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“LET’S ALL DO THE POZNAŃ”: MANCHESTER VERSUS POLAND BOTH ON AND OFF THE PITCH

ABSTRACT: The story of the Manchester football clubs’ encounters with Poland begins in 1968 with Manchester United facing Górnik Zabrze in the quarter final of their ultimately successful European Cup campaign and ends with Manchester City fans learning to “do the Poznań” in a 2010 UEFA Europa League group match. This article will discuss those encounters which took place during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath from the perspectives of the players, fans and officials involved. During this period, matches between Manchester and Polish clubs were trips into the unknown, whether that meant crossing the Iron Curtain in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the first and until very recently the only experience of a major European final for both Manchester City and Górnik Zabrze in 1970, or the first away days in Europe for English fans after a five-year ban, in 1991. The aim of the article is to show how sport, and particularly the travelling and crossing of borders involved in international competition, can affect our attitudes towards and opinions on formerly unknown, sometimes mysterious places. This process appears to be largely positive and the article will also propose that the experiences involved with Manchester football clubs meeting Polish opponents are examples of sport as cultural diplomacy, in other words, football diplomacy. The sources consulted will include Polish and English newspaper reports as well as first-hand accounts of players, fans and officials travelling in both directions.

KEYWORDS: Manchester United, Manchester City, Górnik Zabrze, Widzew Łódź, Legia Warszawa / Legia Warsaw, Lech Poznań, football history, cultural diplomacy, football diplomacy, Cold War

On 22 October 2010, Manchester City played Polish team Lech Poznań in the group phase of the UEFA Europa League and although City won the match comfortably (3:1), the night will be remembered more for the behaviour of Lech’s travelling fans. Described by one City fan as “the best we’ve ever

seen”, Lech’s ultras impressed with their tireless vocal support and also their habit of linking arms, turning their backs to the pitch and bouncing up and down in unison. So impressed were City’s fans that they started to imitate the habit, while singing “Let’s all do the Poznań”. Through the rest of that season, and most notably at their F.A. Cup semi-final win over city rivals United, “Doing the Poznań”, as it became known, was the City fans’ trademark. This was the last of a number of encounters between the two Manchester clubs and Polish clubs starting in the late 1960s, encounters which provide fascinating insights into the mutual perceptions of British and Polish sportspeople, their fans and wider societies, and the way in which sport, and the travel involved therein, can influence these perceptions. This article will specifically analyse those encounters which took place during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath in the early 1990s, firstly as examples of cultural diplomacy, and then more specifically as football diplomacy. Most of what has been written about cultural and football diplomacy looks at the subject from the perspective of state actors using the sport as either a tool for soft power or as a deliberate way in which to improve relations with foreign powers. This article will rather look at football diplomacy as a process carried out by what Sarah B. Snyder calls “low-level non-state actors”, regarding “footballers, their coaches and fans as possible actors in international relations”.¹ Based on a variety of sources, including newspaper reports from both countries, life writing produced by players and coaches involved in the matches, club histories and personal testimonies, the article will look at how these encounters on the football pitch affected the perceptions of those travelling between East and West, with a particular focus on contrasting British and Polish fan behaviour and culture.

From both the perspective of the Manchester clubs and their Polish opponents, these encounters came at crucial periods in a purely footballing context, but also in terms of wider political and social developments. Górnik Zabrze, the most successful Polish club in both domestic and European competition and strongly connected with the Silesian coalfields, played United’s European Cup winning team of 1968 in the quarter finals and then met City in the final of the 1970 European Cup Winners’ Cup, and again in the quarter final of the same competition a year later. Both the City and United teams were iconic representatives of the modern, glamourised version of the English game which had developed through the 1960s, while the Górnik team of that time formed the nucleus of the Polish national team which would go on to achieve unprecedented success in international competition, giving pride to a country slowly emerging from the darkness of the Stalinist period. The Widzew Łódź team of the late 1970s and early 1980s, similarly, comprised players from

