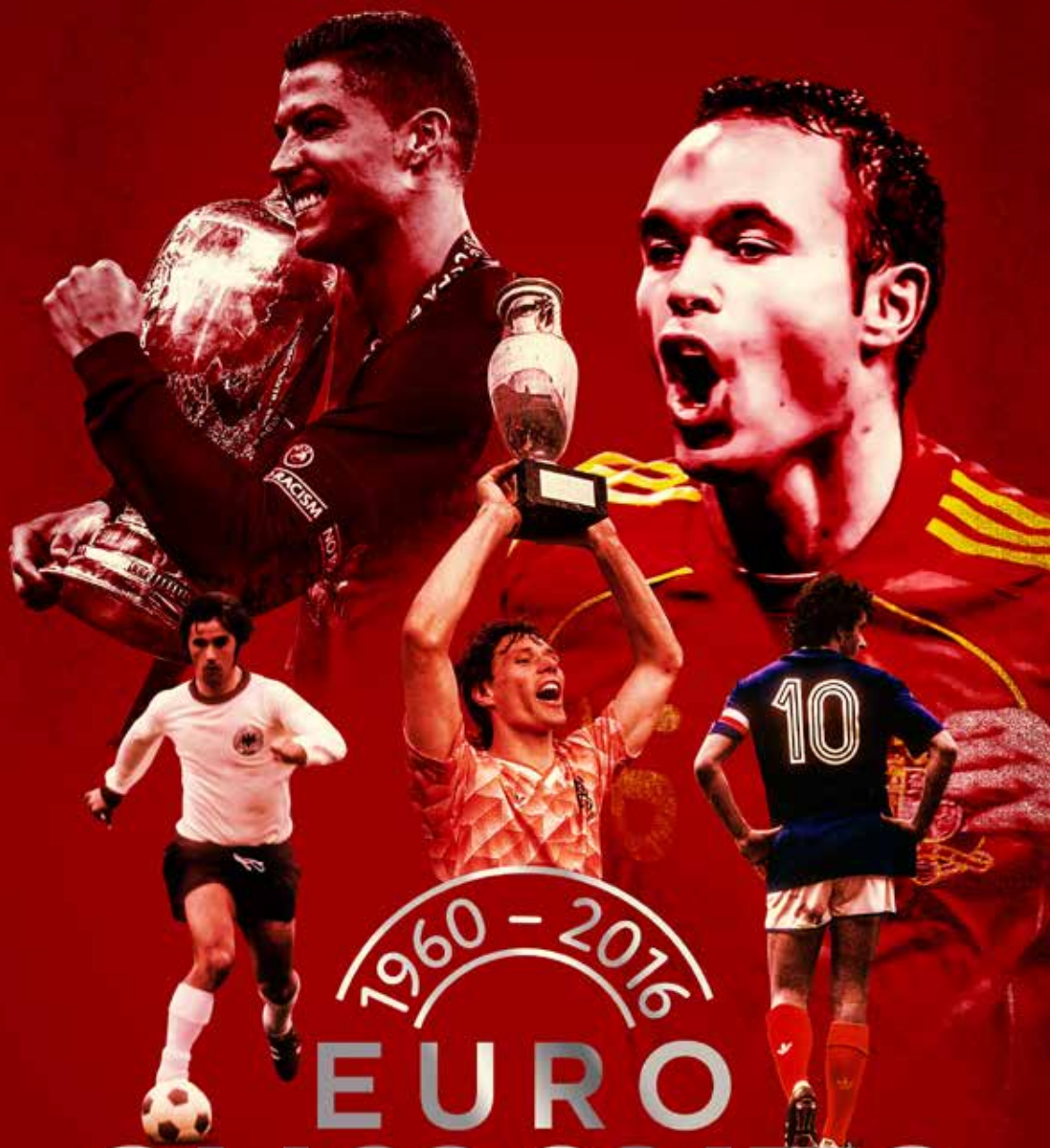


JONATHAN O'BRIEN



1960 - 2016

EURO SUMMITS

THE STORY OF THE
UEFA EUROPEAN
CHAMPIONSHIP

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1960

BY THE time the first ball of the European Championship was finally kicked on a September Sunday afternoon in Moscow, the man whose imagination and hard work made it possible had been dead for almost three years. Henri Delaunay passed away on 9 November 1955 from a terminal illness at the age of 72, never getting to see the culmination of his decades of assiduous work. His son Pierre took over as UEFA general secretary, first as a caretaker, then on a permanent basis.

The European Nations' Cup being stuck in development hell for more than three decades wasn't just down to the horrors of the Second World War and its aftershocks. Even after the June 1954 formation of UEFA, many of Europe's footballing powerhouses showed little interest in entering anything that wasn't the World Cup. But in the wake of Delaunay's death, his son redoubled his efforts to get the Euros off the starting blocks. The idea had already been floated at the Vienna congress the previous March. As a compromise, it was agreed that that most European of things, a commission, should be set up to examine the idea and run the rule over its workability.

At UEFA's second congress in Lisbon in July 1956, Pierre Delaunay gave it another go. His arguments were met with well-rehearsed opposition. Those against the idea pointed out that nationalistic tensions were still running high barely a decade after the end of the war; that the fixture calendar was already quite crowded; and that European football didn't need extra commercialisation. The first point was valid, the second debatable, the third laughably self-serving even then. The proposal failed to win a majority vote.

