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Hungarian coaches in Cold War Cuba

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ABSTRACT

This essay will examine Cold War sport links between two relatively small-sized, satellite countries: Hungary and Cuba, via the activities of Hungarian coaches on the island. These started in the 1960s after the establishment of diplomatic relations and show a concentration in the first half of and the middle of the 1970s. The investigation aims to find out the main reasons and objectives for the presence of Hungarian sport professionals on the island as well as to evaluate the impact of their work. The study begins with providing a brief overview of the evolution of the foreign relations of the Socialist bloc in the 1950s and 1960s and within this context, of Hungarian-Cuban bilateral links, finally narrowing down the analysis on sport relations. In this context, two case studies are presented: one on football and the other on water polo, traditional fields of success for Hungarians, but little known / not popular on the island. The investigation – based on documents of the Hungarian National Archive and contemporary press articles – aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of international (sport) relations in the 1960s and 1970s, adding both to Sport History and New Cold War Studies.

KEYWORDS Cold War; sport; water polo; football; coach

Introduction

- In 1966, the Cuban national [water polo] team visited us [in Hungary]. They had a rather weak team. I led a couple of training sessions for them. The following year I spent three months working in Cuba and we won the Central American Games. Of course, they wanted to contract me permanently.

- And? Did it go smooth?

- Ah, come on ... [The authorities] would not let me out of Hungary for all the treasure in the world. Finally, Fidel Castro himself wrote a letter to Kádár. Well, that worked. I coached the Cuban team until 1978. We came third in the 1975 World Cup in Cali and sixth in the Munich Olympics. Yet I do not consider those our greatest success, but the fact that we beat the Hungarians in 1970.¹

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These lines form part of an interview made with coach Károly Laky, dubbed by the Hungarian press as ‘the national hero of Cuba’.² He was one of the almost seventy Hungarian coaches who worked on the island between 1961 and 1975,³ including specialists in water polo, football, fencing, kayak-canoe and other areas. Many reached spectacular results with their disciples and teams, yet Laky, ‘Fidel Castro’s favourite Hungarian’,⁴ might have been the most successful of all.

This essay will examine Hungarian participation in Cuban sport in the 1960s and 1970s, based on documents of the Hungarian National Archive (*Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára*, MNL OL) and contemporary press articles, complemented by academic writings. Although in case of the latter, publications from both sides of the Atlantic have been used, archival materials are from Hungary only, due to the author’s lack of access to Cuban sources. Therefore, this paper has necessarily been written from a Hungarian point of view. Bilateral sport cooperation covered a wide range of fields such as joint trainings for athletes, participation in championships and other races, visits of delegations, as well as the sending of sport experts. The scope of this writing is the latter group, in particular, Hungarian coaches who worked in Cuba.

The investigation aims to find out the main reasons and objectives for the presence of Hungarian sport professionals on the island as well as to evaluate the impact of their work. This way it studies both Hungarian and Cuban sport, the links between them, and the impact these connections could have on sport itself and on fields outside sport, such as international relations. By focusing on the non-Western world, the essay explores one of the emerging areas in sport history following the discipline’s so-called diplomatic turn.⁵ It begins with providing a brief overview of the evolution of the foreign relations of the Socialist bloc in the 1950s and 1960s and within this context, of Hungarian-Cuban bilateral links, finally narrowing down the analysis on sport relations. In this context, two case studies are presented: one on football and the other on water polo, traditional fields of success for Hungarians, but little known / not popular on the island. Conclusions will allow for observing particularities and overall trends both on a micro and macro level, and thus contribute to a deeper understanding of international (sport) relations in the Cold War, adding both to sport history and new Cold War studies.

Context

After the Second World War, due to domestic challenges (failing war economy) and a changing international situation with the speeding up of decolonisation and the formation of new countries, the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc began to intensify and diversify its international relations,

giving rise to the phenomenon of Socialist globalisation.⁶ Hungary was a latecomer to this process, as the violent suppression of the 1956 Revolution resulted in the international isolation of the country, lasting until the beginning of the 1960s. The start of Hungarian opening in fact more or less coincided in time with the Socialist turn in Cuba, which drew the attention of the Socialist world to the island, and via the island to Latin America in general.

Diplomatic relations between Hungary and Latin American countries had broken with the Second World War and were slow to normalise. Ties were re-mended only with Ecuador (1946), Argentina (1949), Bolivia (1952) and Uruguay (1956) in the fifteen years following the end of the war. Latin American countries tended to show little interest in intensifying links with Hungary, for belonging to the Socialist camp, as well as being a small-sized country, offering little trade perspectives.⁷ The region was not in the focus of Hungarian foreign policy either, as Socialist internationalism paid more attention to Asia and Africa in the 1950s.⁸ Change was brought about with the Cuban Revolution, resulting in the Hungarian government's readiness to normalise links with Cuba. Yet, this took longer than expected.

Although the new Cuban leadership made a general diplomatic opening towards Socialist countries, they postponed it (!) – for a while – in case of Hungary, to show their dissatisfaction with the way how János Kádár was brought to power, that is, via a foreign military intervention, putting an end to the Hungarian Revolution.⁹ The 1956 events left their mark on Latin America, and their echo was even stronger in Cuba because the island was a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1956–57, during and immediately after the events in Hungary. The official papers on the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations were signed in Budapest by the visiting Che Guevara and the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Relations, Endre Sík as late as 18 December 1960.¹⁰

Though relations might not have started out in a perfect way, the Kádár government partly bridged the initial distance by sending János Beck as its first ambassador. Besides speaking Spanish, Beck's past as an ex-combatant of the Spanish Civil War led to a special sympathy on behalf of the Cuban leadership.¹¹ In the years to come, Cuban-Hungarian relations got intensified in all fields including political, economic, cultural and other contacts, nonetheless they never grew as strong as Cuban-Soviet, Cuban-Czechoslovakian and Cuban-East German links. For example, the Socialist technical support for Cuba, estimated to reach 442.3 million roubles for the period 1962–1966, was planned to be divided in the following way: Soviet Union (57.1%), Czechoslovakia (21.8%), East Germany (9.5%), Poland (7.1%), Hungary (3.2%), Bulgaria (1%) and Romania (0.3%).¹² The Soviet Union had to be number one, living up to its image of superpower, whereas Czechoslovakia and East Germany both had the economic capacity and the political

will to help. Hungary had a more modest economic potential, and the government was also trying to keep foreign relation costs low, in order to maintain relatively high standards of living at home, being the main legitimising factor for the Kádár system.

Cuba was a priority relationship for Hungary in the Cold War, based on political-ideological reasons. This link, however, meant costs instead of income, unlike other Latin American contacts of Hungary. The Kádár government, dependent both on the Soviet superpower and on Western technology and loans, used connections to the Global South to make up – at least partially – for the missing Western contacts and to obtain the necessary hard currency – all this with Soviet consent.¹³ Hungarian foreign policy in the latter cases was mostly foreign trade driven.¹⁴ Socialist Cuba was different. Hungarian government was expected to act based on solidarity and help the development of the island. Here not only the dependency on the Soviet Union should be taken into account, but also the competition that existed among European Socialist countries. From time to time, Hungarian foreign ministry asked for reports on relations between Cuba and countries of the Socialist bloc, in order to see what others were doing and how Hungary should position itself. Supporting the development of Cuba was not a question. How and by how much, were.