¹ S. B. Snyder, *Playing on the Same Team, What International and Sport Historians Can Learn From Each Other*, [in:] *Soccer Diplomacy: International Relations and Football since 1914*, ed. H. L. Dichter, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2020, p. 19.

the second great Polish national team, and played and beat both United and City in the UEFA Cup. For the Manchester clubs, this was a time when the activities of fans off the field were making more headlines than the players on it. United then played Legia Warszawa (Legia Warsaw) in the European Cup Winners Cup semi-final of 1991, a time when Poland was just starting to experience the freedoms of the new post-communist reality and English clubs had recently been readmitted to European competition after a five-year ban. For the sports historian researching such famous clubs in such a recent era, there are, of course a wealth of sources available, yet much of it represents quantity rather than quality. A good example of this is the large amount of life writing which has been produced concerning players from both the Manchester and Polish teams. Life writing, particularly when it involves celebrity figures such as football stars, is notoriously inaccurate as a historical record and any information found there should at least be corroborated in other sources, such as newspapers. Newspaper reports are also not without problems, with on the one hand the Polish newspapers being heavily controlled and censored by the communist authorities, particularly when material involved the West, and many of the British reports being written to stereotype or sensationalise, rather than objectively report events. There is also much information to be gleaned from club histories and museums, very useful for background data and statistics though lacking in any particular insight. Finally, there is perhaps the most useful source, personal testimony, whether gathered from internet fan forums or via interview, which again is not without its issues – it can be difficult and time-consuming to collect, and also rather fragmentary – but perhaps offers the most credible accounts. Despite the flaws of each type of source, by consulting a sample of all of them both in Polish and English, it is surely possible to build up an accurate picture of these Poland versus Manchester encounters.

As mentioned above, this article will analyse these encounters as examples of cultural diplomacy. Milton Cummings, in a survey of cultural diplomacy as practised by the United States government, defines the process as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects among nations in order to foster mutual understanding” and goes on to explain how this can be either a one-way or a two-way process.² It will become clear through the article that football matches between Manchester clubs and Polish clubs were very much the latter, with each side involved in the exchange. Cummings does not specifically mention sport as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy, though other writers have noted the peculiar power which sport has in bringing people together. As Vincent Mabillard and Daniel Jadi point out in a report on sporting projects with that very aim: “This popularity and global attraction to sport enables people to transcend national, cultural, socio-economic and political

² M. Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government*, Americans for the Arts, Washington DC 2009, p. 1.

boundaries.”³ They also remind us that this is a very old concept indeed, going back to the Ancient Olympic Games and the Olympic Truce between city states which otherwise would have been at war. In more modern times, sport and diplomacy have crossed paths since the late 19th century,⁴ when most sports as we would recognise them today were developed and codified. This is unsurprising when one considers the reach of modern sport and the depth of feeling which people attach to it. As the former British Prime Minister and avid sports fan, John Major, put it: “Sport is a binding force between generations and across borders. But, by a miraculous paradox, it is at the same time one of the defining characteristics of nationhood and local pride.”⁵ It was not, however, until the interwar period that diplomats made a concerted effort to take advantage of the opportunities offered by sport.⁶

During the immediate post-war period, when European nations’ contacts with those on the other side of the Iron Curtain were limited, “[s]port then turned out to be another area of confrontation during the Cold War. Nevertheless, there was already scope for cultural diplomacy with sport being a useful and powerful tool to reach more peaceful relations and foster mutual understanding between east and west.”⁷ As Ronnie Kowalski and Dilwyn Porter argue in their account of British-European Cold War encounters on the football field, “sport in its own way was as important a part of cold war international relations as diplomacy and espionage”.⁸ This was well understood by those responsible for organising the first international sports federations, most of which emerged in this post-war period. Indeed, a special edition of the “Sport in History” journal devoted to international sports organisations comprises articles exclusively covering the Cold War period.⁹ Writing about the early history of UEFA (European Union of Football Associations) in their introductory article to the abovementioned special edition, Jürgen Mittag and Philippe Vonnard point out that UEFA executives believed strongly in the ideal of European integration in the 1950s and 1960s and that UEFA was one of the few European bodies to include countries from both sides of the Iron Curtain

³ V. Mabillard and D. Jadi, *Sports as Cultural Diplomacy: How Sport Can Make a Difference in Intercultural Relations*, “Institute for Cultural Diplomacy”, 2011, date of access: 1 Oct. 2021, www.culturaldiplomacy.org.

