

Essay

History of Political Culture - The Spirits of Edward Snowden: Global history of surveillance since 1900

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Lecturer: Dr. Clemens Six

## A serious game

*Surveillance through sports during the Cold War in the USA and the GDR*

By: Robert Feller - s2828030

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## Introduction

In 1983 football player Lutz Eigendorf crashed his car into a tree and died of his injuries two days later.<sup>1</sup> Eigendorf had been a star player of the East-German football team BFC Dynamo. Although successful, he defected to West Germany in 1979, much to the fury of Erich Mielke, who was both the director of Dynamo and minister of *Staatssicherheit* ("Stasi").<sup>2</sup> The Stasi started campaign *OV Rose* with the main purpose to undermine Eigendorf personally and professionally. His wife, who still lived in the GDR, divorced him (presumably under Stasi pressure) and married a Stasi agent who had been planted on her.<sup>3</sup> Whether the Stasi had a hand in his death is still disputed.

About twenty-five years earlier, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the American government feared a so-called "muscle gap". The American youth was perceived as too soft and therefore open to communist penetration. What was feared was that the new generation would not be able to uphold the "national heritage" of expansionism that had been built by the hard (white) men of previous generations.<sup>4</sup> Just as with the famous "missile gap", the Americans actively tried to close it; in this case by setting up several programs for physical education that were supposed to prepare the youth for US citizenship during the Cold War.

What these two, seemingly different, short histories show, is that both a capitalist, democratic country (the USA) and a socialist, dictatorial country (the GDR) resorted to controlling the world of sports as a means of influencing their societies during the Cold War. Sports and the Cold War actually seem to fit together perfectly. After all: sports allow countries to show their power and supremacy without actually resorting to violence.<sup>5</sup> In 1945, George Orwell referred to international sports and the Olympics as 'war minus the shooting.'<sup>6</sup> And to drive the metaphor a little further: sport is just as much about mobilizing an imagined (Anderson) *us*, and about competing, and eventually defeating, an imagined *them* on the (battle-) field.

George Orwell is well known for his writing on a sinister state-centred

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<sup>1</sup> Alan McDougall, *The People's Game: Football, State and Society in East Germany*. (Cambridge:

<sup>2</sup> Mike Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle': The Stasi and East German Elite Sport", *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29.18 (2012): 2565.

<sup>3</sup> McDougall, *The People's Game*, 124.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews, *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*. (London: Routledge, 2007), 5, 6, 123.

<sup>5</sup> Wagg and Andrews, *East Plays West*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Peter. J Beck, "'War Minus the Shooting': George Orwell on International Sport and the Olympics." *Sport in History* 33.1 (2013): 72-73.

surveillance society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Many consider this work as a critique of state socialism, but as David Lyon notes: 'Orwell did not let Western liberal democracies off the hook so easily.' According to Lyon, Orwell saw totalitarian tendencies (such as surveillance) as 'immanent within any bureaucratically organized nation-state.'<sup>7</sup> And he was not alone; Giddens argued that aspects of totalitarian rule could emerge in all modern (democratic) states, as totalitarianism is a tendential property of the modern state.<sup>8</sup>

With this in mind, this essay sets out to compare the surveillance machineries that were built around sports in a capitalistic, democratic state, and a socialist, dictatorial state during the Cold War. For this reason, the research question of this paper is as follows: in how much did the USA and the GDR deploy the same socio-political strategies through sports during the Cold War (1954-1989)? In order to answer this question, the following subquestions will be addressed: how can sports be used as an instrument of state influence? What programs were set up by both states during the Cold War? A comparison will help to find out whether the GDR and the USA deployed the same socio-political strategies. The start of the periodization is based on the year in which the USA rolled out their program in order to close the "muscle gap". The periodization goes on till 1989, the year when the GDR, and their state controlled sports, officially came to an end, and with it: the Cold War.