The development of sport relations came in handy for the Hungarian government, as a low-cost tool. There was awareness of both the political nature of Cuban sport achievements as well as of Fidel Castro's personal fascination for sport.¹⁵ Spectacular sport results could contribute to the domestic legitimacy of the Cuban government, prolonging the existence of a Socialist system right next to the United States. Favourable outcomes could also increase Cuba's international visibility and prestige,¹⁶ hence promote Socialism. The work of Hungarian coaches on the island could also be exploited for domestic purposes in Hungary because in case of success, these could be 'shared' - e.g. a Cuban team coached by a Hungarian - reaffirming Kádár's support at home and increasing Hungary's visibility internationally. Moreover, this kind of export of coaches also fitted well with the Hungarian self-image as a sport nation – between 1928 and 1990 Hungary constantly figured among the first ten nations in the medal table of the Summer Olympic Games – fuelling national sentiments.

All in all, sport is a potential starting out point for niche diplomacy,¹⁷ especially for minor players – like Hungary and Cuba – which need to find alternative and cost-effective ways to be first of all more visible in the international system as well as to gain prestige.¹⁸ How a country is viewed by other states has a significant impact on its foreign, economic, cultural and other relations.¹⁹ Sport has universal appeal: it can attract people regardless of socio-economic status, political differences, national frontiers and geographical distance, thus it has the potential to influence even things

that fall outside its realm. The conscious ‘use of sport to realize goals’ that ‘impact on things outside itself [that is, sport]’ is sport diplomacy.²⁰ Hungarian leadership felt confident in the field of sport relations and was ready to help Cuban efforts. There were some limitations, though: money and degree of success. This resulted in a certain paradox. Hungarian coaches abroad should achieve success but not create undesirable competition for Hungarian sport at the same time.

Importance of sport in Cuba

In general, sport can be an agglutinating force, a basis for national identity and unity,²¹ a source supporting the political regime’s legitimacy, consolidation and control,²² as well as a basis for claiming its superiority over other systems.²³ Sport policies tended to have twofold objectives in Socialist countries. On one hand, they massified physical education and sport in order to have healthy citizens who make more productive workers, and to achieve the general fitness deemed necessary for military readiness in the oft-hostile Cold War environment.²⁴ On the other hand, they also raised highly successful sportsmen and sportswomen whose achievements could be exploited for propaganda purposes. The previous area was organised on the basis of quantitative criteria (the more, the better), the latter on qualitative ones.²⁵

In Cold War Cuba sport was connected to multiple domestic and external functions. The previous included social, health, military and educational fields. Great efforts were made to include an increasing proportion of the population, with the help of new mass sport facilities, teachers and volunteers. There was an emphasis on children, the future generation. The National Institute for Sports, Physical Education and Recreation in Cuba (*Instituto Nacional de Deportes, Educación Física y Recreación de Cuba*, INDER) together with the Ministry of Education (*Ministerio de Educación*, MINED) launched programmes to promote sport such as ‘Plan of the Streets’ that targeted youngsters aged 6–12.²⁶ Sport and revolution were inextricably linked: sportsmen and sportswomen were meant to make good revolutionaries for their strength of character and physical capacity, whereas revolutionaries went in for sport to improve themselves.²⁷

Internationally sport was crucial for Cuba for various reasons. Being an island of approximately 100 000 km², only about a hundred miles from the United States, it had been under economic blockade, and for most part of the Cold War was the only Socialist country in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Sport cooperation and links with Socialist countries could strengthen and improve Cuba’s relations with the Eastern bloc, and thus contribute to its security. Sport could also help to form contacts with countries with whom Cuba did not or could not have official

relations, therefore was also a tool to diversify the links of island with the rest of the world.

Furthermore, sport successes meant visibility and prestige on the global scene and could 'prove' the resilience and vitality of the Castro regime. Competition did not only exist on the level of athletes, but there was also a competition of the respective states. A victory was not only the victory of an individual or a team. It could be and was often considered as the victory of a country, or even of a certain political regime. It was portrayed as 'the product of, and a tribute to' the Socialist system.²⁸ Sport was highly charged politically, ideologically and of course, emotionally. 'Sport has long served as an important source of collective identification and is perhaps one of the most powerful and visible symbols of national identity and nationalism. Moreover, it has long been used to demonstrate the ideological superiority of a particular system or state'.²⁹ Cuban sport successes achieved were seen as a reaffirmation of the new Socialist system on the island, as well as its superiority over Capitalism.³⁰ Sport provided an opportunity to fight the antagonistic system in a 'direct head-to-head competition', without risking a real conflict.³¹ It could provide the ecstasy of victory (and also the agony of defeat) in the safe environment of sport fields and stadiums, without upsetting the international balance, thus turning into 'a proxy for hotter forms of conflict'.³²

'Sport [also] became an example of the progress of the revolution',³³ of modernisation and development, and of ideological superiority. Fidel Castro went as far as to state in 1966: 'Our homeland will harvest huge successes in the field of sport ... [they are] the triumph of an idea, the triumph of a system, the triumph of a concept'.³⁴ Sport successes were linked to the Revolution and used to popularise it internally and internationally.³⁵ Thus sports also had a strong political function on the island. In Cuba – similarly to other Socialist countries – the political leadership considered sport as a tool for consolidating itself in power, therefore spent significant amounts on it. However, this also meant that it took over decisions related to the field of sport.³⁶

Coaches from socialist countries in Cuban sport

'The basic structure of sport ... [followed] the fundamental model for other communist-governed states'.³⁷ Sport contacts between Cuba and Hungary, and in general, Cuba and Socialist countries did not only mean the sending of coaches to the island in order to train athletes, but their tasks also included contributing to the construction and development of the sport and physical education system. It could be characterised as state-managed and state-financed. It was hierarchical, based on institutions specialised in physical education and sport science.³⁸ While trying to reach

out for the population and include as many Cubans as possible in physical education and mass sport, the system was also designed to select and raise the most talented, who would compete in the national and international arena. Therefore, it included a strong basis of clubs and a pyramidal structure of sport schools, beginning with the *Escuela de Iniciación Deportiva Escolar* (EIDE), at the age of 8–12.³⁹ The whole system obviously had a lot of common traits with that of the Socialist countries, which served as an example.⁴⁰