⁴ H. L. Dichter, Introduction, [in:] *Soccer Diplomacy: International Relations and Football since 1914*, ed. H. L. Dichter, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2020, p. 1.

⁵ P. J. Beck, *Scoring for Britain: International Football and International Politics, 1900-1939*, Routledge, London 1999, p. 13.

⁶ H. L. Dichter, op. cit., p. 4.

⁷ V. Mabillard and D. Jadi, op. cit., p. 5.

⁸ R. Kowalski and D. Porter, *Cold War Football: British-European Encounters in the 1940s and 1950s*, [in:] *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. S. Wagg and D. Andrews, Routledge, London 2007, pp. 64-81.

⁹ G. Quin and P. Vonnard, eds., *Special Issue: International Sports Organisations*, “Sport in History”, vol. 37, no. 3 (2017).

from its inception, meaning that UEFA were uniquely able to build bridges between East and West.¹⁰

Football is, of course, the particular sporting context of this article and Mittag and Vonnard¹¹ also stress the unique power of the sport to build the aforementioned bridges. In the first tournament of the Europeans Champions Cup, Real Madrid, from Francoist Spain, were drawn against Partizan Belgrade, from communist Yugoslavia, in a quarter final and many problems were expected between the two sides. However, huge crowds attended the two legs of the tie with no issues and the event gave representatives from the two outwardly hostile countries opportunities to engage in dialogue. As the authors point out, “in eastern bloc countries, football’s popularity turned out to be a stronger force in bringing countries together than the Cold War’s political tensions were in pushing them apart”, partly a result of UEFA giving Eastern countries equal status to those in the West, both in sporting and administrative terms. They further argue that “[f]ootball proved to have an almost unique ability to maintain relations between all European nations.” In Heather L. Dichter’s recent edited book, *Soccer Diplomacy*,¹² we can read about examples of the diplomatic power of football ranging from the French 3rd Republic and Franco’s Spain to Apartheid era South Africa and modern-day Brazil, with the rest of the chapters concerning Cold War contexts. In her introduction, Dichter makes a useful distinction between state-led football diplomacy and football diplomacy carried out by non-state actors. On the one hand, “governments have particularly utilized soccer within the two related dimensions of public diplomacy and soft power”, while on the other, diplomacy within football works “down to the person-to-person level, where sport forms the basis of a transaction”.¹³ As we will see when we look at the stories of those involved with the Manchester versus Poland matches, “soccer competitions can facilitate international connections at times of political isolation”,¹⁴ and it is through the experiences of these “non-state actors”, players, coaches and fans, that people living under very different circumstances can come to understand each other better.

Indeed, what will be focused upon first of all are some of the mutual preconceptions which those travelling between Manchester and Poland had, and how they were directly affected by these encounters. In the period under discussion, the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and even to a certain extent the early 1990s, travel between Manchester and Poland was a rare thing and for those

¹⁰ J. Mittag and P. Vonnard, *The Role of Societal Actors in Shaping a Pan-European Consciousness. UEFA and the Overcoming of Cold War Tensions, 1954-1959*, “Sport in History”, vol. 37, no. 3 (2017), p. 333.

¹¹ J. Mittag and P. Vonnard, op. cit., pp. 348-349.

