

URGENT

AH /B
27 April
II/1,308

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

SPORTS

Fate Of World's Champion Hockey
Team.

SOURCE STOCKHOLM: reliable member Swedish sports contingent which visited Czechoslovakia late January to early February.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Early February 1953

NOTE: The following information may be old but is included in the event that any phase of this story is unknown. Unfortunately, the belated return of this source to Sweden via many Western European countries after his trip to Czechoslovakia is responsible for the tardiness of this report.

EVAL. COMMENT: All reported names are confirmed here. The subject is, however, UNCONFIRMED in our files.

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One member of Czechoslovakia's 1949 World Championship Hockey Team MODRY Boza is known to have committed suicide in prison while three others (as of February 2, 1953) were still behind bars in PRAGUE.

The three still imprisoned (as of the above date) were KONOPASEK Stanislav, ROZINAK Vaclav and KOBRANOV (fnu.) Two other former members of the 49 championship team TROJAK and HAJNY have been released.

The six were arrested on 13 March 1950 just as they were about to board a plane in PRAGUE to take them to the world championships in LONDON. At the time, the Czech government announced officially that the team had been prevented from making the trip and another try for the worlds championship because of the refusal of the British Government to grant entry visas to two Czech journalists accompanying the team. The British Embassy in PRAGUE immediately countered with the

over.

reply that visas for the two journalists LAUFER Josef and PROCHAZKA (fnu) had been waiting and available for two days before the scheduled departure.

The arrest of the six, which was believed to have been prompted by Czech fears that the sportsmen planned to defect once in the UK, occurred one day after the airport incident. The men were arrested in a bar while celebrating with fellow player MACELIS, Jiri, the birth of the latter's son. Watched carefully by secret police during the impromptu celebration, it is believed that some of the group gave vocal vent to bitter feelings about the halting of the trip and the government which ordered the action.

According to best available information, the six arrested men were sentenced to 20-25 years imprisonment. In addition to the two freed players, it is rumored that both KONOPASEK and ROZINAK will shortly be released from custody. The possibility of KOBRANOV's release in the near future is deemed highly unlikely since his alleged offenses were compounded in official Czech eyes by the fact that he was a member of the military.

Source found also interesting the fact that ZABRODSKY Vladimir, who has been refused permission to play with the Czech national team, is still regarded by the public as the odds away favorite player. During a game in the two match series between Sweden and Czechoslovakia in early February when the Czech team was losing by four goals, a steady insistent roar from the audience did nothing but repeat the chant; "ZABRODSY - ZABRODSKY - ZABRODSKY."

Although lacking any official confirmation from Czech circles, source, who is extremely familiar with current sporting practices in that country, feels certain that the withdrawal of the Czech team from the European championships in Switzerland in March was dictated by the fact that the team had lost a match to Sweden rather than out of respect for the death of GOTTWALD.

End.