Help and assistance of Socialist experts were welcome. According to Pickering, 549 sport specialists worked in Cuba in the period between 1961 and 1975. Had they been evenly distributed, it would have meant 36–37 experts a year. However, a growing trend can be detected from low numbers in the early 1960s – when relations were tensed between Cuba and the Socialist camp due to the Caribbean missile crisis – to higher ones until the beginning of the 1970s, with peak years in 1970 (120 specialists) and 1972 (130 specialists) – when Cuba became a Comecon member – then some decrease. The biggest source of sport experts was the Soviet Union (43%), followed by Bulgaria (17%), Hungary (12%), Czechoslovakia (7.8%), East Germany (7.5%), Poland (6.7%), North Korea (3%) and others (3%).⁴¹ The prominent place of the Soviets is not surprising taking into account human and economic resources of the Soviet Union and the expectations that were attached to the behaviour of the leader of the Socialist camp. The second place of Bulgaria seems to be more of a surprise but might be explained by the close adjustment of Bulgaria to Soviet goals, being the ‘best disciple’; and spectacular growth in Bulgarian achievements at the Summer Olympic Games. Bulgaria obtained its first medal (a bronze) at the Helsinki Olympic Games in 1952, and hence ranked 40th among the participating nations. It constantly improved its ranking over the years, it already ranked 7th in Montreal in 1976 and achieved its best place ever in 1980, at the Moscow Games, being 3rd. For Olympic successes, Bulgaria – with territory and population size similar to that of Cuba – could be an example for the island. Additionally, sports in which Bulgaria excelled were also well-known individual sports in Cuba, such as boxing, wrestling and weightlifting. The 3rd place on the list belongs to Hungary, being the only country besides the Soviet Union and Bulgaria that achieved shares over 10%, overtaking both Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Thus, this list puts Hungary in a prominent third place, whereas in case of economic support to Cuba, Hungary figured towards the end.

It would be fascinating to know the areas of specialisation of the above-mentioned experts. It seems that the Cuban leadership associated and assigned certain sports to certain Socialist countries. That means that foreign coaches and specialists had a tendency to be concentrated in particular areas, over which they could exert quite a lot of influence, irrespective of

the overall number of specialists sent by their motherland. Fencing, kayak, water polo and football were ‘Hungarian areas’.

It is not yet possible to draw a comprehensive list of Hungarian coaches and sport experts who worked on the island in the Cold War (68 according to Pickering).⁴² Nonetheless, 16 names can already be confirmed. In order to give statistics a human face and examine the career paths of these trainers on the island, as well as before and after Cuba, brief bios are provided, when available. The following inventory includes those Hungarian coaches of whom there is available data at the present that they worked some time in Cuba. The list could probably be expanded in the future. Water polo: Károly Laky,⁴³ and Károly Szittya.⁴⁴ Football⁴⁵: Sándor Csende,⁴⁶ Zoltán Friedmanszky,⁴⁷ Tamás Gyenes,⁴⁸ Tibor Ivanics,⁴⁹ Károly Kósa (Kocza),⁵⁰ László Mohácsi (Mohaczy),⁵¹ and János Szőke.⁵² Fencing⁵³: Kornél Horváth,⁵⁴ Endre Palócz,⁵⁵ György Palócz,⁵⁶ Róbert Schatz,⁵⁷ and János Veczán.⁵⁸ Kayak – canoe: Gyula Füzesséry,⁵⁹ and Ferenc Szabó.⁶⁰ Fencing, kayak, water polo and football were sports in which Hungary (had) excelled, moreover, they were Olympic sports; yet rather unknown / not so popular in Cuba among the general public. In the following section, two team sports will be highlighted upon within Cuban-Hungarian sport relations in order to have an in-depth view: football and water polo.

Football

The sport with which the world associated Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s, was football: the Hungarian national team won the summer Olympic Games in Helsinki (1952), Tokyo (1960) and Mexico (1964), defeated the English team in Wembley in 1953 (6:3) and in Budapest a year later (7:1), and came second in 1954 World Championships. The success of individual players (Puskás, Kubala, Kocsis, etc.), Hungarian clubs – such as Honvéd – and the selection, all contributed to the incorporation and reinforcement of football in the image of Hungary. In Latin America all the above mentioned were coupled with an additional factor: the success of Hungarian football trainers living and working in South America and in Mexico, basically from the professionalisation of the game, since the 1920s and 1930s.⁶¹

Yet the popularity of football in Cuba could never even get close to that in Europe or South America. Baseball stayed as the most esteemed sport of the islanders. Nonetheless – curiously enough – football did have pre-revolutionary antecedents, some even associated with Hungarians. The introduction of US entry quotas in the first half of the 1920s, restricting the arrival of immigrants, especially those coming from the Eastern part of Europe, brought about a change in migratory routes. Cuba and Mexico were converted into potential springboards for East Europeans who still wanted to reach their land of dreams, hoping to cross to the US from places that

were relatively close. Many, however, did not actually get to the United States, and stayed in Mexico or Cuba, where communities of Eastern Europeans were formed in the 1920s.⁶² Hungarians settled in Cuba also included sportsmen, playing for and coaching Club Fortuna. Károly Katzer, a Hungarian immigrant even led the Cuban national team in 1934–35.

After the lacuna of the 1960s and 1970s, the sixties and the seventies proved to be the most intensive period of Cuban-Hungarian cooperation in the area of football. In the sixties, Hungary was still considered as a football power, but financial support by the government was gradually reduced, leading to a slow decline, manifest from the 1970s. By that time the principal legitimising factor of the Kádár government was the standard of living in Hungary,⁶³ and it did not need spectacular football results for legitimacy like the Rákosi dictatorship (1948–1953). Kádár was aware that sport results are unpredictable and in case of lack of success, may backfire on the regime. Therefore, football remained important but lost its outstanding prominence.⁶⁴ This also provided a window of opportunity for Hungarian football experts to try themselves out abroad. Károly Kósa and László Mohácsi worked in Cuba in the 1960s, and were followed by a group of young trainers, some ex-players, some youth specialists, usually in their late thirties. Sándor Csende, Zoltán Friedmanszky, Tamás Gyenes, Tibor Ivanics and János Szőke all worked on the island more or less at the same time. The provincial coach/supervisor of four Cuban provinces out of the six,⁶⁵ was Hungarian: Camagüey: Szőke; Las Villas: Csende; Matanzas: Friedmanszky and Oriente: Ivanics. They were responsible for three main areas: raising young football players by organising sport schools and preparing their curricula; educating football coaches via preparing the respective courses, course materials, exams, etc., and organising the provincial competitions.⁶⁶

The Hungarians did not only devote a lot of attention to the training of their players, but they also created an excellent school of coaches. In contrast to other Europeans, they attributed a lot of importance to tactics, educated with great discipline, and put emphasis on the general physical constitution of the players, based on gymnastics, athletics and complementary sports.⁶⁷

The national team was headed by Károly Kósa (Kocza) in 1966, László Mohácsi (Mohaczy) in 1967 and Tibor Ivanics in the period 1979–1981. It was under the leadership of Ivanics that the Cuban team obtained 5th place in the Moscow Olympic Games.⁶⁸

Hungarian football coaches had a mixed experience in Cuba. Tibor Ivanics was pleased. 'I started experimenting and nobody intervened. Testing of the young players, introduction of new methods, courses for sport schools ... At the same time, I worked at the Cuban National Association of Football and the national committee of trainers. [...] My most

memorable experience was work. Seeing the evolution'.⁶⁹ Others were less optimistic. Zoltán Friedmanszky said: 'I spent four and a half years in Cuba. I cannot pride myself on very spectacular results'.⁷⁰

