from ideological stereotypes), and satirical (in connection with the propaganda role of sports as an activity and as a form of “peaceful competition” with capitalist countries) caricature.

Results and discussion

The sports press of Belarus developed typically (with only rare exceptions) for other Soviet republics, with the existence of specialized sports media where local football was widely covered and separate sections in socio-political newspapers. Such unification was also emphasized by the name of sports newspapers: in the Byelorussian, Uzbek, Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs these were “Fizkulturniks”. Throughout its existence, the republican press remained primarily a publication about local sports, which did not directly compete with such central media as “Sovetskiy sport” and “Futbol-Hockey”. Although the republican media tried to pay attention to foreign competitions as well, the information was provided not systematically in the sections “The manners of bourgeois sports” and “Their manners”, published in the sections “From around the world”, “Events, chronicles, facts”, “Abroad”, “Pages of History” and “Football mosaic” or, at best, in more or less regular reports from major international competitions, and rarely included analytics.

The circulations of the central and republican press were also incomparable. For example, the circulation of the central newspaper “Sovetskiy sport” from 1963 to 1973 increased from 900 to 3,600 thousand copies. The circulation of the magazine “Fizicheskoye obrazovaniye i sport” (“Physical Education and

russii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1959, no 57 (849), p. 4; *Veselyy karandash* [A merry pencil], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1984, no 1 (6563), p. 4.

⁸⁶ *Karikatura* [Caricature], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1962, no 58 (1163), p. 3.

⁸⁷ *Dlya nikh doroga v kommunizm zakryta* [The road to communism is closed for them], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1961, no 83 (1084), p. 4.

⁸⁸ *Tri prevrashcheniya gore-futbolista* [Three transformations of a failed football player], “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” [“Physical culturist of Belarus”] 1962, no 26 (1131), p. 4.

Sport”) from 1963 to 1973 increased two and a half times, and the weekly “Futbol-Hockey” – four times.⁸⁹ In 1980s, the newspaper “Sovetskiy sport” reached a circulation of 4 million copies and in this indicator was among the leaders of world sports publications.⁹⁰ At the same time, the indicators of the republican sports press also increased: from 1962 to 1973, the circulation of “Sportyvna hazeta” (Ukrainian SSR) increased from 50 to 300 thousand copies, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” (Byelorussian SSR) – from 30 to 100 thousand, “Fizkulturnik Uzbekistana” – from 25 to 101 thousand copies.⁹¹

During the period under research, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” remained the only specialized sports media in the republic, unlike in Ukraine, where the tradition of sports media was more developed and characterized by greater diversity. However, the newspaper covers a wide range of sources concerning the history of Belarusian football. “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” provides information about the matches of the Belarusian football teams, the training and personnel, ideological work and propaganda in relation to football players and fans, infrastructure (stadiums, football pitches, other facilities), notable football players and coaches. The newspaper materials provide the basis for research into the origin and development of Belarusian football journalism.

Conclusion

The newspaper’s formation took place during the period of the “Khrushchev Thaw”, when the policy of de-Stalinization of society was proclaimed. Despite the activation of public life in the Soviet Union, the sports press remained one of the main instruments of propaganda. This period was also characterized by the processes of Russification, and Russian was chosen as the language of the newspaper (“Fizkulturnik” was simultaneously published in Belarusian in 1952–1962). During the “Era of Stagnation”, the circulation of central and republican publications continued to increase. In “Fizkulturnik”, changes in the genres of publications occurred: the number of informational and analytical articles increased, the use of feuilletons and humoresques noticeably decreased. Caricatures, which were especially actively used in the 1950s and 1960s, gradually be-

⁸⁹ I. Svistelnik, *Knyhovydannya ta periodychna presa u haluzi fizychnoyi kultury i sportu: monohrafiya* [Book publishing and periodicals in the field of physical culture and sports: monograph], Kyiv 2010, p. 56.

⁹⁰ K.A. Alekseev, *K probleme periodizatsii istorii sportivnoy zhurnalistiki v Rossii* [On the Problem of Periodization of the History of Sports Journalism in Russia], “Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, Yazyk i Literatura” [“Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. Language and Literature”] 2018, vol. 15, issue 2, p. 181.

⁹¹ I. Svistelnik, op. cit., p. 56.

came an exception after the 1970s. At the same time, the importance of photography, including sports reporting, gradually increased. More noticeable changes emerged in the second half of the 1980s, when letters from readers (including critical ones) appeared in the newspaper, and the genre of interviews with athletes actively developed and became more informal, which indicates that the editorial board was striving to become closer to its recipients.

In the late 1980s, under the conditions of the “Perestroika” and “Glasnost” policies, with the weakening of ideological control, “Fizkulturnik Byelorussii” moved away from highly specialized sports topics. At this time, the newspaper acquired the characteristics of a popular publication. Topics unrelated to sports and physical education appeared on its pages (interviews with winners of beauty contests, articles on crime, racketeering, and alcoholism), and coverage of karate and bodybuilding, which were popular at the time, expanded. The turn of the 1980s and 1990s was a period of fundamental transformations in the history of Belarusian statehood: on July 27, 1990, the Declaration on State Sovereignty of the Byelorussian SSR was adopted, and on September 19, 1991, the country became the Republic of Belarus. In 1992-1995, the newspaper adjusted the name and was published as “Fizkulturnik Belarusi” (instead of Byelorussii previously), and since 1995 it has been called “Sportivnaya Panorama”.

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Kseniya Tserashkova: Supervision, Conceptualization, Resources, Investigation, Original Draft.

Andrei Vashkevich: Investigation, Data Curation, Review & Editing.

Pavel Darokhin: Investigation, Analysis, Visualization. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

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