

Concerning "State Amateurism"

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How much ink has already been spilt writing about the new sport definition in vogue just now, qualifying "State Amateurism" as conceived and put in practice, it is assumed, in the Peoples Democracies ! (This condition also exists, most likely in other countries, Editor.)

It would be a mistake to imagine that all the people going in for sport ignore the meaning of "genuine Amateurism." If, for instance, any Bulgarian sportsman was to be asked if he derives any material benefit from the practice of his sport when participating in sport manifestations or when he has been gaining distinction in some sports' events, he would express great surprise. A man with an impartial mind who is desirous to know the truth on the subject should at least take the trouble to have an inkling of the lives of these "Sportsmen Emeritus" who are accused of being "State Amateurs." What shall strike him most, from the very beginning, is probably the fact that the best athletes usually always excel in the discharge of their professional work. This acknowledged fact is not due to an absence of assignable causes, but for the following reasons : the practice of sport develops the qualities which are essential to the evolution of life. These qualities are known as : perseverance in the production of work, determination in the wish to overcome difficulties, it promotes wholesome ambition, self-control and develops a spirit of patriotism.

The Bulgarian Sport Bulletin "Naroden Sport" N° 983, issued on September 4th 1953, published an article dealing with the life-story of the junior middle-weight Boxing Champion : Athanase Takev, who is "Travailleur de choc" in the large chemical works "Staline." The ambition of this young workman is to prove to his fellow-workers that activity in sport can be run in perfect harmony with the discharge of professional duties and that efficiency in sport achievement can synchronize with mastery and proficiency in one's professional work.

Another striking example is the life of Master in Sports Nicolas Dagorov who is national hop, step and jump Champion and who, after having beaten 8 times running the national record, is now classed amongst the best performers in Europe. He reached distinction as a medical student and is now working in the Institute where Doctors follow perfecting courses as well as go in for specialization, this Institute is accessible to very highly qualified subjects only.

As well as this let us mention the case of the 5 oarsmen in the International class : Youroukov, Zachariev, Jalamov, Salim and Dikov who are at the same time employed as "Travailleurs de choc" in the Danubian port of Svichtov.

Another example is shown by the case of the football team of the factory N° 12. This team is entirely composed of "Travailleurs de choc". It is heading the list of the republican football group "B".

The Master in Sports of basket ball : Konstantin Totev who is well known abroad, is a highly qualified architect, etc., etc.

The title of "Travailleur de choc" is however not easy to obtain as only men possessing outstanding qualities receive it. It should be our turn to spill ink on this subject with a view to give a synopsis, however brief, of the lives of our sportsmen of established reputation. It may be that the solicitude and interest taken by the Peoples' Government towards sport in general and sportsmen in particular, as being recognized facts may create the wrong impression. One asks oneself however if it is not just and fair to reward those who, at the cost of strenuous efforts have reached the summit in the sphere of social activity of any description be it on the economical or cultural order ? Is it not fair to reward those who by their splendid example lead to the road of perfection the masses of countless urban and country workers ?

An honorary title is bestowed on the Bulgarian sportsman as a reward for accomplishing certain exploits. This distinction is only gained through merit. The sportsman may spend hours of pleasant recreation at the Master in Sports' club. This club is specially equipped to provide him with most of the cultural facilities which he needs. The athlete is submitted to a periodical medical control. *He is not afraid to forego his earnings when requested to take part in a sport manifestation.*

This type of solicitude may be looked upon as a moral reward which is the expression on one hand of the esteem society entertains towards the athlete in question, while on the other hand it acts as an incentive to all those who follow in the track trodden before them by their famous predecessors. But our champions are fully aware that this honorary title puts them under an obligation as well as is a cause to be proud of. The public never holds in esteem a champion who is vain and prides himself on his records and who is carried away with his successes to the extent of shunning his obligations towards work.

This demonstrates the moral aspect of our social life. Let us give everybody his due ! This is also true with regard to Amateurism which is qualified with blame and contempt by some people as "State-Amateurism."

How many needless arguments and unpleasant words could be avoided were the imputations founded on an impartial basis and the criticism subjected to such a strict objective "self examination" before being uttered !