By the time of the next congress, in Copenhagen in July 1957, Pierre Delaunay had drawn up new proposals which entailed a streamlined qualifying process followed by a small four-team tournament in the summer of 1960. Still it wasn't enough; even Delaunay senior's old ally Ottorino Barassi came out against it. Accounts differ as to the breakdown of the voting. UEFA's

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own official history says the proposal got 15 yes votes, seven no votes, four abstentions and one ballot paper left blank. Another source has it at 14 for yes, seven for no and five abstentions (including all the British associations).

But in Stockholm a year later, on the eve of the 1958 World Cup, the dam burst. After another ballot produced the same number of yes votes, president Ebbe Schwartz settled the matter after lunch by announcing that it was time to plough ahead. The draw for the qualifying round was held two days later at Stockholm's Foresta Hotel.

For a while, it looked as though there wouldn't be enough participants for the competition to be feasible. The consensus was that 16 teams were needed to make it happen, and uptake was so slow that UEFA was forced to extend the registration deadline by four months. Some arm-twisting ensued behind the scenes before a sudden torrent of late entrants ensued. Seventeen countries went into the hat, almost perfectly split between the western and eastern halves of the continent (nine to eight).

West Germany, Italy, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland all gave it a miss. The blazers of British football, insular to the toejam in their socks, had told UEFA in 1957 that they wanted no part of this strange new tournament, worried that it would interfere with the Home Internationals. The West Germans' reluctance had a similarly self-interested motivation behind it: their manager Sepp Herberger felt that playing in a second international tournament would take a huge physical toll on his players, and that the World Cup was enough for now. He should have been careful what he wished for. In June 1962, West Germany fell to a surprise 1-0 defeat by Yugoslavia in the World Cup quarter-final in Santiago, having played only four competitive games since 1958.

When all the horse-trading was over, the dawn of the competition was witnessed on 28 September 1958 at the Lenina Stadion in Moscow, where 100,572 people – still the third-biggest attendance in the competition's history – turned up to see the USSR beat a Hungarian team who were a sad shadow of what they'd been a few short years earlier.

The very first goal of the European Championship was tucked away after just four minutes by Anatoliy Ilyin, who robbed Hungarian sweeper Ferenc Sipos in the box and shot past goalkeeper Béla Bakó (this distinction is often wrongly credited to Ireland's Liam Tuohy, who headed the opening goal in the preliminary round against Czechoslovakia – a fixture that didn't take place until April 1959). Newspaper *Soviet Sport* reported, 'The game was very beautiful, very tense until the last second, and perfectly correct. In short, it was a meeting of true friends.' A full 364 days elapsed before the second leg in Budapest, which the USSR won 1-0 before another massive crowd.

Many of the first-round games were little more than exhibition matches. France's meeting with Greece was a 7-1 cakewalk; Spain swept Poland aside in Chorzów, Alfredo Di Stéfano and Luis Suárez both scoring twice; and Norway were hit for five in Vienna by the remnants of Austria's fine early-1950s team. The only surprise came when a Mário Coluna-inspired Portugal overcame East Germany in East Berlin. In a good sign for the event's viability, there were some huge attendances: the aforementioned 100,572 in Moscow, 78,481 in Budapest, 71,469 in Chorzów, 67,200 in Bucharest, 62,070 in Madrid. People were clearly interested in this new tournament, even if they weren't sure how seriously to take it.

The 1960 European Nations' Cup is effectively unique in footballing history for having only three quarter-finals, thanks to the full-metal-jacket paranoia of Francisco Franco, the deranged despot who other deranged despots called The Guv'nor. When Spain came out of the hat with the USSR in December 1959, the Soviets began clearing the decks for the grudge match, gathering their squad together to spend the spring of 1960 playing preparatory friendlies. One of their top officials, Andrei Starostin, was officially censured by the Kremlin for the mistake of praising the technical qualities of Spain's team in an interview (Starostin may have felt a shiver run down his spine, having spent time in the Norillag labour camp during the Second World War).

The Soviet squad was based at a sports complex owned by the Communist Party, just outside Moscow. Manager Gavriil Kachalin, having learned that his incomparable goalkeeper Lev Yashin was feeling tense, ordered the young striker Viktor Ponedelnik to take the big man out to a nearby lake for a fishing expedition to calm his nerves. 'It became a ritual,' said Ponedelnik. 'Whichever country we were playing in, we both went fishing.' In Yashin, a bona fide colossus whose force of personality matched his athletic abilities, the USSR possessed not just the greatest keeper in the world, but possibly the era's greatest player full stop.

There may have been good reasons for Yashin's anxiety. 'Even if there was an air of freedom under Khrushchev after Stalin died,' said Ponedelnik, 'we were being watched all the time. There was a spy in the team. Lev unmasked him and we warned the others. Everything went on as if nothing had happened. Do not expect me to condemn it now!'