¹² H. L. Dichter, op. cit., p. 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ S. B. Snyder, op. cit., p. 19.

players, coaches and journalists venturing east, the reality of life behind the Iron Curtain sometimes matched the stereotype of a cold, grey and harsh world which was prevalent in the West. Ken Ferris, in his history of Manchester United in Europe, relates how George Best, United's star player, believed the cold weather and desolation was bad for morale in United's preparation for their European Cup quarter final against Górnik Zabrze,¹⁵ describing Katowice as a "desolate place, bleak, snow swept and utterly cold". Similarly, Bobby Charlton, in one of his autobiographies, talks of his apprehension over the tie in distinctly Cold War terms: "It was rarely easy fighting on Europe's Eastern front, and the draw committed us to another exercise in survival". He also talks of coal miners who "warmed themselves on heated vodka" and "huddled figures in icebound streets".¹⁶ United's captain, Paddy Crerand, relates another story from the trip which fed in to another stereotype about Eastern Europe, that it was a dangerous place where one could easily be drawn into Cold War intrigue. After being asked to smuggle six copies of the Bible and rosary beads into Poland by a member of the Polonia community in Manchester (after the first leg of the match in Manchester), he refuses to meet his mysterious Polish "contact wearing a blue hat" in the reception of the hotel as he believes he is being set up.¹⁷ Crerand also tells of his friend and club accountant, Reuben Kay, being terrified by a late night call to his hotel room from someone asking for "Comrade Number 10". Crerand later claimed the caller was simply asking for George Best's autograph (Best had been wearing the number 10 shirt that season).¹⁸ And while Crerand's account is laced with humour, the stereotype-driven fear of the East is clear. Manchester City's Neil Young, travelling to Poland for his team's European Cup Winner's Cup quarter final with Górnik Zabrze in 1971, found the experience much more troubling, talking of having nightmares for weeks after visiting Auschwitz: "I don't know if the Poles sent us there to mentally disrupt us before the game but it certainly had the desired effect." Young also describes Poland as "ridiculous for the cold" and as an extremely poor country where "there did not seem a lot for them to do".¹⁹

Such was the apprehension of all things Polish that the United players of 1968 had brought their own supplies of tea and dried soup which they cooked in a player's room on Primus stoves. In an amusing example of how the travel involved with international sport helps to explode myths, Charlton describes this as "a decision which proved embarrassing when we were fed perfectly

¹⁵ K. Ferris, *Manchester United in Europe: Tragedy, Destiny, History*, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh 2001, pp. 202-209.

¹⁶ B. Charlton, *My Manchester United Years*, Headline, London 2007, p. 239.

¹⁷ P. Crerand, *Never Turn the Other Cheek*, HarperSport, London 2014, pp. 142-144.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ N. Young, *Catch a Falling Star: The Autobiography of Neil Young*, Empire Publications, Manchester 2004, pp. 132-133.

adequately in the big dining room”.²⁰ Ken Ferris also quotes “Times” journalist Geoffrey Green as describing how “United were looked after superbly at the Katowice hotel [...] even the food was surprisingly good” and according to United player Nobby Stiles: “We felt happier when we were settled into the hotel and found we were going to be comfortable.”²¹ Charlton goes further in his assessment of the positive impressions he gained from his trips to Poland and other countries in Eastern Europe, describing them as “fascinating places if you wanted to venture, however carefully, into another world”. As if echoing the theories on football diplomacy described above, he states: “Football, back when the Berlin Wall seemed like a permanent statement about the divisions of Europe and the world, had the power to draw people together, however confusingly at times.”²²

Poor food, conversely, is one of the popular Polish stereotypes about England which lingers to this day and the Widzew Łódź entourage which travelled to Manchester in 1977 for a UEFA cup tie with Manchester City, when asked in the hotel what they would like for breakfast the following morning, ordered 25 continental breakfasts as a safer option than the one dreaded full English breakfast chosen by a shrewd reporter who had visited the country previously. Andrzej Gowarzewski, author of *Widzew: 75 lat prawdziwej historii RTS (1922-1997)*, describes the look of envy on the Poles’ faces the next morning as they compared the “miniscule” rolls and portions of butter and jam on their plates with the generous pile of sausage, egg and bacon being tucked into by the aforementioned reporter. He also describes his positive sense of surprise in the stadium, as next to the press were sat a few dozen blind people, all in club scarves and headphones on, with carers describing the match to them. Coming from a place where people with disabilities had very little access to public spaces and events, this was clearly an eye-opener for the Polish writer.²³

