

April 1, 1967

**Embassy of the USSR in Czechoslovakia,
'Information About the Reaction in the ČSSR to the
Game between the National Teams of the USSR and
the ČSSR at the World Championships in Vienna'**

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Summary:

Soviet ambassador in Czechoslovakia, Stepan Chervonenko, sends a report warning about the growth of tension between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak fans expressed strong hostility and anti-Soviet sentiments at a game between the Soviet and Czechoslovak national teams at the 1967 World Hockey Championships in Vienna.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

EMBASSY OF THE USSR
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Prague, 1 April 1967
No. 355, Copy 1

Top Secret

CPSU CC DEPARTMENT

To: Cde. K. V. Rusakov

This is to transmit information about the reaction in the ČSSR to the game between the national hockey teams of the USSR and ČSSR at the world championships in Vienna, which took place in an unsavory and agitated atmosphere.[1] It is worth noting that recent encounters between Soviet and Czechoslovak athletes have begun to go beyond questions purely of sports prestige and national pride and have acquired a political character, which might have a detrimental effect on Soviet-Czechoslovak relations.

In connection with this, the embassy believes it is necessary to reconsider: (1) the option of temporarily halting matches on Czechoslovak territory between Soviet and Czechoslovak athletes in all sports that involve rough physical contact and that evoke unnecessarily agitated and subjective reactions among fans (hockey, soccer, boxing, etc.); and (2) the option of refusing to send Soviet referees to international competitions in which Czechoslovak athletes are taking part.

Attachment: as mentioned, totaling 10 pages.
USSR AMBASSADOR IN THE ČSSR

S. CHERVONENKO

EMBASSY OF THE USSR
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Prague, 1 April 1967
Affixed to No. 355, Copy No. 1

I N F O R M A T I O N

About the Reaction in the ČSSR to the Game between the National Teams
of the USSR and the ČSSR at the World Championships in Vienna

Recently, as the Embassy has informed the Center on more than one occasion, meetings between Soviet and Czechoslovak athletes have been taking place in an agitated and unsavory atmosphere, thanks to the Czechoslovak side. Significant blame for the emergence of this problem is borne by the Czechoslovak press, radio,

and television, which have stirred up a huge fuss around matches between Soviet and Czechoslovak athletes. In connection with this, sports contests between our countries are beginning to go beyond questions purely of sports prestige and national pride and are acquiring a political character, which could have a negative effect on Soviet-Czechoslovak relations.

The game between the Soviet and Czechoslovak national teams on 29 March at the World Hockey Championships in Vienna attracted wide coverage in the Czechoslovak press and was the subject of much discussion among the public. In reporting on this game, a number of newspapers ("Rudé právo," "Mladá fronta," etc.) published inappropriate, subjective views[...]

[...] Nothing can justify the behavior of the fans who created a scandal during the game by shouting obscenities and who then whistled during the playing of the Soviet anthem[...]

The unpleasant aftertaste from the game also took its toll on the final ceremony. "Excited" fans, including several thousand from Czechoslovakia, stepped over the bounds of decency and brought a disgraceful end to the current world championships[...]

During a lunch arranged by the ambassador from Iraq, which was attended by the ambassadors from several states and also by official representatives from the ČSSR government and social organizations, the ČSSR Deputy Foreign Minister, Cde. [Ján] Pudlák, had a conversation with the Soviet ambassador in which he first congratulated him on the Soviet hockey team's performance and then said, in this connection, that in his view the contest had tarnished the Soviet team's victory because of the fight at the end of the third period. He, Pudlák, believed that although both sides were guilty, the greater responsibility lay with the Soviet players, who should have been able to react more calmly to some of the incidents on the hockey rink. In Pudlák's view, if such contests produce a comparable level of hostility in the future, that will impair the friendship between the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples.

The head of the press department in the ČSSR Foreign Ministry, Cde. [Karel] Dufek, who was also present at the lunch, said somewhat diffidently that in his view the blame for the fight lies completely with the Soviet players, who began to use physical force and to hit the Czechoslovak players in the face. He said that this encounter was the reason for the wave of anti-Soviet sentiments among a major segment of the Czechoslovak public, since almost everyone in the Czechoslovak republic had been watching the game on television and had seen the uncalled-for actions of the Soviet players.

[...] The Soviet ambassador said that there had been several occasions during these sorts of contests in Czechoslovakia when the Czechoslovak fans at the stadium had unfairly attacked the Soviet athletes even when they were competing not against a Czechoslovak team, but against a team from another country, including bourgeois countries such as Japan. Despite the clearly superior skill of the Soviet athletes, the Czechoslovak fans usually rooted for the athletes of the opposing countries[...] Such a situation clearly inhibits efforts to foster bonds of friendship between the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples.

On the 30th of March, during a meeting with the Soviet ambassador, the deputy head of the KSČ CC International Department, Cde. [Oldřich] Kaderka, expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet-Czechoslovak hockey game that took place the previous day in Vienna. In Kaderka's view, all the blame for the fight rests with the Soviet players[...] Cde. Kaderka further said that the incident had evoked an unpleasant mood among the Czechoslovak citizenry and that although this shock (as he called it) would dissipate within several days, the situation in Vienna had given

impetus to anti-socialist and, above all, anti-Soviet sentiments in Western countries, especially in Austria. Cde. Kaderka reported that in Vienna newspapers had been appearing for the past two days with headlines criticizing the Soviet players, and that this was casting a shadow over Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship[...]

On 30 March, one of the Czechoslovak citizens employed in the Soviet embassy, Jan Svátek, said that both teams were to blame for the melee on the hockey rink, but that it was simply tasteless to have refused to shake hands with the Soviet athletes after their victory and to have refused to listen to the Soviet anthem. Even the athletes from the FRG, after losing their game to the East German team, listened respectfully to the GDR anthem and congratulated their opponents on their victory[...]

On 29 and 30 March, numerous Czechoslovak citizens phoned the Soviet embassy and crudely and insultingly expressed their views about individual players on the Soviet team. The embassy also received letters from Czechoslovak citizens expressing their disgust at the behavior of the Soviet hockey players in the game with the ČSSR team.

The embassy has already informed the Center about the subjective and unhealthy reaction in the Czechoslovak press and society to the competition between Soviet and Czechoslovak athletes and to the conduct of Soviet referees at matches in which Czechoslovak athletes take part. The embassy believes it is necessary to reconsider: (1) the option of temporarily halting matches on Czechoslovak territory between Soviet and Czechoslovak athletes in all sports that involve rough physical contact and that evoke unnecessarily agitated and subjective reactions among fans (hockey, soccer, boxing, etc.); and (2) the option of refusing to send Soviet referees to international competitions in which Czechoslovak athletes are taking part.

[1] Translator's Note: Chervonenko uses the exact title of the report here. The rest of the cable is also taken verbatim from the report.