On 18 May 1960, Real Madrid annihilated Eintracht Frankfurt 7-3 in the European Cup Final in Glasgow. The following day, Spain's selection committee of Ramón Gabilondo, José Luis Lasplazas and José Luis Costa were in Moscow to watch the USSR inflict similar punishment on Poland in a friendly, winning 7-1. The latter result concentrated minds in Madrid.

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Franco was already unnerved by the propaganda implications of 'his' team losing to godless Bolsheviks (the USSR had funded the republican side during the Spanish Civil War, and the two countries had no diplomatic ties). Now he got wind of inaccurate reports that a sizeable contingent of Soviets would attend the first leg in Madrid. This, plus the thought of the USSR anthem playing and flag flying at the Bernabéu, was too much for El Caudillo. On 25 May, he instructed RFEF president Alfonso de la Fuente Chaos (sic), to tell Spain's players that they were withdrawing from the tournament. 'Orders from above,' the bureaucrat said. 'We're not going to Moscow. Franco said so.'

Even at the time, Franco's behaviour seemed risible. After all, Spain had been happy to play Poland, another communist state, in the previous round. The real reason was that while Poland were a weak opponent, the USSR were anything but.

It would emerge that Franco's handpicked successor, Luis Carrero Blanco, and another influential minister, Camilo Alonso Vega, were bending his ear. Both men were irreversibly opposed to the idea of Soviet athletes setting foot on Spanish soil at all. UEFA had no choice but to award the USSR two walkovers, home and away, so they went into the semi-finals without kicking a ball. Spain were fined by the governing body but, astonishingly, received no other punishment.

The USSR Football Federation, when they had stopped laughing, put out a statement accusing Franco of trying to please 'his US imperialist owners', while Nikita Khrushchev sneered, 'The whole world is laughing at Franco's latest trick. From his position as the right-sided defender of American prestige, he has scored an own goal.' The Soviet players saw it differently. 'It was a huge disappointment,' said Ponedelnik. 'We really wanted to compete with them. All the tickets had been sold. What a pity!'

Could Spain have won the whole thing if their dictator hadn't interfered? Hard to say. They had Alfredo Di Stéfano, the greatest outfield player of the era, and Ladislao Kubala, Luis Suárez and Paco Gento, who weren't far behind him. On the other hand, the opponents they chickened out of facing were one of the most formidable national teams in Europe; hardly any guarantees there. More to the point, Spain hadn't even managed to qualify for the recent World Cup in Sweden. And their bottom-of-the-group finish in Chile in 1962 would confirm that it was useless having wonderful players in your squad if you couldn't mould them into a cohesive team.

Years after the event, right-back Feliciano Rivilla recalled how he and his team-mates waited on tenterhooks for word to come back from El Pardo, Franco's hunting-lodge headquarters. 'We wanted to go to the USSR because we couldn't go,' he said. 'When human beings are told they can't do

something, it makes them want to even more. We were left all dressed up with nowhere to go.'

And then there were seven. But while all this was going on, Pierre Delaunay's career had been blown off course. Working as general secretary on a voluntary basis from his office at 22 Rue de Londres in Paris, he was effectively sidelined in December 1959 when UEFA's general assembly voted in favour of moving its operations to Bern in Switzerland.

His work was, however, recognised with a seat on the executive committee, as well as the responsibility of overseeing the design of the new competition's trophy. A stately silver sculpture, 19in tall and weighing 6kg with engravings inspired by ancient Greek vases, it was created by Parisian silversmith Adrien Chobillon for jewellery firm Arthus-Bertrand. As Ebbe Schwartz had announced at the Stockholm congress, the trophy would bear the name of Delaunay's father.

QUARTER-FINALS

France v Austria

Portugal v Yugoslavia

Romania v Czechoslovakia

USSR v Spain (walkover awarded to USSR)

France had just fired seven goals past Greece, and their hot streak wasn't over yet. They were fragile but fearsome, their line-up full of firepower, with the two biggest guns being Just Fontaine, the 1958 World Cup's top scorer, and Raymond Kopa, winner of three consecutive European Cups with Real Madrid. The pair roomed together but barely knew each other personally, due to Kopa keeping his wristwatch on Spanish time and going to bed much later than Fontaine. They enjoyed a better understanding on the field.

Manager Albert Batteux could also call on Lucien Muller, whose languid talents had already attracted the burdensome tag of 'le petit Kopa' and would later get him an ill-fated transfer to Real Madrid. Some of France's defenders were noticeably long in the tooth, but they could outgun most opponents and they had little trouble beating Austria 5-2 at the Stade de Colombes.

Fontaine's first and second goals were both nerveless finishes into the corner when clean through on the left. He sealed his hat-trick by dribbling around Austrian goalkeeper Kurt Schmied and thumping the ball past two defenders on the line. Earlier, Jean Vincent capitalised on Karl Koller's dithering in the six-yard box to bury the third goal, and he rounded off the scoring with another tap-in when Schmied and Muller collided under the bar. Austria had briefly got it back to 3-2 with close-

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range goals from Walter Horak and Rudolf Pichler, the latter after Horst Nemec slalomed through midfield, but Austria's generosity had left them with too much to do.

Three and a half months went by before the second leg, by which time both teams looked very different. Austria made seven changes, France five (poor Fontaine had broken his leg while playing for Stade de Reims), but the outcome was the same: dodgy defending exposed by sharp forwards.

