

Cult of Body:

Sports and Physical Culture in Russia, 1891-1919

Advisor: Prof. Louise McReynolds, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*
Material from the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg



“Sports and Physical Culture in Russia” continues the new IDC series Mass Culture and Entertainment in Russia. This collection is particularly significant because sports provided opportunities for transitions from tradition to modernity: athletic competition broke down class barriers, brought women into public spaces, and encouraged new modes of behavior and self-presentation.

The IDC series *Mass Culture & Entertainment in Russia*

The IDC series *Mass Culture & Entertainment in Russia* comprises collections of extremely rare, and often unique, materials that offer a stunning insight into the dynamics of cultural and daily life in Imperial and Soviet Russia. The series is organized along six thematic lines that together cover the full spectrum of nineteenth- and twentieth century Russian culture, ranging from the penny press and high-brow art journals in pre-Revolutionary Russia, to children's magazines and publications on constructivist design in the early Soviet Union. The first sub-series – “Film” – comprises periodicals and archival material dating from the first decades of Russian cinema (1907-1940). The second – “Theater” – is devoted to Russian and Russian-Jewish theater history. The third – “Entertainment and Leisure Activities” – contains journals that reflect the changing lifestyles of the emerging middle class of pre-Revolutionary Russia. The fourth – “Mass Media” – has a more outspoken

diachronic dimension. It includes the highly successful collection *Gazety-Kopeiki*, as well as lifestyle magazines and children's journals from various periods. The fifth sub-series – “Everyday Life” – focuses on the hardship of life under Stalin and his somewhat more liberal successors. Finally, the sixth – “High Culture/Art” – provides an exhaustive overview of the historic avant-garde in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Europe, which despite its elitist nature pretended to cater to a mass audience. The materials brought together in this IDC series are essential to Slavists and historians, but should be equally appealing to political scientists, art historians, and sociologists who no longer view mass culture as the arrièregarde of cultural evolution, but as a highly complex phenomenon that deserves to be studied in its own right. The entire series will also become available online in IDC's Digital Library.

Otto Boele, *Leiden University*

MASS CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT IN RUSSIA

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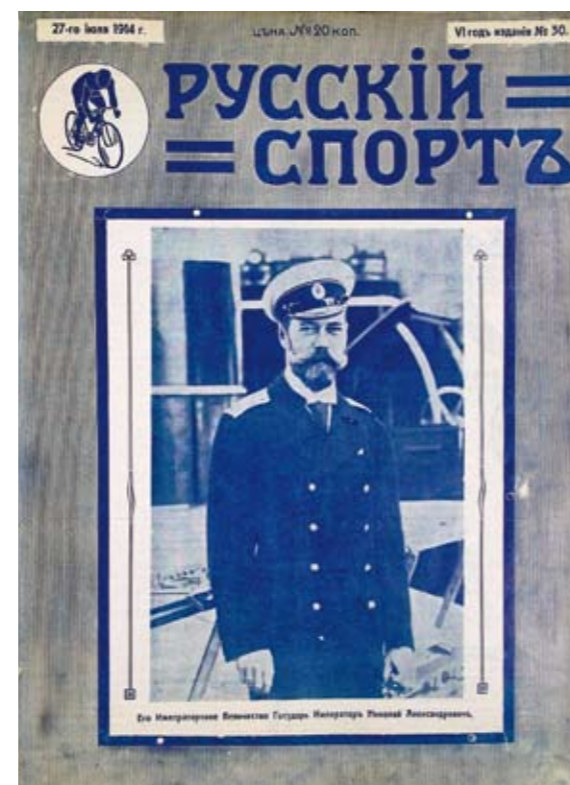
Physical Culture and Sports at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

By the turn of the twentieth century, urban Russians found themselves swept up in the “physical culture” movement that had engulfed much of Western Europe. Military conflicts had inspired governments to pay attention to the physical fitness of their populations. Sporting competitions offered a unique forum for the development of a national identity. Imperial expansion also required a combination of physical and psychological superiority that could be enhanced through sports. The rapid industrialization had brought urbanization, which generated anxieties about modernity taking its toll on the human body. Fitness clubs began sprouting up, organizations that brought together members of the emergent middle classes with shared interest in self-improvement. This was complemented by organized athletic competitions. It is this dialectic of individual effort and team spirit that makes sports so valuable as a source for analyzing the transition from tradition to modernity.



Topics

This collection offers extraordinary sources for researchers into a variety of topics. The most obvious beneficiary is the sports historian; this discipline profits largely from the scholarly recognition that sports form an essential aspect of any society’s culture. Sports are essential to the evolution of the modern personality in terms of health, competitiveness and team play. Tourism, another growth field in academic studies, relates directly to sports. Most significantly, contemporary interest in sexuality is informed by sports periodicals. Not only are gender roles transformed through sports, but the visuals in these publications illustrate emergent feminine and masculine ideals.



Sports played a dynamic role at a pivotal moment in Russian history, when a more traditional agrarian society transformed into a modern industrial one. Regulated by clearly articulated rules that were enforced by self-discipline, sports offered an alternative behavior model to the one that was feared by the critics of mass culture. Athletics brought women out in new public spaces, and created opportunities for cooperation among all classes.

Russian Sporting Periodicals

The racing form, the oldest example of a sporting periodical, circulated primarily among gamblers. Private clubs published “official organs” that distributed information to members while also attracting new ones. The increasing popularity of multiple sports made general-interest journals profitable. Although the majority of periodicals in this collection, such as *K sportu!* (Let’s Take Up Sports!) and *Sila i zdorov’e* (Strength and Health), cover all types of athletics, several journals dedicated to individual sports, such as wrestling and cycling, are also included. It also provides glimpses of homoeroticism. Sports also provided impetus to the boom in commercial tourism at the turn of the century. The combination of fun and transportation turned cycling into a medium for touring, as is evident from the fact that around 1900 local cycling clubs started calling themselves “tourist clubs” and sponsoring members on local tours. *Tsiklist* (The Cyclist), a cycling journal, 1895-1904, integrated cycling with other sports, just as *Russkii turist* (The Russian Tourist), 1899-1913, brought related athletic activities into tourism.

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VARIOUS SPORTS

This collection contains a wide range of information on various sports in Russia :

- Sports in general
- Airplanes, Automobiles
- Body Building and Wrestling
- Football (Soccer)
- Horse Racing
- Skating
- Tourism: Cycling and Mountaineering

PRODUCT INFORMATION

- Scope: 13 titles
- Number of fiche: 1,132
- Medium: online and on microfiche
- Available at www.idc-digilib.nl
- Including Marc 21 records
- Part of the IDC series *Mass Culture and Entertainment in Russia*



SUBJECT AREAS

- Slavic and Eurasian Studies
- Gender Studies
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- History

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