### **Research goal**

Sport is easily associated with leisure and entertainment. The Olympics, the Super Bowl, the Champions League, and many more sport events, are all multi-million businesses that attract millions of spectators and television viewers. Riding along on the tail of their success we find sponsors, commercials, artists, talk shows, newspapers and magazines. Because of this circus-like spectacle, one might forget that sport is about more than just that. As the state programs during the Cold War from both the USA and the GDR show, governments took (and still take) sports very seriously. What this essay hopes to show is that sports can be considered as a serious thing, and an important instrument in both creating identities and controlling societies.

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<sup>7</sup> David Lyon, *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007), 53.

<sup>8</sup> Sean P. Hier and Joshua Greenberg, *The Surveillance Studies Reader* (Maidenhead Open University Press, 2007), 28, 37. And: Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1985), 310.

## Method

The comparison that will be made does not originate from a positivist effort to identify appropriate paired cases. Rather, this essay wants to make a systematic comparison on the forms and functions of state surveillance in sports, in order to generate valuable insights.

For the purpose of this essay, I will make use of John Torpey's theory on state influence, considering sports as a means of both *embracing* and *penetrating* a society.<sup>9</sup> However, this essay will also make use of the theories of both Habermas and Anderson. Torpey criticizes Habermas' "power" as an instrument of state penetration, because it is rather abstract. He therefore argues to replace it with an instrument such as the passport, which he sees as the bureaucratic equivalent. He also criticizes Anderson's concept of *imagined communities*, which, Torpey writes, 'tends to ignore the extent to which identities must become codified and institutionalized in order to become socially significant.'<sup>10</sup> I will not argue against the points that Torpey makes, however, this essay will take a middle ground in the discussion. First of all: by using, and slightly altering Habermas' instruments of state penetration from power to (for the purpose of this essay) sports. In this way I will replace one rather abstract concept with another. But is "sports" actually so abstract? I actually agree with Hobsbawm, who argues that the imagined community becomes more real with eleven players on the field.<sup>11</sup> In sports "imagining" and "reality" come together. *Who* can represent a country is based on Torpey's codification and institutionalization. However, the sportsman or sportswoman is not just the embodiment of codification, he or she also "embodies" the community he or she is a part of. Torpey quotes Noiriel who wrote: 'It is often overlooked that legal registration, identification documents, and laws are what, in the final analysis, determine the 'identity' of immigrants.'<sup>12</sup> What I would like to argue is that sports, and what it represents, can actually do this as well. Sports just as much bring about *feelings of belonging* when we - for instance - see eleven players,

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<sup>9</sup> i.e. In the GDR, the professional sportsmen and sportswomen were the actual people that represented the community. Moreover, they were monitored in order to prevent them from defecting. In this way, the state not only tried to keep them, but the entire GDR society within their embrace. In the American case, young Americans were educated in "US citizenship" in order to produce "productive yet manageable subjects", which highlights 'the interconnection of identity and structural relations of power emanating from the "capitalist state".'. See: McDougall, *The People's Game*, 123.

<sup>10</sup> John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>11</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, myth, reality*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143.

<sup>12</sup> Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 13.

with the same national identity in their passports as us, *representing* "us" against eleven players from a different country.

## §1: how can sports be used as an instrument of state influence?

There has been extensive writing about how states can “penetrate” their societies. Explanations differ from the importance of *imagination* (Anderson), *surveillance* (Foucault), and *money and power* (Habermas), to whether 'penetrating' actually tells the whole story.<sup>13</sup> Torpey argues for the importance of states "embracing" their societies, in which *codification and institutionalization* play an essential role.<sup>14</sup> I would argue for the importance of all four scholars in this discussion by looking at three concepts in regard to sports: the *body as flesh* function, the *symbolic* function, and *governmentality*. Taking a closer look at these concepts will show the interconnectedness between ways of penetrating and embracing societies through sports.