Nemec gave Austria an undeserved half-time lead, after which normal service was resumed. Jean-Jacques Marcel trotted up to the edge of the Austrian box without encountering a challenge, saw his shot blocked by a defender, but gobbled up the rebound and stroked it past the slow-diving Rudolf Szanwald. Then Pierre Grillet got the better of the great but ageing Gerhard Hanappi on the right wing and sent over a looping cross which Bernard Rahis headed home.

Erich Probst, one of the stars of the 1954 World Cup, equalised with the best goal of the tie, a smooth finish to round off an attractive move involving Giuseppe Koschier, Paul Kozlicek and Nemec. But Austria couldn't deal with Kopa's clever runs and sparkling passes, and he gave François Heutte a clear sight of goal which was tucked away. When Heutte then strolled past three Austrians, Erich Hasenkopf took his legs away before he could shoot; Kopa put the penalty just inside the left-hand post, more like a pass than a shot.

With France's forwards averaging more than four goals a game, their defensive shakiness didn't matter for now. In time, however, they would be exposed as multimillionaires in a discontinued currency.



It was the same story in the second quarter-final, as Yugoslavian talent swept aside limited opponents. Though not quite that limited. Portugal were blessed with two fantastic players: the supernaturally calm centre-half Germano de Figueiredo, who was about to join Benfica for £2,000 (a tiny sum even in 1960), and the Mozambican inside-left Mário Coluna, who was already there and on the way to becoming one of their greatest players. In the first leg in Lisbon, Portugal spent long periods under the cosh, undeservedly winning 2-1 with two opportunistic goals from Joaquim Santana and another Mozambican, Matateu. The fair-haired Bora Kostić's well-struck effort near the end was scant reward for all Yugoslavia's pressure.

Most people expected the natural order to be restored in Belgrade a fortnight later. They were right. Yugoslavia overran Portugal, even with Germano working overtime. Domiciano Cavém's first-half equaliser, struck hard on the run, was a false dawn: it ended 5-1, and the pick of the goals

was Kostić's spectacular right-footed hammer into the top corner. Portugal's moment in the sun would come – powered by an extraordinary player who was even better than anybody Yugoslavia had – but not for another five or six years.



With ice-blue eyes and a blinding smile, Vlastimil Bubník was a visually striking man. He was also a world-class athlete, holding down a place in both Czechoslovakia's football squad and its ice hockey team. He would win a bronze medal at the 1964 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, and was enough of a natural with the puck to be admitted into the sport's International Hall of Fame in 1997.

Against Romania in Bucharest, Bubník showed how good he was with a round ball at his feet. His running in midfield drove Czechoslovakia to an easy 2-0 victory, and he grabbed the second goal with a fine run and drive, after Josef Masopust clipped home the first from 12 yards. The likes of Masopust (who would be named European Footballer of the Year in 1962), Bubník and the stylish sweeper Ján Popluhár were too good for a Romanian team who had struggled to get past the Turks in the previous round.

A week later in Bratislava, against an inexperienced Romanian team (73 caps between the lot of them), Czechoslovakia put the game to bed inside 20 minutes. Titus Buberník scored five times for his country, and all of them came in the qualifiers of this tournament. His two goals here were easy meat, both knocked in from close range, and the irrepressible Bubník grabbed another. Czechoslovakia eased off after that, to Romania's relief.

So UEFA's new baby now had its completed line-up of semi-finalists. The quartet had a heavily Slavic flavour to it – three east European teams out of four – but the one exception had home advantage.

2.30pm, 13 December 1959

Stade Olympique de Colombes, Paris

Attendance: 43,775

Referee: Manuel Martín Asensi (Spain)

FRANCE 5 (Fontaine 7, 18, 70, Vincent 38, 82)

AUSTRIA 2 (Horak 40, Pichler 65)

FRANCE: Georges Lamia, Jean Wendling, Robert 'Bob' Jonquet, Roger Marche (c), Armand Penverne, René Ferrier, François Heutte, Lucien Muller, Just Fontaine, Raymond Kopa, Jean Vincent. **Manager:** Albert Batteux.

AUSTRIA: Kurt Schmied, Paul Halla, Karl Nickerl, Gerhard Hanappi (c), Karl Stotz, Karl Koller, Walter Horak, Helmut Senekowitsch, Horst Nemeč, Rudolf Pichler, Karl Höfer. **Manager:** Karl Decker.

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3pm, 27 March 1960

Praterstadion, Vienna

Attendance: 39,229

Referee: Leo Helge (Denmark)

AUSTRIA 2 (Nemec 26, Probst 64)

FRANCE 4 (Marcel 46, Rahis 59, Heutte 77, Kopa 83 pen)

AUSTRIA: Rudolf Szanwald, Johann Windisch, Erich Hasenkopf, Hanappi (c), Giuseppe, 'Giose' Koschier, Koller, Horak, Paul Kozlicek, Nemec, Wilhelm Huberts, Erich Probst.

FRANCE: Lamia, Wendling, Raymond Kaelbel, Bruno Rodzik, Jean-Jacques Marcel, Ferrier, Pierre Grillet, Muller, Heutte, Kopa (c), Bernard Rahis.

