
The Olympic Movement in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic during the Cold War: Ideology, Politics, and Regional Identity Formation.

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Résumé

This research study examines the evolution of the Olympic Movement in the Soviet Union in general, and in one of its fifteen union republics - the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), in particular, during the Cold War. It explores the close relationship between elite sport, ideological propaganda, and the construction of the Soviet identity. In a period when sport itself had become a symbolic battlefield between East and West, sport and Olympic values in the MSSR went beyond athletic competition, being transformed into an instrument of Soviet "soft power."

The study analyzes how the authorities in Moscow used Olympic ideals to legitimize the perceived superiority of the socialist system over capitalism and to shape the "new Soviet person." The analysis focuses on the political mechanisms through which sport was institutionalized, ranging from infrastructure financing to the strict control exercised over athletes and coaches. Special attention is given to the western region of the USSR. As the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic had been part of Romania during the interwar period, it represented a sensitive territory and was perceived as a potential threat to the Soviet Union's national and ideological interests.

This paper is part of a broader doctoral research project on the evolution of sport in Soviet Moldova between 1944 and 1991. It draws on archival sources, normative acts, oral history, and relevant historiographical works. The analysis of the Olympic Movement contributes to a deeper understanding of sport as a social and political phenomenon, highlighting the tension between centralized ideological control and regional identity-building processes in the context of the Cold War.

Mots-Clés: Olympic Movement, Soviet sport, Cold War, Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, elite sport, sports propaganda, soft power, sport and politics, Soviet Union

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