



Sport in the USSR: Physical Culture--Visual Culture (Reaktion Books - Picturing History)

Mike O'Mahony

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Sports played a vital role in the social and cultural life of the former Soviet Union.

The Soviet state sponsored countless programs to promote sporting activities, even constructing a new term, *fizkultura*, to describe sports culture.

With *Sport in the USSR*, Mike O'Mahony asserts that the popular image of *fizkultura* was as dependent on its presentation as it was on its actual practice. Images of vigorous Soviet sportsmen and women were constantly evoked in literature, film, and folk songs; they frequently appeared on the badges and medals of various work associations and even on plates and teapots. Several major artists, in fact, made their careers out of vivid representations of sports.

O'Mahony further examines the role that *fizkultura* played in the formulation of the *novyi chelovek*, or Soviet New Person, arguing that these images of the sporting life not only promoted the existence of this national being but also articulated the process of transformation that could bring him or her into existence. *Fizkultura*, O'Mahony claims, became a civic duty alongside state labor drives and military service.

Sport in the USSR is a fascinating addition to current debates in the fields of sociology, popular culture, and Russian history.

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