3pm, 8 May 1960

Estádio Nacional, Lisbon

Attendance: 39,978

Referee: Joseph Barbéran (France)

PORTUGAL 2 (Santana 30, Matateu 70)

YUGOSLAVIA 1 (Kostić 81)

PORTUGAL: Acúrcio Carrelo, Virgílio Mendes (c), Ângelo Martins, Fernando Mendes, Germano de Figueiredo, David Abraão Júlio, Hernâni Ferreira, Joaquim Santana, Sebastião Lucas 'Matateu', Mário Coluna, Domiciano Cavém. **Manager:** José María Antunes.

YUGOSLAVIA: Milutin Šoškić, Vladimir Durković, Fahrudin Jusufi, Ante Žanetić, Tomislav Crnković (c), Željko Perušić, Muhamed Mujić, Milan Galić, Branko Zebec, Dragoslav Šekularac, Bora Kostić. **Managers:** Ljubomir Lovrić, Aleksandar Tirnanić and Dragomir Nikolić.

4pm, 22 May 1960

JNA Stadion, Belgrade

Attendance: 43,000

Referee: Alfred Stoll (Austria)

YUGOSLAVIA 5 (Šekularac 8, Čebinac 45, Kostić 50, 88, Galić 79)

PORTUGAL 1 (Cavém 29)

YUGOSLAVIA: Šoškić, Durković, Jusufi, Žanetić, Žarko Nikolić, Perušić, Zvezdan Čebinac, Tomislav Knez, Galić, Šekularac, Kostić (c).

PORTUGAL: Acúrcio, Virgílio, Mário João Sousa, Mendes (c), Germano, David Júlio, Hernâni, Santana, Matateu, Coluna, Cavém.

3pm, 22 May 1960

Stadionul 23 August, Bucharest

Attendance: 61,306

Referee: Andor Dorogi (Hungary)

ROMANIA 0

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 2 (Masopust 8, Bubník 45)

ROMANIA: Petre Mîndru, Cornel Popa, Alexandru Apolzan (c), Valeriu Soare, Imre Jenei, Ion Nunweiller, Emanoil Hașoti, Gavril Raksi, Viorel Mateianu, Haralambie Eftimie, Nicolae Tătaru. **Manager:** Augustin Botescu.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Imrich Stacho, Jozef Bomba, Ján Popluhár, Ladislav Novák (c), Titus Buberník, Josef Masopust, Ladislav Pavlovič, Josef Vojta, Andrej Kvašňák, Vlastimil Bubník, Milan Dolinský. **Manager:** Rudolf Vytačil.

4.30pm, 29 May 1960
Tehelné Pole, Bratislava
Attendance: 31,057
Referee: Leif Gulliksen (Norway)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 3 (Buberník 1, 15, Bubník 18)
ROMANIA 0

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Viliam Schrojč, Bomba, Popluhár, Novák (c), Buberník, Masopust, Pavlovič, Vojta, Kvašňák, Bubník, Dolinský.

ROMANIA: Mîndru, Popa, Alexandru Fronea, Soare, Vasile Alexandru, Nunweiller, Gheorghe Cacoveanu, Gheorghe Constantin, Mateianu, Constantin Dinulescu, Tătaru (c).

SEMI-FINALS

France v Yugoslavia

USSR v Czechoslovakia

At the dawn of the 1960s, foreign travel wasn't so much a rarity for most people as an exotic concept from the pages of a spy novel. Especially if you happened to come from one of the three communist countries which had qualified for the first European Nations' Cup finals.

Yugoslavia's squad spent 28 hours on a train before reaching Paris. When they pulled in at the Gare de Lyon, they found that their hosts had failed to arrange transport to their hotel, forcing them to walk another kilometre with their luggage. But the Yugoslavs wasted little time in immersing themselves in the local *joie de vivre*, *esprit de corps* and *soup du jour*, spending a happy evening at the Moulin Rouge.

France themselves were without their entire forward line from the 1958 World Cup. We've already heard about Fontaine's broken leg; Kopa too was injured; and Roger Piantoni's wrecked knee put him out for nearly a year. Moreover, there was a general lack of big-game experience in the side, with only three survivors from the World Cup. Batteux threw Roby Herbin and Michel Stievenard in at the deep end for their international debuts, and a farcical 17-1 win over provincial side Oise three days earlier was no preparation for facing a team like Yugoslavia.

Batteux had one other problem, in goal. The debonair *pied-noir* Georges Lamia, who sported a pencil moustache and an eye-catching striped jersey, was known to be a flawed keeper and the only alternative was the uncapped 22-year-old Jean Taillandier. In the event, Lamia would have the worst night of his career, bearing varying degrees of responsibility for each of Yugoslavia's five goals.

Both sides traded goals in the opening stages. After 11 minutes, Galić scored with an opportunistic curler which caught Lamia off his line. And within 60 seconds, Vincent's tantalising cross from the left went all the way in. Maryan Wisnieski strained and failed to connect with it, but tried to claim it anyway.