He explained in another interview: 'Cubans were not fans of football, but of baseball ... Once a year I prepared the provincial team [of Matanzas] for the championship. The championship consisted of bringing all the teams from the provinces together in one city and then playing the whole tournament in two weeks. They called it a championship, but it was just a tournament. [...] There were no important international matches I know of. [...] The provincial team did not tie up my time so much therefore I taught football for kids in a Varadero school. It was like a football college'.⁷¹

Interestingly, when asked about whether he was satisfied with his job on the island, he said yes, enlisting the beauty of Varadero, the good salary, the tranquillity and the Hungarian community.⁷²

After working on the island, Hungarian trainers returned to their home country. Their reintegration was, however, most of the time unsuccessful. Some retired, whereas those who continued working in the field of sport, did so in positions with less responsibility and visibility (coach of second division teams, physical education teacher, etc.) or went abroad again. Their Cuban experience was not taken advantage of in Hungary. What is more, the foreign stay of the specialists made them different from the rest, which could arouse unease and suspicion on behalf of the authorities.

Water polo

Water polo has been one of the success sports in Hungary: the Hungarian national team has participated in 23 Olympic Games so far and always figured among the first six teams. It is nine times Olympic champion, including victories during the Cold War at Helsinki (1952), Melbourne (1956), Tokyo (1964) and Montreal (1976). Between 1928 and 1980, Hungary always won a medal. In Cuba, on the contrary, water polo had little antecedents. The national team had not participated in any Olympic Games before the 1959 Revolution. The first time it competed was in 1968, followed by the 1972, 1976 and 1980 Summer Olympics, then after years of silence in 1992, in Barcelona. Altogether, the Cuban water polo team had five Olympic appearances, four of which can be associated up to a great extent with one Hungarian specialist, called Károly Laky.

Laky (b. 1912–d. 2000) was a former water polo player – active for almost two decades –, member of the Hungarian sport clubs BBTE, BSE and Vasas. He started to coach during his active years as an athlete and became one of the outstanding trainers of the club BVSC. He coached the Hungarian national team between 1954 and 1956, and also between 1960 and 1965, leading it to victory at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. Despite the

Olympic gold, Laky was not allowed to keep his position.⁷³ According to him the reason had to do with the Hungarian Office of Physical Education and Sports (Magyar Testnevelési és Sporthivatal, MTS). ‘I was considered an undesirable element by the then all-powerful head of the MTS. [...] He even gave instructions that my name should not figure in Hungarian press. He also wanted to prevent me from signing a contract for working abroad’.⁷⁴ In March 1966 – by that time he no longer coached the Hungarian national team – Laky was invited for a short visit to Cuba. What happened in 1966 on the island was summarised this way by a residing Hungarian diplomat:

I would like to anticipate that in the ‘Laky case’ the Hungarian part is culpable. During the spring, we let the trainer travel from Hungary to the island, upon Cuban request. They were so impressed with his work that, if I can use the expression, they got an appetite. It is all our fault (sic). With the help of Károly Laky the national waterpolo team of Cuba won the Central American Games.⁷⁵

Cubans were offering a contract for Laky already in April. Yet the Hungarian Office of Physical Education and Sports did not agree with sending him. They offered another coach, Mihály Czakó instead, the trainer of Budapesti Spartacus, under whose hands the team of Szolnoki Dózsa had become champion the year before. ‘We judge Czakó to be better [than Laky] both from a professional and *political* aspect’.⁷⁶ – MTS insisted. Cubans protested and pressed for Laky via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Hungarian Office of Physical Education and Sports and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had different priorities. The MTS focused on Hungarian sport. Sport relations and sport diplomacy were only secondary. The Ministry on the other hand would not have minded the work of particular trainers abroad in exchange for better international negotiating positions or other benefits on the global scene. Yet the MTS did not want to create ‘extra’ competition for Hungarian sport and tried to make sure not to let those out of the country who had the potential for that, like Laky.

After some tense correspondence, the Ministry seemed to have given up on the Cuban petition. It wrote:

The harmonization of foreign demand and national interest is the task of the Hungarian Office of Physical Education and Sports. Consequently, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will not support in the future unilateral, personalized requests of any country’s sport committee, in order not to upset the plans of the MTS made with the aim of developing Hungarian sports.⁷⁷

Based upon this statement one could expect the sending of Czakó to Cuba and the local, Hungarian employment of Laky. At this point, however, the story took a radical turn: Fidel Castro intervened personally. Thus, the

'Laky case' was converted into a top political question. It was not possible to say no.

The coach was finally conceded to the Cubans and worked on the island for more than one decade, starting from 1967. During those years, the Cuban national team reached 2nd place in Cali (1971),⁷⁸ 3rd in Mexico City (1975) and 2nd in Puerto Rico (1979) in the Pan-American Games; 4th in the World Championship in 1975 (only after the Soviet Union, Hungary and Italy); qualified and participated in all Summer Olympic Games between 1968 and 1980 and achieved 5th place in Moscow in 1980.⁷⁹

Conclusions

Comparing Hungarian presence and expertise in the fields of Cuban water polo and football, it calls the attention that in case of football, various Hungarian trainers worked on the island for a couple of years, whereas in case of water polo, achievements were much more connected to only one person, Károly Laky, who worked in Cuba for a longer time, approximately a decade. Whereas the sending of football coaches formed integral part of Hungarian-Cuban sport cooperation, and therefore can be considered a general or ordinary case, the Cuban employment of the star water polo coach overstretched the above-mentioned frames, he left for the island against the will of the MTS, making it an extraordinary case. Another difference is that Cuban water polo reached international reputation and results, whereas football was never that successful. Returning Hungarian football coaches remained active, though generally not filling important positions in Hungarian sport, whereas Laky, already in his sixties, retired from coaching. Nonetheless, he kept his Cuban contacts and from time to time, revisited the island upon Cuban request, to share his expertise.⁸⁰

Via sport both Cuba and Hungary could promote their national interests and at the same time improve their bilateral relations. The limits of this cooperation for Hungary, or to be more precise, for Hungarian sport authorities, like MTS, was that the work of Hungarian coaches abroad should not create competition for Hungarian sport. Mainly youth sport specialists and experts in coach training were sent to Cuba. Their work was visible in Hungary via press articles, which in fact served as an important source for this paper. Yet whereas coaches sent by Socialist Hungary to Cuba were shown to the Hungarian public and their successes contributed to national pride and re-enforcing the image of Hungary as a sport nation, other Hungarian coaches, who had emigrated between the two world wars or in the early 1940s, settled abroad and worked for example in Latin America, were not mentioned. Their results – even though many were outstanding – did not and could not form part of the successes of the sport life of Socialist Hungary, as they were considered suspicious and dangerous, whose

unwillingness to return home made them to be seen as ‘enemies of the Socialist system’.