For the Polish players travelling to Manchester in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in the words of Widzew Łódź historian, Marek Wawrzynowski, “football was also a pass to a colourful world of shops full of products”. As Widzew player Marek Pięta explains, “We didn’t want to play in Eastern Europe. First of all it was grey, which we knew all about [...] and secondly Manchester was a dream destination, as much from a tourist perspective. On the streets there was a shop on every corner, everyone could take something

²⁰ B. Charlton, op. cit., p. 240.

²¹ K. Ferris, op. cit., p. 204.

²² B. Charlton, op. cit. p. 240.

²³ A. Gowarzewski, *Widzew: 75 lat prawdziwej historii RTS (1922-1997)* (Widzew: 75 Years of the True History of RTS (1922-1997)), Kolekcja Klubów 5, GiA, Katowice 1998.

home for their wives”.²⁴ Of course, not all Polish footballers had positive experiences of playing in England and Kazimierz Deyna, the iconic Polish footballer who moved from Legia Warsaw to Manchester City in 1978, served as a cautionary tale of the potential pitfalls in the decadent West after he fell into gambling, drink and debt. Deyna’s problems were well documented and concerned both the personal grief involved with his wife’s many miscarriages and the frustrations of playing in a league where the physical rigours of the game were given precedence over skill and guile.²⁵ He was not, however, involved in the Manchester versus Poland cultural exchange of UEFA competition and in that sense falls beyond the scope of this article.

One area where those involved in this cultural exchange may have experienced negative impressions of the other side of the Iron Curtain is in fan behaviour, with English fans in particular having a bad reputation during the period in question. What we see in reality, however, is witnesses from both sides mostly expressing fascination and respect for the foreign fan culture. There were exceptions, of course, and in the second half of Manchester City’s bad-tempered 1977 UEFA cup tie with Widzew Łódź, the Polish newspaper “Przegląd Sportowy” reported that City fans (“idiots”) came onto the pitch and physically attacked the Widzew player, Zbigniew Boniek. On the same evening, Manchester United fans had caused trouble at St. Etienne in France, and “Przegląd Sportowy” pointedly commented that “[t]he fans from Manchester, as we can see, are everywhere confirming their hooligan reputation.”²⁶ Marek Wawrzynowski paints a rather different picture after attending the same match: “Maine Road²⁷ made an electrifying impression; the players were fascinated with it. They’d never played in such a stadium in front of such perfectly responsive spectators.”²⁸ This fervour and responsiveness of the fans at English stadiums and the spontaneous way they react to events on the pitch was also noted by “Przegląd Sportowy” when Widzew Łódź visited Old Trafford for a UEFA cup match with Manchester United in 1980. First they describe how three hours before the match the streets were filled with fans wearing scarves and hats, and how “The Trafford End”²⁹ filled with the loudest young fans. The newspaper then quotes Józef Młynarczyk, Widzew’s goalkeeper: “It was necessary to have nerves of steel to get used to this rare atmosphere and the booming cries of thousands of voices. Here the crowd

²⁴ M. Wawrzynowski, *Wielki Widzew: Historia polskiej drużyny wszech czasów* (The Great Widzew: History of the Polish Team of All Time), QSB, Warszawa 2013, pp. 143-144 [all translations from Polish have been made by the author, PN].

²⁵ See W. Bołba, *Deyna: Geniusz futbolu, książę nocy* (Deyna: Football Genius, Prince of the Night), The Facto, Warszawa 2014; R. Kołtoń, *Deyna, czyli obcy* (Deyna, or Different), Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2014.

²⁶ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 29 Sep. 1977.

²⁷ Maine Road is the name of Manchester City’s former stadium.

²⁸ M. Wawrzynowski, op. cit., p. 83.