What Koch sees as a defining strategy for how states perpetuate themselves, is their ability to 'set in motion a nation building project that successfully links the people to a homeland (territorial bonding) and to the state (statist bonding). At its core, an effective nationalist project abstracts various feelings, desires, and motivations to a geographical imaginary of the "state" as an "objective", "natural" territorial entity.<sup>15</sup> Sport is an important part of this nationalist project as it can serve as a mechanism of 'performing regime-articulated values through the bodies of the masses'. In this regard, a distinction can be made between the *symbolic function* of sports (i.e. the sporting body as understood as the principal vehicle for the symbolic imagining of national identities), and the *body as flesh function* of sport.<sup>16</sup> I will first discuss the latter.

According to Gagen, bodies not only symbolize, but are also the comings to flesh of the nation, as they are the physical proving of the power of the nation. 'The visual display of movement, coordination, command-response, strength and agility [can be] interpreted as evidence enough of the successful emergence of national principles.'<sup>17</sup> The idea of power of a nation coming to flesh can be traced back to the late 19th century with the rise of psychology. G. Stanley Hall<sup>18</sup> theorized that

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<sup>13</sup> Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Natalie Koch, "Sport and Soft Authoritarian Nation-Building." *Political Geography* 32 (2013): 43.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth A. Gagen, "Making America Flesh: Physicality and Nationhood in Early Twentieth-Century Physical Education Reform." *Cultural Geographies*, 11.4 (2004): 424.

<sup>17</sup> Gagen, "Making America Flesh": 438.

<sup>18</sup> Who was the first president of the American Psychological Association.

conscience and muscles are part of one continuum, and it was thus impossible to conceive of a moral development without the corresponding development of muscles, because without physical capability, the mind itself became weak and incapable.<sup>19</sup> This idea of "muscles as the building blocks of character" meant that muscular habits had to be trained, something that could - supposedly - be established by routinized exercise. In this way, habits would become so naturalized that they eventually would be embedded securely in the mind. This had the positive effect that "corrupt" influences would be fended off in the future.<sup>20</sup>

These ideas on "pedagogistic education-through-movement" led to physical education programs in both the US and Germany from the start of the 20th century. In the US, socially endorsed characteristics of "Americanness" were established in the bodies of children through physical education. "Typical" American traits were bravery, honour and robustness in boys, and grace, humility and vitality in girls.<sup>21</sup> While in Germany, during the Nazi regime, physical education was used to develop the "characteristic" male Aryan, which implied the brave mentality of a soldier, the qualities of a leader, disregard for risk of physical injury, and absolute commitment to the *Führer* and the Nazi state.<sup>22</sup> A German role model for girls' physical education was also established. Naul and Hardman note: 'the strength to bear children dedicated to the *Führer* was as important as the "beauty of the race".'<sup>23</sup>

In regard to these American and German programs, it is important to mention Foucault's concept of *governmentality*: the "art of government". This art, in a wide sense, is not limited to state politics alone (i.e. a hierarchical, top-down concept), but also involves power relations, knowledge production, and the construction of the self within the nexus of the other two dimensions.<sup>24</sup> Foucault argues power can manifest itself by producing knowledge and discourses that get internalised by individuals and in this way guide their behaviour. This in turn leads to more efficient forms of social control, as knowledge enables individuals to govern themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly "fitness" (which is a constructed, - supposedly - measureable

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<sup>19</sup> Gagen, "Making America Flesh": 428.

<sup>20</sup> Gagen, "Making America Flesh": 430.

<sup>21</sup> Gagen, "Making America Flesh": 431.

<sup>22</sup> Roland Naul, and Ken Hardman, *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 25.

<sup>23</sup> Naul and Hardman, *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew C. Billings, and Marie. Hardin. *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*. (London: Routledge, 2014), 55.