The Parc des Princes was barely half-full, but those present were in good voice, and France – playing in red shirts, as Yugoslavia had been named as the 'home' team – soon got on top. Just before half-time, Heutte's rising drive from the edge of the box flew past the startled Milutin Šoškić. Eight minutes after the break, another Vincent cross fed Wisnieski, whose finish was decisive for 3-1.

But Yugoslavia, with Dragan Šekularac in lambent form, pulled one back in ridiculous fashion when Lamia somehow allowed Ante Žanetić's cross from the byline to drift past him at the near post, like a preview of Amarildo's goal for Brazil in the World Cup Final two years later. Unfazed, France simply strolled upfield and scored again. Lucien Muller's pass came off Branko Zebec; Šoškić and his defenders all froze, assuming Heutte was offside, and he put away the chance after initially hesitating. 'I was so surprised to find myself alone in front of goal,' said the striker years later. 'Jean Vincent had to yell at me to knock it in.' The rotund referee Gaston Grandain, owner of a 'Hitchcockian belly' in the words of one French newspaper report, ignored Yugoslavia's protests.

Cruising at 4-2 with a quarter of an hour left, France now experienced a staggering *bouleversement*, with the roof falling in as they conceded three awful goals in four minutes. First, a long cross found Tomislav Knez unmarked at the far post: he shot straight at Lamia, who allowed it to squeeze home. Then, after a stylish Yugoslavian move down the left, Lamia dropped Kostić's shot for Dražan Jerković to knee it over the line (the French claimed handball, but Grandain said no). His nerves now in tatters, Lamia gifted Yugoslavia their winner moments later, failing to hold Knez's shot before Jerković tapped it in.

Like Albert Camus, Lamia was an Algerian-born goalkeeper, and it's probably safe to surmise that plenty of people were wishing a plague on all his houses after this horror show. 'Lamia assassine l'équipe de France,' howled the headline of a double-page photographic spread of his blunders in *Football Magazine*. In *France Football*, Jacques Ferran was no more forgiving, writing that 'on Wednesday he didn't make one mistake, or two, or three; his biggest error was simply to be there'.

A disbelieving Batteux lamented, 'At 4-2, I would have bet all my money that we'd be in the final.' More than half a century later, Lucien Muller

spoke up in qualified defence of his old colleague, 'Pffff, when a keeper lets in a goal, it's always his fault. It was a collective failure. But in the last 20 minutes, he lost his mind.'

The first game in the European Championship finals is still its highest-scoring match ever. It's also the worst collapse in French footballing history, Bulgaria 1993 be damned. Šekularac's recollections of it were more rose-tinted. 'Do I remember that match? To this day, I dream about it,' he sighed. 'I took part in one of the best games in the history of football.'

The second semi-final wasn't a patch on the first. Czechoslovakia would reach the World Cup final two years later, and five of that team played here – but the USSR were just too far ahead, not only on technical ability but also the amount of work they put in. They were based in Chantilly, but there weren't many frills about this squad of strapping specimens.

The day before the game, manager Kachalin brought his squad on a trip to the island of If, just off the Mediterranean coast. The players loved it, most of them having read the Alexandre Dumas novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* (whose protagonist was imprisoned there) during their schooldays. Full-back Vladimir Kesarev was hit by appendicitis that evening, but the Georgian Givi Chokheli came in and enjoyed the smoothest international debut he could have wished for.

The opening stages at the Vélodrome were a fast-paced mess ('The ball was a frequent guest of the penalty areas of both teams,' noted one Russian account of the match), and both Viliam Schrojf and Yashin had to save well in one-on-ones from Valentin Ivanov and Bubník respectively. But once the USSR got their noses in front, it was all over. Ivanov prodded in from close range after Schrojf blocked at Ponedelnik's feet, and his second goal was quite brilliant: a twisting run through Czechoslovakia's defence, a jink inside the goalkeeper's dive, a finish belted into an open net.

For number three, the balding Valentin Bubukin's shot cannoned off a defender and Ponedelnik forced in the rebound. A minute later, the Czechoslovaks were thrown a lifeline by Slava Metreveli's handball in the box, but Josef Vojta's penalty trundled wide. Czechoslovakia had been blown away by superior firepower. 'We had Yashin,' reflected Ponedelnik. 'The credit for the win went to him. For the Czechoslovakians, it was like being up against God, and ultimately it gave them an inferiority complex.'

'[The Soviets] were better than us,' said a chastened Masopust. 'They had already adopted a kind of professionalism in their preparation, whereas in our country, everybody had other jobs.' That extra edge, already apparent, would make the difference in the final too.

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8pm, 6 July 1960

Parc des Princes, Paris

Attendance: 26,370

Referee: Gaston Grandain (Belgium)

YUGOSLAVIA 5 (Galić 11, Žanetić 55, Knez 75, Jerković 78, 79)

FRANCE 4 (Vincent 12, Heutte 43, 63, Wisnieski 53)

YUGOSLAVIA: Šoškić, Durković, Jusufi, Žanetić, Zebec (c), Perušić, Knez, Dražan Jerković, Galić, Šekularac, Kostić.

FRANCE: Lamia, Wendling, Rodzik, Marcel, Ferrier, Michel Stievenard, Roby Herbin, Muller, Maryan Wisnieski, Heutte, Vincent (c).