²⁹ Presumably, this refers to “The Stretford End” of Old Trafford, where traditionally the most vocal supporters have been situated.

reacts to every situation on the pitch, which lends a certain objectivity.”³⁰ “Przegląd Sportowy” had noted a similar fan culture when Górnik Zabrze played Manchester City in 1971, impressed that there were no annoying trumpets or whistles, but choral singing before the match and as a response to every attack or good bit of play, an “Ooohhhh” at every major event. The reporter goes on to comment: “I think that if our footballers had such fans, it would be easier for them to play.”³¹

When Manchester United played Legia Warsaw in a two-legged semi-final of the UEFA Cup Winners Cup in 1991, the Cold War was officially over, the Berlin Wall had come down and the opportunity for large numbers of fans to travel with the teams was now available. This was also the first season in which English fans were allowed to travel to away European matches after a five-year ban imposed on English clubs after the Heysel stadium disaster at the UEFA European Cup Final of 1985 between Liverpool and Juventus, when, partly due to the hooligan behaviour of English fans, a wall collapsed leading to the deaths of thirty-nine Juventus fans. Such was the reputation of English fans at this stage that “Przegląd Sportowy”³² devoted almost as much column space before the match to discussions of the police preparations and potential for trouble as they did to the actual football match. Reports from the day of the match described the security involved as appropriate for the visit of a world leader rather than a football match. Some 2,000 fans travelled from Manchester and “Przegląd Sportowy” reports that for an hour before the game, Warsaw’s Myśliwiecka Street was like a street in Manchester.³³ Echoing the positive experiences of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, however, the dreaded hooligan issue never materialised and the Polish journalists are full of praise for the travelling fans, describing them as “looking really nice”, “smiling” and “well-behaved”. It was also duly noted that only United’s younger fans were “noisy, shouting and giving the v-sign” after “getting drunk on the buses”³⁴ but the overall impression was so positive that the discussed article was headlined “Angole³⁵ not so terrible”. And again, echoing earlier reports discussed in this article, “Przegląd Sportowy” notes that “it was strange how the United fans knew songs and melodies by heart – all of them”.³⁶ In the same vein, the Legia Warsaw website also notes how the United fans chanting their chants created a murmur of delight in the stadium.³⁷ All in all, the match seems to have been

³⁰ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 18 Sep. 1980.

³¹ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 11 Mar. 1971.

³² “Przegląd Sportowy”, 9 Apr. 1991.

³³ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 10 Apr. 1991.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Angole” in the original Polish is a colloquial expression for the English, similar to the American term ‘Limeys’ or, conversely, ‘Polacks’ to denote Polish people in English.

³⁶ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 10 Apr. 1991.

³⁷ *Historia 1991-2000* (History 1991-2000), “Legia.com”, 2017, date of access: 13 Feb. 2017, <https://legia.com/historia-1991-2000>.

played in a sporting atmosphere, and “Przegląd Sportowy” describes how a United fan with a microphone, ten minutes before the end of the match, thanked both sets of fans and welcomed them to the second leg in Manchester.³⁸

Due to the economic disparities between post-communist Poland and England in the early 1990s, it was not financially realistic for large numbers of Polish fans to travel to Manchester for the return leg and it was left to the players and their entourage to make an impression. Indeed, the Legia.com website tells the amusing story of how the British airways stewardess politely welcomed the Legia team on their flight to Manchester but that politeness was later in short supply when the Secretary General of the club kept asking for small bottles of complementary alcohol with the lids intact. Eventually, the stewardess lost her patience and gave him the whole carton of bottles, with the rest of the Legia party left cringing with embarrassment.³⁹ In the stadium itself, Polish journalists and were given tickets with the United fans and one notes how the Legia players were applauded by the home crowd as they were warming up, commenting that they “respect the opposition”. In the same report, Jacek Bąk, a Legia player at the time, maintains a common theme when he notes that “the Oohs and Ahhs of the crowd bored into your ears”.⁴⁰