Hungarian water polo continued being a success sport in the analysed period, whereas victories in football started to dwindle, although it was not until 1986 that the Hungarian national team suffered its most humiliating defeat. The 6:0 victory of the Soviet team in Mexico proved to be a fatal blow, and no Hungarian national team has qualified for a World Cup ever since.

In order to achieve multiple but fundamentally political goals, Cuban leadership institutionalised sport with the support of the Socialist countries, and created a hierarchical and efficient system, going from amateur mass sport towards highly selected athletes.⁸¹ A couple of years after the coming to power of Fidel Castro, in particular since the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, sport successes for the island started to multiply. Before 1970 the most medals Cuba obtained in a summer Olympic event was 4, in the 1968 Games in Mexico. This changed dramatically: 8 in Munich (1972), 13 in Montreal (1976), and afterwards always a two-digit number, 20 in Moscow (1980), 31 in Barcelona (1992),⁸² 25 in Atlanta (1996), 29 in Sydney (2000), 27 in Athens (2004), 29 in Beijing (2008), 14 in London (2012), 11 in Rio de Janeiro (2016) and 15 in Tokyo (2020).⁸³ Cuba is the second most successful country overall – after the USA – in the Pan American Games.⁸⁴ With respect to the Central American and Caribbean Games, organised every four years since 1926, Cuba has had more than 1700 gold medals, ranking 1st among participating countries.⁸⁵ Sport brought Cuba worldwide prestige and admiration, ‘its athletes became Cuba’s most potent diplomatic tools and a valuable form of soft power’.⁸⁶ The numerous sport successes of the island served as an ‘image- and nation-building tool’.⁸⁷ So effective, that after a time Cuba began to export that knowledge, sending its own sport experts to other countries.

Notes

1. ‘Két ország élő pólólegendája’ [Living Water Polo Legend of Two Countries], *Népszava*, July 14, 1997, 14.
2. Serényi, ‘Laky Károly, Kuba nemzeti hőse’ [Károly Laky, national hero of Cuba], *Népszava*, January 2, 1989, 11.
3. Ron Pickering, ‘Cuba’, in *Sport under Communism*, ed. James Riordan, 2nd ed. (London – Montreal: C. Hurst & Company – McGill – Queen’s University Press, 1981), 155.
4. Dezső Vad, ‘Fidel Castro legkedvesebb magyarja’ [Fidel Castro’s Favourite Hungarian], *Reform*, December 9, 1997, 77.
5. Heather L. Dichter, ‘The Diplomatic Turn: The New Relationship Between Sport and Politics’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 38, no. 2–3 (2021): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2021.1894135>.

6. James Mark and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); James Mark; Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Steffy Marung, eds., *Alternative Globalizations. Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 2020); Béla Tomka, 'Szocialista globalizáció Kelet-Közép-Európában. A kutatás új irányai és hiányai' [Socialist Globalization in East-Central Europe. New Directions and Lacunas in Research], *HistGlob Working Paper*, no. 7 (2022): 3–21.
7. Mónika Szente-Varga, 'Diplomatic Relations Between Hungary and Central American Countries after World War II', *Orpheus Noster* 8, no. 4 (2016): 84–6.
8. MNL OL j 1945–64 IV Latin-Amerika, box 2, 11/i, Magyar-latin-amerikai kapcsolatok [Hungarian-Latin American Relations], 1960–64.
9. Emőke Horváth, 'A magyar-kubai diplomáciai kapcsolatok létrejöttének sajátos fordulatai, 1959–1961' [Peculiar Twists in the Establishment of Hungarian-Cuban Diplomatic Relations], *Aetas* 33, no. 1 (2018): 50–68.
10. 'Diplomáciai kapcsolat létesül Magyarország és Kuba között' [Diplomatic Relations are Established Between Hungary and Cuba], *Népszabadság*, December 20, 1960, 2.
11. It was known that Fidel Castro had a high esteem for those who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. Interview with János Beck, made by Katalin Mérő. 1956 Institute – Oral History Archive, 1988, recording no. 174, 539.
12. Czech National Archive (*Národní Archiv*), Č. 681/7, Příloha IV, March 25, 1963, 'Koncepce čs. Zahraniční politiky vůči zemím Latinské Ameriky' [The Concept of the Czechoslovakian Foreign Policy Towards the Countries of Latin America].
13. Béla Tomka, 'Alternatív vagy korlátozott globalizáció? A szocialista rendszerek nemzetközi kapcsolatainak új értelmezéseiről' [Alternative or Limited Globalization? On the New Interpretations of the International Contacts of Socialist Systems], *Múltunk*, no. 1 (2023): 220–36; Zoltán Ginelli, 'Hungarian Experts in Nkruma's Ghana. Decolonization and Semiperipheral Postcoloniality in Socialist Hungary', *Mezosfera.org*, 2018, <http://mezosfera.org/hungarian-experts-in-nkrumahs-ghana/#fn-8114276-84> (accessed October 20, 2023).
14. Béla Kádár, 'A latin-amerikai országokkal folytatott együttműködésünk irányzatai, stratégiai összetevői, keretei és formái' [Directions, Strategic Components and Frames and Forms of Our Cooperation with Latin American Countries], *Külpolitika* 15, no. 5 (1988): 98–112.
15. It is less known, but Kádár was also keen on sport, especially football and chess. He used to play football in the youth team of Vasas in the 1940s, but never became a professional, as professionalism was incompatible with the ideals of the Communist Party. Source: Péter Csillag, 'Kádár János és a futball' [János Kádár and the Football], *Rubicon* 29, no. 6. (2018): 80–7; Áron Dalos, '<Nincs jobbszárnyunk> – avagy Kádár János és a football kapcsolata' ['We Have No Right Wing' – the Relationship Between János Kádár and the Football], *ELTE*, November 12, 2019, <https://elteonline.hu/sport/2019/11/12/nincs-jobbszarnyunk-avagy-kadar-janos-es-a-futball-kapcsolata/> (accessed August 16, 2023).
16. Julie Marie Bunck, 'The Politics of Sports in Revolutionary Cuba', *Cuban Studies* 20 (1990): 112; Trevor Slack, 'Cuba's Political Involvement in Sport