9.30pm, 6 July 1960

Stade Vélodrome, Marseille

Attendance: 25,184

Referee: Cesare Jonni (Italy)

USSR 3 (Ivanov 34, 56, Ponedelnik 66)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 0

USSR: Lev Yashin, Givi Chokheli, Anatoly Maslyonkin, Anatoly Krutikov, Yuri Voinov, Igor Netto (c), Slava Metreveli, Valentin Ivanov, Viktor Ponedelnik, Valentin Bubukin, Mikheil Meskhi.

Manager: Gavriil Kachalin.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Schrojf, František Šafránek, Popluhár, Novák (c), Bubník, Masopust, Vojta, Anton Moravčík, Kvašňák, Bubník, Dolinský.

THIRD-PLACE PLAY-OFF France v Czechoslovakia

The disintegration against Yugoslavia knocked the stuffing out of France's fans as well as their team. Fewer than 10,000 turned up for an undistinguished third-place match at the Vélodrome, and weren't happy that Batteux picked a weakened line-up; some in the crowd vocally demanded a refund. Czechoslovakia, faced with an 'équipe fantomatique', a team of ghosts, played well within themselves to win.

Other than Schrojf catching a looping shot under his bar, little of note occurred for the first hour. Then Bubník beat the flat cap-wearing debutant keeper Jean Taillandier with a daisy-cutter from Ladislav Novák's centre, to the displeasure of the grizzled-looking chain-smokers in the crowd. The veteran Bob Jonquet, back after missing the semi-final, slipped badly as the cross came over; no way for such a good player to take his leave from international football after 58 caps. In the final minutes, Ladislav Pavlovič wrapped up the win with a soft, angled shot which passed easily through Taillandier (no improvement on Lamia) at the near post. 'My men were not good,' said Czechoslovakia's manager Rudolf Vytlačil afterwards, 'but I'm especially disappointed to have seen France play so badly.'

6pm, 9 July 1960
 Stade Vélodrome, Marseille
 Attendance: 9,438
 Referee: Cesare Jonni (Italy)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 2 (Bubník 58, Pavlovič 88)
FRANCE 0

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Schrojf, Šafránek, Popluhár, Novák (c), Buberník, Masopust, Ladislav Pavlovič, Vojta, Pavol Molnár, Bubník, Dolinský.

FRANCE: Jean Taillandier, Rodzik, Jonquet (c), André Chorda, Marcel, Robert Siatka, Stievenard, Yvon Douis, Wisnieski (c), Heutte, Vincent.

FINAL

USSR v Yugoslavia

All the USSR's fixtures in the competition so far had come packaged in layers of political intrigue: the walkover against Franco's Spain, the easy wins over their unhappy satellites Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The final would be no exception.

In 1948, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform, the Soviet-dominated grouping of communist parties. For the next 12 years, its leader Josip Broz Tito followed his own political path, infuriating Stalin, who might well have invaded the country had he not died in 1953. Would it be Moscow's way or Belgrade's way? Everyone was going to find out, if not in the boardroom of the Coninform, then at least on the playing fields of Paris.

Once again, the attendance was dishearteningly low, with fewer than 18,000 turning up at the Parc des Princes. 'Crowds in France wanted western European glamour, not mysterious teams from the other side of Europe,' noted Šekularac years later. Televising the match live on the day didn't help. Nor did the bad weather.

Yugoslavia's selection committee changed their goalkeeper, bringing in Blagoje Vidinić (a trained opera singer who would later manage Zaire at the 1974 World Cup) after an eye problem deprived Šoškić of sleep. They also gambled by handing an international debut to midfielder Željko Matuš. And their team made all the early running.

Before long, Yashin got down smartly to save two free kicks by Kostić. But he was a spectator when Šekularac whipped a shot just beyond the angle of post and bar, following a slick Yugoslavian move. Šekularac looked the best player on the field in the first half, at the heart of everything good his team did. With Soviet captain Igor Netto playing in a deeper role than normal to guard against the pace of Bora Kostić, the USSR looked stretched.

Yugoslavia's pressure deserved a goal. Before the break, they scored a messy one. Jerković kept the ball in play as Anatoly Maslyonkin stopped to

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appeal for a throw-in, then sent in a low cross which was diverted in at the near post, past a wrong-footed Yashin. The flickery old black-and-white footage doesn't prove conclusively whether it went in off Milan Galić's head, or his knee, or some other part of his anatomy – or indeed off Netto, who was marking him. But let's give the benefit of the doubt to the attacker, as we're always being told to. It was an unusual lapse by Netto, a colossus of Italian descent who was one of the best players in the world.

Half-time came at a serendipitous moment for the Soviets. Their former defender Boris Kuznetsov, who had played in the 1958 World Cup and was present with the squad, knew a little bit about shoemaking and took the opportunity to put spikes in the soles of their boots, to help them better negotiate the soggy surface. Within minutes of the restart, they were handed an undeserved equaliser. Bubukin ambled forward and struck a moderate left-footer from 25 yards, Vidinić fumbled it, and Metreveli reached the loose ball first to tap in from a narrow angle.