<sup>25</sup> Billings and Hardin, *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*, 55.



concept that can classify people as either "fit" or "unfit") was connected to a narrowly defined national identity. For girls, exercises such as gymnastics, dance, swimming and cheerleading, were symbolic showpieces for national vitality, reproductive success and visual pleasure. While for boys a muscular and aggressive sporting body was the standard.<sup>26</sup> Meeting these standards was not only accomplished through defined physical education, but also required self-surveillance (e.g. discipline through diet) to avoid possible deviations from the "normal". 'Because a "normal" body is defined externally, the self-imposed body disciplines exemplify a panoptic power arrangement where an invisible gaze is imposed on individuals through media representations.'<sup>27</sup> In this way, if you were fit, you embodied and served as the physical prove of the power of the nation. This also leads to the *symbolic* function of sports.<sup>28</sup>

In the world of professional sports, a victory on the field is not just a victory for a specific individual or team, but also a victory of the principles and the character of the nation, which in turn increases international prestige. Especially during the Cold War, sporting victories were seen as advertisements for the superiority of the political system that brought forth the athletes, and supposedly helped to win support.<sup>29</sup> Also, sporting spectacles allow states to mobilize citizens in ways that create an illusion of participation, without allowing any actual input from citizens in the process. So whether actively performing sports, or passively spectating it, the general population is given a venue to perform their patriotism, to participate in the "nation", without actually being involved in the "rigorous labor of self-determination".<sup>30</sup> On top of that, what makes sport such a strong instrument is that the practice of cheering for one's homeland (i.e. imagined community) becomes so naturalized that it is unthinkingly reproduced, and that even the least political or public individuals can identify with the nation as symbolized by the sportsmen on the field. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself.<sup>31</sup> The "team" *stands for* the 'state' and the 'nation', and the state and the nation

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<sup>26</sup> Gagen, "Making America Flesh": 422. And: Billings and Hardin, *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Billings and Hardin, *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> Mike Dennis, and Jonathan Grix, "Behind the Iron Curtain: Football As a Site of Contestation in the East German Sports 'Miracle'." *Sport in History*, 30.3 (2010): 448.

<sup>29</sup> Koch, "Sport and Soft Authoritarian Nation-Building": 43.

<sup>30</sup> Koch, "Sport and Soft Authoritarian Nation-Building": 44.

<sup>31</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870*, 143.

stand for the team.<sup>32</sup>

However, it should be noted that state influence is not completely overpowering; societies are not simply passively "penetrated" by their states.<sup>33</sup> Girginov argues, in regard to totalitarian states, that the penetrative and extractive powers of sports on society should be relativized.<sup>34</sup> In the next paragraph, the sports programs of the US and the GDR are discussed, with attention to societal resistance.

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<sup>32</sup> Koch, "Sport and Soft Authoritarian Nation-Building": 50.

<sup>33</sup> Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> Vassil Girginov, "Totalitarian Sport: Towards an Understanding of Its Logic, Practice and Legacy." *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions*, 5.1 (2004): 54.

## §2: what programs were set up by both states during the Cold War?

### USA

In the US, the 1950s produced a number of mass culture critiques, which saw the new, postwar affluence, tied to employment in large corporations and the rising consumer culture, as impeding the development of rugged individualism and ultimately "effeminizing" postwar men.<sup>35</sup> What was thought, was that consumerism and consumer comfort was 'cultivating a generation of soft youth that, if not corrected, would ultimately deplete the masculinity of the nation at a moment of intense geopolitical competition with the Soviet Union.'<sup>36</sup> This was extra dangerous as capitalism was equal to an "open society", so if citizens grew soft, they could easily become receptive to communist penetration.<sup>37</sup>

What strengthened this believe was the Kraus-Weber Minimal Fitness Tests of 1954. According to this research the American youth was "alarmingly unfit" in comparison to both previous generations of Americans and to European (Italian, Austrian and Swiss) children. 57% of the over 4,000 tested American children failed it, versus 8% of the European children. Added to this, selective military service statistics reported that out of 4.7 million draftees called up between 1950 and 1957, 1.6 million (one third) were "found unfit for duty" for physical or mental reasons. Meanwhile, the domination of the Soviet Union at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki made them appear like a nation of "red muscle men".<sup>38</sup> The situation was soon blown to crisis proportions and the term "muscle gap" was coined. Something had to be done, but this confronted the US with two major problems.<sup>39</sup>

First, capitalism was a central concept in the Cold War as it was part of the economical containment politics of the US. Not only did the US try to "contain" communism through military means, 'economic development was seen as necessary to create an affluent society that would shore up support at home and abroad for the US's larger Cold War objectives.'<sup>40</sup> But within muscle gap discourse, capitalism actually seemed to foster a generation that was unfit and effeminized. In other words,

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<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence: College Football, Media, and the American Way of Life during the Cold War*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 35.