- Since the Socialist Revolution’, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 6, no. 2 (1982): 42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019372358200600204>.
17. See Andrew F. Cooper, ‘Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview’, in *Niche Diplomacy. Studies in Diplomacy*, ed. Andrew F. Cooper (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 1–14; István Lakatos, ‘The Potential Role of Small States and their Niche Diplomacy at the UN and in the Field of Human Rights, with Special Attention to Montenegro’, *Pécs Journal of International and European Law* 1 (2017): 58–68; Alan K. Henrikson, ‘Niche Diplomacy in the World Public Arena: The Global “Corners” of Canada and Norway’, in *The New Public Diplomacy. Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 67–87, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_4.
 18. Bence Garamvölgyi and Tamás Dóczy, ‘Sport as a Tool for Public Diplomacy in Hungary’, *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research* 90 (2021): 39–40; Heather L. Dichter, ed., *Soccer Diplomacy: International Relations and Football Since 1914* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2020).
 19. Michał Marcin Kobierecki and Piotr Strożek, ‘Sport as a Factor of Nation Branding: A Quantitative Approach’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 7–8 (2017): 2–4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1403901>.
 20. Stuart Murray, *Sports Diplomacy: Origins, Theory and Practice* (London – New York: Routledge, 2018), 3; Christopher Hill, ‘Prologue’, in *Sport and International Relations: An Emerging Relationship*, ed. Adrian Budd and Roger Levermore (London – New York: Routledge, 2004).
 21. George Eisen, ‘The Hungarian Sport Culture’, *Quest* 22, no. 1 (1974): 103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.1974.10519812>.
 22. Jenifer Parks, ‘Promoting Authority Through Sport by States and Societies of Eastern Europe’, in *Handbuch der Sportgeschichte Osteuropas*, ed. Anke Hilbrenner, Ekaterina Emeliantseva, Christian Koller, Manfred Zeller and Stefan Zwicker (Regensburg: Leibniz Institute for East and South East European Studies, 2017), 3, https://doi.org/10.15457/sportost_parks_2017.
 23. Sylvain Dufraisse, ‘Facing the Involvement of Youths in Competitions: Soviet Visions and Adaptations to the Rejuvenation of Elite Sports (Second Half of the 20th Century)’, *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 2 (2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2020.568025>.
 24. Robert Edelman and Christopher Young, ‘Introduction. Explaining Cold War Sport’, in *The Whole World was Watching: Sport in the Cold War*, ed. Robert Edelman and Christopher Young (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020); Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport. National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge, MA – London, England: Harvard University Press, 2006), 4.
 25. Péter Sipos, ‘Sport és politika’ [Sport and Politics], *História* 25, no. 8–9 (2003): 16; László Bíró, ‘Futball Kelet-Európában’ [Football in Eastern Europe], *História* 25, no. 8–9 (2003): 8–9.
 26. Robert Chappell, ‘Sport in Cuba: Before and After the “Wall” Came Down’, *The Sport Journal*, January 3, 2004, thesportjournal.org/article/sport-in-cuba-before-and-after-the-wall-came-down/ (accessed February 10, 2020).
 27. Geralyn Pye, ‘The Ideology of Cuban Sport’, *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 2 (1986): 122.

28. Barbara Keys, 'Soviet Sport and Transnational Mass Culture in the 1930s', *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 3 (2003): 433.
29. Stefen J. Jackson and Stephen Haigh, *Sport and Foreign Policy in a Globalizing World* (London – New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.
30. Chappell, 'Sport in Cuba'.
31. Heather L. Dichter and Andrew Johns, ed., *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft and International Relations Since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 5.
32. David Black and Byron Peacock, 'Sport and Diplomacy', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, ed. Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine and Ramesh Thakur (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 712, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588862.013.0040>.
33. Pye, 'The Ideology of Cuban Sport', 125.
34. 'Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, primer secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba y Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario, en el resumen del acto de bienvenida a la delegación deportiva cubana que asistió a los X Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe, celebrado en el Estadio Latinoamericano, el 29 de junio de 1966', *Fidel*, <https://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1966/esp/f290666e.html> (accessed February 11, 2020).
35. Julie Marie Bunck, 'Sports in Cuba in the Twenty-First Century: The Challenges of the New Millennium', Projects at Harvard, 2015, conferences.wcfia.harvard.edu (accessed 8 February 2020).
36. Róbert Szabó, 'Volt egyszer egy mérkőzés' [Once There was a Match], *Historia* 25, no. 8–9 (2003): 31.
37. Pickering, 'Cuba', 155.
38. For example, Dirección General de Deportes (DGD) was created in 1959, Instituto Nacional de Deportes, Educación Física y Recreación (INDER) in 1961 and Escuela Superior de Educación Física Comandante Manuel Fajardo in the same year.
39. Chappell, 'Sport in Cuba'.
40. Ibid.
41. Proportions calculated with the numbers indicated in Pickering, 'Cuba', 155.
42. Pickering, 'Cuba', 155.
43. See the subchapter on water polo.
44. (1918–1983). Original name: Schaffer. Water polo player of the clubs UTE and FTC, member of the Hungarian water polo team at the London Olympics in 1948 (silver medal) and of the Helsinki Olympics in 1952 (gold medal). Szittyta trained different Hungarian teams from 1954 and worked briefly in Cuba in 1972. He coached the Cuban junior team that participated in 1972 in Szentes, Hungary at the Friendship Games (Hungarian: Ifjúsági Barátság Verseny, IBV); an international juvenile sport competition among Socialist countries. Sources: 'Az IBV morzsái' [Brief news on IBV], *Csongrád Megyei Hírlap*, August 19, 1972, 6; Szittyta Károly, in *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*, ed. Ágnes Kenyeres (Budapest: Arcanum, 2011), <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-eletrajzi-lexikon-7428D/sz-77C95/szittyta-karoly-1945-ig-schaffer-7802F/>.
45. Tamás Dénes; Mihály Sándor and Éva B. Bába, *A labdarúgás története IV. Szocialista profizmus (1967–1986)* [History of Football IV. Socialist Professionalism (1967–1986)] (Debrecen: Campus Kiadó, 2015).