The goal seemed to demoralise Yugoslavia, and referee Arthur Ellis then showed remarkable leniency when Vidinić sent Ivanov flying with a professional foul. By today's footballing mores, an instant red card; in 1960, a free kick to the USSR 25 yards out and no more. Very late on, Metreveli's low cross-shot bobbed across the goalmouth, Ponedelnik slid in but missed it, and it reached Ivanov, who stabbed wide from three yards. Extra time it would be.

Playing for an additional half-hour was a novelty back then, and despite the cooling effects of the rain, tiredness saw the game become stretched. The extended period also witnessed that rarest of collector's items, a Yashin howler. Coming out for a corner that he had little hope of getting, he was relieved to see Jerković's looping header go wide.

As the second half of extra time began, Yugoslavia spurned a golden chance. Žanetić put a low cross on a plate for Galić in the goalmouth, but the striker slumped wearily to his knees as the ball skidded tantalisingly past him, just like the lager-bloated Gazza against Germany at Wembley 36 years later.

A replay seemed near-certain, but with seven minutes to go, Ponedelnik succeeded where Galić had failed. The tireless Ivanov sent a cross into the danger area, where the exhausted Yugoslav defenders left Ponedelnik unattended ('Jovan Miladinović had sucked my blood for 90 minutes, but he could do no more'). With Vidinić stranded, he rose to head it back across and into the corner.

'I didn't see how the ball went into the goal, but as soon as I headed it, a defender pushed me off my feet, and I fell down into that mud,' Ponedelnik recalled. 'Everything was wet. I couldn't see anything.' This is contradicted

by the footage, which shows him toppling over with no defender near him, but never mind.

Ponedelnik's surname was also the Russian word for Monday. And while it was Sunday evening in Paris, it was almost 1am in Moscow when his goal hit the back of the net. 'Ponedelnik zabivaet v Ponedelnik' blared the newspaper headlines back home, Monday scores on Monday. 'Against the USSR, we've never had luck,' Šekularac lamented. 'The Russians, at times during the match, were totally inferior. But Ponedelnik showed no mercy.'

After the Soviets survived a goalmouth scramble at the death, Ellis blew for time to give them their first and last international trophy. In the confusion, Yashin's cap was stolen by someone who had run on to the pitch.

The Soviet players went out on the town in Paris until the sun came up. Midfielder Yuri Voinov recalled, 'We were given a bonus – something like 400 francs. But to sit in a Paris café with a glass of wine was enough. We didn't drink much. We were drunk on victory.'

Ponedelnik said, 'The bosses were concerned and very embarrassed. No one expected this win, so no one had arranged bonuses. When we got the money, it made us laugh. We took it and we moved on. We didn't have anything like that [nightlife] in Moscow. It was all dark at night. No bars, no clubs. Nobody went out. Everyone was like mice in their houses. So that night was something out of a fairytale. And they said that, back in Moscow, there wasn't one dark window. When they told us that, we literally had tears in our eyes.'

The next day, covetous Spanish eyes sized up the USSR's squad while they were feted at a reception in a restaurant near the Eiffel Tower. After receiving a tip-off, Real Madrid chairman Santiago Bernabéu walked in and offered contracts to five players on the spot. He would have had more chance of signing Dmitri Shostakovich. 'He was ready to buy half of our team, with no hesitation,' said Ponedelnik. 'Yashin, Ivanov, Netto, Metreveli and myself. We avoided the conversation. We said we had contracts with our clubs, even though there were none.'

The eventual victory parade in the Lenina Stadion drew a six-figure crowd. But in France itself, coverage was low-key: the next day's sports pages were dominated not by images of Netto lifting the Henri Delaunay Trophy, but by the appalling injuries sustained by French cyclist Roger Rivière when he plunged into a ravine during the Tour de France. *L'Équipe*, France's sporting bible, was left sufficiently cold by the new tournament to put its match report on page ten. German magazine *Das Sport* described the competition as 'a week of rain in Paris, with all the disappointments that sport usually brings', and predicted that the 'vexed issue' of fixture scheduling would remain a sticking point.

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So Europe had its first champions. A handful of concrete conclusions could be drawn: that the new event had a future, that its organisers would have to promote it far more comprehensively around the continent, that those who had sat it out might want to think again and that international football wasn't exactly redefining the art form in the summer of 1960.

The four matches drew a total of 76,949 spectators: nothing special, but enough to pay the bills. The TV deal with the European Broadcasting Union pulled in some more cash, and a razor-thin profit of 24,412 francs was announced, prompting warnings that future tournaments might be staged at a loss. But you've got to start somewhere, and what we now know as the UEFA European Championship had taken its first steps.

9.30pm, 10 July 1960

Parc des Princes, Paris

Attendance: 17,966

Referee: Arthur Ellis (England)

USSR 2 (Metreveli 49, Ponedelnik 113)

YUGOSLAVIA 1 (Galić 43)

After extra time

USSR: Yashin, Chokheli, Maslyonkin, Krutikov, Voinov, Netto (c), Metreveli, Ivanov, Ponedelnik, Bubukin, Meskhi.

YUGOSLAVIA: Blagoje Vidinić, Durković, Jusufi, Žanetić, Jovan Miladinović, Perušić, Željko Matuš, Jerković, Galić, Šekularac, Kostić (c).