<sup>38</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 34.

<sup>39</sup> Patricia A. Eisenman, and C. Robert Barnett, "Physical Fitness in the 1950s and 1970s: Why Did One Fail and the Other Boom?" *Quest*, 31 (1979): 115.

<sup>40</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 35.

the concept that was supposed to triumph over communism seemed to show a deficiency. 'If consumerism created a sphere of life where consumer citizens could participate in the Cold War without [physical] sacrifice, then consumerism could also present a barrier when citizens are called upon to make sacrifices and asked to do what they could for their country. [...] The self-sacrificing ethos and Spartan discipline necessary for citizen-soldiers came into contradiction with the self-centered hedonism of consumer citizenship.'<sup>41</sup>

Second, finding a concrete solution to the "problem" of the muscle gap proved to be equally difficult. Following the Kraus-Weber test results, president Eisenhower formed the President's Council on Youth Fitness in which the issue was discussed. Consensus was rather easily reached that something had to be done, but exactly how was not such an easy matter.<sup>42</sup> This was primarily caused by the fear to be compared with communist states such as the Soviet Union, which had an extensive nationalist exercise program. American children should be able to choose their own sports and fitness programs.<sup>43</sup>

As a result, government policy was mostly focused on facilitating physical activities. What was hoped for was, that in this way, children would eventually become more active, and thus fit. Thus, the government supported institutions in civil society and the economy such as schools, the Boy Scouts of America, Little League baseball, the Amateur Athletic Union, Wheaties Sports Federation, and Union Oil's 76 Sports Club, that all were supposed to maximize citizens' self-direction and self-regulation.<sup>44</sup> On top of that, nongovernmental actors, such as fitness experts and fitness institutions helped direct and structure the field of physical education and the "habitus" that citizens developed through fitness regimes. Although the government let the actual choosing of a specific activity up to its citizens, "to sport, or not to sport" was a rather directed choice. Regarding this, media played an important role, after all, for making people aware that there is a problem, they first need to hear or read about it. The dissemination of the Kraus-Weber results and the army draft

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<sup>41</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 35, 36.

<sup>42</sup> M. T. Bowers, and T.M. Hunt, "The President's Council on Physical Fitness and the Systematisation of Children's Play in America." *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28.11 (2011): 1500.

<sup>43</sup> Bowers M.T., and Hunt T.M. "The President's Council on Physical Fitness and the Systematisation of Children's Play in America." *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28.11 (2011): 1500. And: Shelly McKenzie, "Mass Movements: A Cultural History of Physical Fitness and Exercise, 1953-1989." *Dissertation Abstracts International*, A68/12 (2008): 51.

<sup>44</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 40.

rejection rates created this first awareness and, in the context of the Cold War, triggered the fear of losing to communism. Montez de Oca: 'Fear has the political expediency of converting beliefs into prescribed actions, and muscle gap discourse came with specific recommendations.'<sup>45</sup> Montez de Oca counted 139 articles with recommendations on exercise, diet, and/or nutrition, 55 articles on lifestyle, and 62 articles with practical suggestions for parents on how to make "our boys" strong and fit again, between the years 1954-1963. The importance of being fit thus made it into every American home.