46. (1936–2019). Member (later Head) of the Department of Physical Education of the Kossuth Lajos University of Debrecen, football trainer of the local sport school in Debrecen. Worked in Cuba between 1974 and 1976. Coach of the team of Azucareros (Las Villas). Advisor to the Cuban youth team. Later, in Hungary, coach of DVSC, president of the Football Federation of Hajdú-Bihar province and board member of the Hungarian Football Association. Sources: Ferenc Király, ‘Magyar siker – kubai futballpályán’ [Hungarian Success – on a Cuban Football Field], *Népszabadság*, August 26, 1975, n.p.; ‘Debreceni siker kubai futballpályán’ [Success from Debrecen on a Cuban Football Field], *Hajdú-Bihari Napló*, August 9, 1975, 7; Sándor Csende, ‘Szavak, emlékek’ [Words, Memories], *Hajdú-Bihari Napló*, November 18, 2006, 5; ‘Elhunyt Csende Sándor’ [Sándor Csende Passed Away], *MLSZ*, <https://szovetseg.mlsz.hu/hir/83-eves-koraban-elhunyt-csende-sandor-az-mlsz-hajdu-bihar-megyei-igazgatosag-versenybizottsaganak-elnok>
47. (1934–2022). Forward. FTC player between 1957 and 1964 in Hungary, participating in 157 football matches. Club-mate of Tibor Ivanics. Top scorer but never played in the Hungarian national team. He worked in Cuba in the first half of the 1970s: Coach of F.C. Matanzas, in Varadero, between 1971 and 1975. Upon his return, he trained Szolnoki MT and his original team, FTC. Coach in Kuwait for seven years in the 1980s. Sources: ‘Friedmanszky bánata és csodás góljai’ [The Sorrow and the Marvellous Goals of Friedmanszky], *Vasárnapi Hírek*, March 14, 1993, 15; Gyenes, ‘Az elfelejtett gólkirály’ [The Forgotten Top scorer], *Reform*, September 8, 1995, 46; ‘Elhunyt Friedmanszky Zoltán’ [Zoltán Friedmanszky Passed Away], *FTC*, <https://www.fradi.hu/labdarugas/elso-csapat/hirek/elhunyt-friedmanszky-zoltan> (accessed August 15, 2023).
48. (c. 1999–). Coach of the junior teams of various Hungarian clubs (Angyalföldi Sportiskola, KSI, Vasas). In Cuba, his work included supervising and training, was coach of Granjeros (Camagüey), champion of the 1975 season. Upon returning to Hungary, he coached kids and worked as a physical education teacher in Puskás Tivadar Távközlési Technikum. Sources: Tamásné Gyenes, ‘Kiigazítás’ [Correction], *Magyarország*, March 14, 1976, 31; ‘Futball – mindhalálíg’ [Football – Forever], *Nemzeti Sport*, June 29, 1999, 4.
49. (1937–2014). Played football in various clubs in Hungary such as Dohánygyár, Keltex, FTC and was selected once to play in the national team. Graduated from the University College of Physical Education in 1960. Coach (from 1962) and lecturer at football coach trainings. He worked in Cuba as provincial, later national supervisor for football. Upon his return to Hungary, coach of the teams Dorog and Baja, both in second division, then physical education teacher at the Ond vezér primary school and founder of a local football school. Author of various works on the Olympic Games. Sources: Zsolt Zsellengér, ‘Egy-két szó Kubáról’ [One or Two Words on Cuba], *Képes Sport*, January 1972, 776; Béla Mattanovich, ‘Vitte a csapatát’ [He Led His Team], *Labdarúgás*, July 1976, 23; Péter Török, ‘A jutalmat ki kell érdemelni!’ [Rewards Must be Earned], *Népsport*, September 3, 1982, 3; Gábor Bursi, ‘Úraim, elegem volt az egészből!’ [Gentlemen, I had enough], *Népsport*, February 13, 1988, 3; Gábor Bursi. ‘Kispad helyett – focisuli’ [Instead of the Bench – Football School], *Foci7*, March 20, 1991, 31.
50. (c. 1910–1980). Worked various years in Cuba, starting c. 1966, and was mainly responsible for training coaches. Also trained Fajardo de la Habana.

Source: D. V., 'A labdarúgás tömegsport lesz Kubában!' [Football Will be Mass Sport in Cuba], *Nemzeti Sport*, August 7, 1969, 3.

51. Former player of the team Gázgyár and coach of the club Budapesti Vegyiművek (Budapest Chemical Factory). His work in Cuba was helped by ex-forward Mario López, who had been one of the most brilliant players of the Cuban national team directed in 1934–1935 by Károly Katzer (b. 1896/7 – d. 1972), a Hungarian immigrant, who played and coached on the island between 1924 and 1935. Source: 'A kubai labdarúgók egyetlen panasza – fáznak' [The Only Complaint of Cuban Footballers – They are Cold], *Magyar Nemzet*, April 23, 1966, 6; 'Kuba. Magyarországra készül a válogatott' [Cuba. The National Team Prepares for Hungary], *Népsport*, February 7, 1967, 6.
52. Ex player of Atlético Junior Baranquilla in Colombia. Worked in Cuba between c. 1964 and 1972. Trainer of Granjeros (Camagüey) – with which he won the Cuban cup. Back in Hungary, coach of the MTK junior team.
53. It is difficult to evaluate outcomes, as the complete national youth team, which had won all the gold medals in the IV Central American Fencing Championship perished when their plane was destroyed by a bomb attack in October 1976. All 24 athletes died together with other passengers and the crew. Despite the tragedy, Cuba competed in all fencing events (foil, épée, sabre – individual and team) in the Moscow Olympics. They obtained no medals.
54. (c. 1943–). Member of the Hungarian national épée team. He worked in Camagüey, Cuba at the end of the 1960s, beginning of the 1970s. Later he coached Budapesti Honvéd. Source: 'Ma 78 éves Horváth Kornél' [Today Kornél Horváth is 78], *Vívómúzeum*, October 24, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/vivomuzeum/posts/906813653286200/?locale=zh_CN&paipv=0&eav=AfYhBSOqZ6HnxIeOkLoQzGrTQYe82CVPaKZBSSjuSHpPzQ0PdJl6DWozjuzWl1MyXA&_rdr (accessed August 15, 2023).
55. (1911–1988). Fencer (Clubs: BEAC, UTE, MC, Vasas, Budapesti Vörös Meteor). Member of the Hungarian national team (foil, épée and sabre). Team world champion (1951, Stockholm and 1955, Rome). Coach of Budapesti Vörös Meteor and MTK. Got specialised in youth training. Head coach of the Cuban fencing association. Upon his return from Cuba, he completed law studies and worked for the Hungarian National Bank. Source: Palócz Endre, in: *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*, ed. Ágnes Kenyeres (Budapest: Arcanum, 2011), <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-eletrajzi-lexikon-7428D/p-77238/palocz-endre-772AA/>.
56. (c. 1994–). Fencer, coach (Club UTE), coronel. Brother of Endre Palócz. Both were disciples of the fencing coach dr. László Gerentsér. Sources: Péter Kozák, 'Endre Palócz', *Névpont*, <https://www.nevpont.hu/palyakep/palocz-endre-805c7> (accessed August 15, 2023); Sándor Dávid, *Arany évtizedek. A magyar vívás története* [Golden Decades. The History of Hungarian Fencing] (Budapest: Magyar Vívó Szövetség, 1988), 55–6.
57. Pentathlete, fencer, fencing coach. He worked in Cuba from c. 1968, first in Santiago de Cuba in a sport school for kids, then in Havana, preparing the national youth team for the world championship. Source: József Naményi, 'Professor húngaro – szabadságon' [Hungarian Professor – on Holiday], *Népsport*, January 13, 1969, 7.
58. Fencer (club Elektromos Művek), studied coaching at Testnevelési Főiskola (TF) in Budapest. Worked in Cuba and later, at the end of the 1980s, in Kuwait. Sources: 'Akiknek nem forintra megy a játék' [Those Who Do Not P(l)ay in

