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Nov 24  
XIV/655CZECHOSLOVAKIASPORTS (3100)FOREIGN RELATIONS(1500)SLOVAK SOCCER TEAM PAYS GRAZ A LIGHTNING VISIT.

SOURCE GRAZ : General observations, statements by Austrian soccer players and officials and local press.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : October 31 1954.

EVALUATION COMMENT : Attention Sport Editor. Additional information concerning this match is available in our files from various Austrian newspaper clippings and is at the disposal of the Sport Editor. No further information about the personnel under reference is available here.

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On Sunday, October 31 1954, the CSR soccer team "Slovan-BRATISLAVA" played a match against a local Austrian team in GRAZ. "Slovan," the first CSR team to visit the Styrian capital since the end of the war, was invited by "Sturm GRAZ" on a "club match" basis and, by accepting, established a "lightning visit record." It stayed in GRAZ for only eight hours.

For unknown reasons, "Slovan" was at first reluctant to accept "Sturm's" invitation, "issued some time ago," and turned it down. Then, at the last minute, on October 29, it accepted but, hardly had this been announced by local newspapers, again cancelled the fixture by cable on October 30. Not until after its match against the "Sportklub" in VIENNA did "Slovan" finally put an end to the confusion by saying "Yes" in a second cable. Apparently "Slovan" had been unable to commit itself until a cable arrived from

(Over)

PRAGUE saying "Permission granted for match in GRAZ."

When local right-wing and socialist newspapers, confused by this "Yes" and "No" business, reported that "Slovan is not coming", the Communist "Wahrheit" promptly protested. Forgetting that it too, had made exactly the same statement 48 hours previously, it finished its Sunday (October 31) article in praise of "Slovan" by saying "....this erroneous report....is an attempt to confuse soccer fans and to reduce the number of spectators....these notorious instigators (of the report) find no means too foul to revile the People's Democracies."

Anyway, the final decision having been "Yes," "Slovan" left VIENNA by "Austrobus" at 0600 hours on October 31 and arrived in GRAZ some four hours later. Here, the members went to the hotel "Erzherzog Johann", had lunch and then sat, completely aloof, in a secluded part of the hotel's coffeehouse until the game began. As the few arrangements that still had to be made were left in the hands of "Reisefuehrer" MOUREK (fnu), the players themselves had no chance of contacting local inhabitants.

Just before the game began the Slovaks boarded their bus and drove to the "Sturm" soccer pitch. Here, at the players' entrance, while MOUREK, "Sektionsleiter" BILSKY (fnu) and Dr. KADLIC (fnu) "tried to watch their charges like hawks", one player (NU) indulged "in what looked like a quick black market transaction" with a spectator.

The game itself began at 1500 hours and played in front of only 2500 spectators (the repeated cancellation of the game was probably responsible for the poor attendance) ended with a 1:1 draw.

The vehicle brought the Slovak team back to the "Erzherzog Johann," where it hurriedly had supper, then left for VIENNA and the CSR at 1815 hours.

Contrary to usual practice, not a single Austrian soccer player was present at the meal. In fact, the Slovaks were so carefully isolated from local inhabitants that, with the exception of the above mentioned case, it was impossible for anyone to speak with them.

End.