Government policy on sports became more concrete during the Kennedy administration. What followed was the development of physical education curriculum guides for the public schools and the undertaking of an extensive marketing and publicity campaign to spread the new message of fitness as an essential part of national safety and security.<sup>46</sup> The program provided a National Youth Fitness Test with national norms, and an award program with certificates and emblems.<sup>47</sup> In this program, children were either assessed as fit, or unfit.<sup>48</sup> Thus a discourse was constituted that made a clear distinction between "hard-disciplined" and "soft indulgent" citizens.<sup>49</sup> In the contradicting context of the importance of capitalism and consumerism on one side, and Spartan discipline on the other, what was produced was a paradoxical environment in which youth were taught to see themselves as incomplete and in need of physical, mental, and moral improvement. This in turn necessitated cultural policy that would teach parents and educators how to constantly work upon and adjust children to the contradictory needs of the capitalist state.<sup>50</sup> Montez de Oca argues: 'In this discourse, a triage model of fitness testing was seen as the way to diagnose and cure a sick society by creating self-surveilling citizens who take charge of their own health needs. As years pass, the student would compare present scores [in fitness] to past scores to measure successes and failures.'<sup>51</sup>

Soon, both educators and students criticized the new program as they - indeed - thought it to be reflective of a 'totalitarian ideology that was antithetical to the

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<sup>45</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Bowers and Hunt, "The President's Council on Physical Fitness": 1502, 1501.

<sup>47</sup> Eisenman and Barnett, "Physical Fitness in the 1950s and 1970s": 116.

<sup>48</sup> Bowers and Hunt, "The President's Council on Physical Fitness": 1502, 1503.

<sup>49</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 36.

<sup>50</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 36.

<sup>51</sup> Montez de Oca, *Discipline and Indulgence*, 43.

American way of life'.<sup>52</sup> Focus soon shifted, mainly due to the great performance of the Soviet Union, and other Eastern European states at the Olympics, which forced the Nixon and Ford administrations to steer away from mass-based fitness policies. What was now concentrated on was elite competitiveness.<sup>53</sup>

## **GDR**

Whereas in the US setting up a national sports program had been triggered by a fear to physically fall behind on other nations, the GDR's program was actually triggered by its own coming about. As a new state, sports were important to the GDR for multiple reasons, which can be exemplified through the case study of Lutz Eigendorf.

First of all, sports played an important role in promoting a separate East German identity. Especially for emerging states, constructing a national identity is a long and complex process. Hall argues: 'National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about "the nation" with which we can identify.'<sup>54</sup> National histories, being the "narrative of the nation", play an important role in this, as they represent shared experiences, sorrows, triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation.<sup>55</sup> Added to that, connecting the present to the past can create a legitimate foundation for the state, something that was important to the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

To contribute to this, the state was looking for both contemporary, and historical, role models that could "embody" the brand-new socialist nation and its ideals.<sup>56</sup> Concerning historical figures, the state organized festivals and races, which were supposed to demonstrate the individual and collective political commitment of both athletes and spectators to the state and socialism.<sup>57</sup> According to Magdalinski, the greatest commemorative ceremonies in East German sport focused on the wrestler Werner Seelenbinder (1904-1944).<sup>58</sup> Around 70% of all schools, stadia and sports clubs were named after Seelenbinder, who had finished fourth at the Berlin Olympics

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<sup>52</sup> Eisenman and Barnett, "Physical Fitness in the 1950s and 1970s": 116.

<sup>53</sup> Bowers and Hunt, "The President's Council on Physical Fitness": 1502, 1496.

<sup>54</sup> Tara Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity." *Peace Review*, 11.4 (1999): 539.

<sup>55</sup> Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity": 540.

<sup>56</sup> Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity": 540. And: Naul and Hardman, *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, 33-34.

<sup>57</sup> Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity": 542.