- Forints], *Képes Sport*, September 19, 1989, 14–15; Ferenc Takács: Jubileumi emlékkönyv. 90 éves a Testnevelési Egyetem [Anniversary Memorial Book. The University of Physical Education is 90 years old] (Budapest: TE, 2015), 156.
59. (c. 1926–). Kayak racer, member of the club Elektromos Művek. Started coaching in his early twenties (Club Bástyá). Prepared the training plan for the national team in 1953, which achieved outstanding results at the 1954 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships, held in Mâcon, France. Hungary got six golds, and ranked number 1 on the medal table. Füzesséry prepared the Hungarian kayak team for the Melbourne Olympic Games (1956) and was coach of the national team for a couple of years. His attention turned to youth training and competitions, and in 1963 he was asked to be the head coach of the future Central Sport School. He elaborated new training methodology, curricula. He was coach of the Hungarian national youth team, and head of the coach training programme. He worked in Cuba during Socialist times, and later he prepared the Spanish national team for the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. Sources: ‘Füzesséry Gyula’, *Magyar Kajak-Kenu Történelem*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s15bEhDRijI>; ‘Gyula al frente de los equipos’, *Aguas Vivas*, November–December 1988, n.p.
 60. (1921–2000). Several times Hungarian national champion, Szabó competed between 1939 and 1957. He started coaching early, from 1946 and became a youth sport specialist. He spent two years (1973–75) in Cuba, training the national team. Source: ‘Szabó Ferenc “Tömpe” sírjának koszorúzása’ [Wreath Laying at the Grave of Ferenc Szabó, Alias Tömpe], *Magyar Kajak-Kenu Szövetség*, <https://kajakkenusport.hu/mesteredzo/szabo-ferenc> (accessed August 15, 2023).
 61. For more on Hungarian football coaches, please see: Tamás Dénes; Pál Peterdi; Zoltán Rochy and József Selmeçi, *Kalandozó magyar labdarúgók* [Adventuring Hungarian Footballers] (Budapest: Arena 2000 Kiadó, 1999), 380–411; Mónika Szente-Varga, ‘Hungarian Football Coaches in Latin America in the Interwar Period’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 38, no. 5 (2021), 492–510, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2021.1932826>; Mónika Szente-Varga, ‘Futbol húngaro en México’, in *La imagen de Hungría en Iberoamérica en el siglo XX*, ed. Ferenc Fischer and Domingo Lilón (Pécs: PTE Ibero-Amerika Központ, 2009), 135–48.
 62. Péter Torbágyi, ‘Ugródeszka vagy célállomás? Magyarok Közép-Amerikában és az Antillákon’ [A Springboard or a Destination? Hungarians in Central America and the Antilles], in: *MTA–SZTE Hispanisztika Kutatócsoport Kutatási Közlemények II. Magyarország és a hispán világ* (Szeged: SZTE, 2000), 84–93; Mónika Szente-Varga, *El baúl de las nomeolvides. Relaciones húngaro-mexicanas* (Budapest: Dialóg Campus, 2017), 55–6.
 63. Róbert Győri Szabó, ‘Football and Politics in Twentieth-Century Hungary’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, no. 2–3 (2019), 15–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2019.1629583>; Miklós Hadas, ‘Football and Social Identity: The Case of Hungary in the Twentieth Century’, *Sports Historian*, 20, no. 2 (2000), 43–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460260009443368>, 51–61.
 64. Gyozo Molnar, Hungarian Football: ‘A Socio-historical Overview’, *Sport in History*, 27, no. 2 (2007), 293–317, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460260701437110>, 309–310.
 65. This administrative division of six provinces existed from the end of the nineteenth century until 1976, currently there are 15 provinces.

66. Zsellengér, 'Egy-két szó Kubáról', 776.
67. Oreidis Pimentel Pérez, 'Janos Szoke: La huella húngara en el fútbol camagüeyano', <https://futbol-cubano.blogspot.hu/2011/01/por-oreidis-pimentel-perez-camaguey-que.html> (accessed July 26, 2014). The blog no longer exists. Oreidis Pimentel Pérez is a Cuban sport journalist.
68. It should not be forgotten that various nations boycotted the Moscow Olympics, therefore competition, for example in the field of football, was not that strong.
69. Mattanovich, 'Vitte a csapatát', 23.
70. Péter Szalay, 'Jenő után Zoltán' [After Jenő Comes Zoltán], *Labdarúgás*, August 1978, 17.
71. László Rózsaligeti, *Az aranycsapat örökösei. A Kádár-korszak válogatottja, a Vasas és a Ferencváros* [The Heirs of the Golden Team. The National Team of the Kádár Era: Vasas and FTC] (Nagykanizsa: Alma Mater Zala Bt, 2018), 37–38. Interview with Zoltán Friedmanszky.
72. Ibid.
73. Péter Malonyai, 'A pólóédző, aki miatt Fidel Castro tollat ragadott' [The Water Polo Coach Who Made Fidel Castro Take up a Pen (to Write a Letter)], *Nemzeti Sport*, June 1, 1997, 13. Interview with Károly Laky.
74. 'Fiatalok százait tanította pólóra – most vígan teniszezik' [He has Taught Hundreds of Youngsters to Play Water Polo – Now He Enjoys Playing Tennis], *Nemzeti Sport*, July 10, 1992, 5. Interview with Károly Laky.
75. MNL OL j 1966 IV Kuba, box 76, 84–772. Communication by Andor György Ajtai charge d'affaires ad interim in Havanna, November 17, 1966.
76. MNL OL j 1967 IV Kuba, box 62, 84–77. Visit of the Cuban ambassador, José Matar at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 11, 1966. Italics by the author.
77. MNL OL j 1967 IV Kuba, box 62, 84–77. Cuban enrolment of Hungarian coaches (001156/1967).
78. Besides the Cuban national team, several others were coached by Hungarians: the team of Colombia by Dezső Gyarmati (1927–2013), of Mexico by Kálmán Markovits (1931–2009) and of Canada by Jenő Áts (1936–). All three of them had participated at the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games, Gyarmati and Markovits in the gold medalist water polo team, and Áts (and Markovits!) as swimmers. Sources: Alfonso Bonilla Aragón, *Cali Panamericana. Memoria de los VI Juegos Panamericanos de 1971*. Tomo 1: Juegos (Colombia: Comité Organizador de los VI Juegos Panamericanos, 197?), 215, 218, 220, 228; Pál Peterdi, *Gyarmati sors avagy egy balkéz története* [Gyarmati's destiny or the history of a left hand] (Budapest: Históriai, 1996), 190–2.
79. Gilberto Dihigo, 'Karoly Laky, los polistas cubanos y la libertad', *Dihigo blog-spot*, <http://dihigo.blogspot.com/2016/09/karoly-laky-los-polistas-y-la.htm> (accessed August 16, 2023).
80. Malonyai, 'A pólóédző', 13.
81. They were 'state amateurs', that is disguised, state-supported professionals, members of clubs run by state companies or by state institutions such as the police and the army, where they were employed and received their salary. Sources: Ferenc Gergely, *A magyar testnevelési és sportmozgalom 1944–1956 között* [The Hungarian Physical Education and Sport Movement Between 1944 and 1956], *Neveléstörténet* 15, no. 3–4 (2018): 95; Jim Riordan, 'A Bright Future Shrouded in Mist: Sport in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Sport History* 17,

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82. Cuba did not participate in the Los Angeles (1984) and the Seoul (1988) Olympic Games.
 83. ‘List of Cuba’s Medals in each Olympic Game’, Olympian Database, <https://www.olympiandatabase.com/index.php?id=28342&L=1> (accessed August 16, 2023).
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