The impressions of travellers from Manchester to Poland of Polish fan behaviour were similarly positive, with witnesses noting the friendliness, hardiness and sheer noise of the Polish fans. David Meek, a “Manchester Evening News” reporter who travelled with Manchester United to Poland in 1968 remarks how “the crowd created an unbelievable noise complete with wailing sirens”, and Geoffrey Green of “The Times” remarks how “these hardy Poles, the miners of Górnik, turned to lighting bonfires on the terraces”.⁴¹ This thought is echoed by Bobby Charlton, who talks of the “frenzied support of the coal miners”.⁴² Paddy Crerand remarked that most fans were in the stadium for an evening game, despite temperatures well below zero, and that “their fans were enthusiastic and passed vodka to ours [...] and blew horns like mad”.⁴³ Geoffrey Green had also noted the open attitude of Polish fans to visitors from Manchester, with “autograph-hunters besieging United’s hotel despite the freezing temperatures, ‘spivs’ mingling with fans offering three times the official exchange rate and locals stopping United fans to see if they could buy polo-neck jumpers and razor blades”.⁴⁴ Clearly, there were economic motivations behind this open attitude but the complete lack of aggression or

³⁸ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 10 Apr. 1991.

³⁹ *Historia 1991-2000*, op. cit.

⁴⁰ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 25 Apr. 1991.

⁴¹ K. Ferris, op. cit., p. 207.

⁴² B. Charlton, op. cit., p. 239.

⁴³ P. Crerand, op. cit., p. 144.

⁴⁴ K. Ferris, op. cit., p. 207.

intimidation towards the Western guests is evident from the reports. Similarly, one Manchester United fan, interviewed outside the ground after their match with Legia Warsaw in 1991, describes the “very good atmosphere” and when asked to compare English fans with Polish fans, replies that “ours are probably more aggressive”. An interviewed British policeman, in Warsaw to keep an eye on the travelling Manchester fans, also notes the sporting atmosphere in the stadium.⁴⁵

This article provides a mere snapshot of the experiences of those who travelled between Manchester and Poland for football reasons during the Cold War, and it forms part of a much longer story about the encounters of sportspeople travelling between East and West in this very specific historical period. The author has also researched and described the experiences of speedway riders from Britain and Poland travelling and competing during the Cold War and sees many similarities in the mutual impressions of those involved.⁴⁶ What is clear from reading the sources is that these journeys did indeed, as Bobby Charlton so eloquently put it, “draw people together” and increase mutual understanding at a time when there was so much propaganda and stereotyping about the ‘other’. Players, journalists and fans travelling to Poland from Manchester expected to find a cold, grey and dangerous place with poor food and uncomfortable conditions. But their experiences showed them that the reality was quite different. Food and conditions were more than acceptable, the local people were friendly and welcoming, and the dangers of travelling beyond the Iron Curtain were much exaggerated. Conversely, Poles traveling in the opposite direction, expecting poor food and aggression from English fans, were pleasantly surprised by the good breakfasts and largely sporting, respectful behaviour of the spectators. Even the seemingly negative impressions described in the article, such as Neil Young’s difficulties in dealing with a trip to Auschwitz, or Polish journalists witnessing “idiots” at Maine Road attacking Zbigniew Boniek, may have contributed to a better understanding of the ‘other’. Young would have come away with a deeper knowledge of Poland’s history and the Polish journalists would have seen that the hooligan element in England constituted only a small minority of English football fans. The desire of UEFA’s founding fathers to foster greater European integration, despite the iron divide between the two sides of the continent, seems to have been fulfilled, and the agency of “non-state actors” in realising the aims of cultural diplomacy also seems to have been significant. The article hopes to inspire potentially fruitful areas of further research, the behind-the-scenes diplomatic and security machinations which would have accompanied the teams travelling in both directions in the Cold War era being one area of

⁴⁵ “Przegląd Sportowy”, 11 Apr. 1991.

⁴⁶ P. Newsham, *Encounters on the Dirt Track: Polish-British Speedway from 1955*, “The International Journal of the History of Sport”, vol. 34, no. 10 (2017), pp. 866-879.

interest, as are the more specifically sports-related issues of contrasting playing styles and concepts of fair play.

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