<sup>58</sup> Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity": 543.

of 1936, making him a true athletic phenomenon. However, his sport achievements were of secondary importance, something that was symptomatic for the GDR. What was rather put emphasis on were his political and ideological convictions: in 1928 Seelenbinder had joined the German Communist Party (KPD), and in 1933 he had refused to give the Nazi salute when receiving his medal at the German Wrestling Championship.<sup>59</sup> On top of that, the Gestapo arrested him in 1942 for being active within an underground resistance group, and he was eventually executed on October 24th, 1944. All of this made him a martyr to the SED, who saw in him a true worker, a resistance fighter against Nazism, and an athlete who was willing to use sport to make a political statement.<sup>60</sup>

Contemporary "heroes" were put on display in a same way to glorify and embody the socialist state. Among those were athletes like Eigendorf, but also, and maybe most prominently, Gustav Schur. Schur was a world-class cyclist who won a bronze medal in the team time trial at the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, and a silver medal at the 1960 Olympics in Rome. Schur was honoured as the "best athlete in 40 years of the GDR", but again, character and conviction were more important. He was labelled as "faultless", "dignified", and a "knight of the pedals", and a true prove of his socialist nature was the fact that he was a member of the GDR-Volkskammer (i.e. one-party parliament) for 35 years.<sup>61</sup> Lutz Eigendorf started of his career in the same promising way. He was a product of the elite Werner Seelenbinder sports school in Berlin, joined BFC Dynamo (the state-favoured football club) in 1970 and was a based player of the team by the middle of the decade. In 1978 he became a member of the SED and made his national team debut against Bulgaria, scoring both goals in a 2-2 draw.<sup>62</sup>

Although athletes needed to be ideologically exemplary, their sporting results did actually matter, because (as well as sportive achievements) they were an ideal strategy for achieving international legitimacy and recognition.<sup>63</sup> Although it is hard to ascertain in how much elite sport contributed, it is all too true that, being the world's most successful nation at the Olympics (in terms of medals per head), it was

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<sup>59</sup> Evelyn Mertin, "Presenting Heroes: Athletes As Role Models for the New Soviet Person." *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26.4 (2009): 470,

<sup>60</sup> Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity": 543.

<sup>61</sup> Mertin, "Presenting Heroes": 470,

<sup>62</sup> McDougall, *The People's Game*, 123.

<sup>63</sup> Koch, "Sport and Soft Authoritarian Nation-Building": 43.

hard to ignore the GDR.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, success on the world's playing fields demonstrated the - alleged - superiority of socialism over capitalism, thus playing an important role in the Cold War.<sup>65</sup> In a *coming to flesh* way, the GDR showed how its system could "produce" such successful athletes, while at the same time, these athletes, as *symbolizing* their nation, defeated the capitalist enemy regularly. The superiority of socialism over capitalism was ultimately symbolized at the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, in which the GDR won 66 medals, compared to 40 medals for West Germany.<sup>66</sup>

To secure success, an elite sports model was set up between 1952 and 1957, with the specific aim of outperforming the West German "class enemy". The program consisted of a highly centralized planning system, heavy investments in sports training facilities, a battery of well-qualified coach and trainers, ideological indoctrination of athletes and trainers in the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, and a pyramidal system of talent spotting and training.<sup>67</sup> Dennis: 'Instrumentalising elite sport's binary category of win or lose, in favour of the former, the all-embracing "total institution" required complete dedication to, and identification with, its political and sporting aims on the part of the performers, whether minors or adults.'<sup>68</sup> Rejecting the system's demands and pressures led to banishment from a club or specialist school. At the same time, not everyone could actually join the elite children's and youth sports schools either. In 1980 around 10% of the applicants was rejected on account of their parents' 'contacts in the West and "disorderly" conditions in the family, including a parent's conviction for a criminal offence.'<sup>69</sup> The Stasi was in this way very careful in picking its future role models, and this was not their only task.

The Stasi also played an important role in keeping the "miracle machine" running, which was in great part done by setting up, and keeping secret, an extensive doping program.<sup>70</sup> Already at a young age, talented children were enrolled in the Children Youth Sports Academy where they were trained and provided with doping.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2551-2553. And: Paul Dimeo, Thomas M. Hunt, and Richard Horbury, "The Individual and the State: A Social Historical Analysis of the East German 'Doping System'." *Sport in History*, 31.2 (2011): 220.

<sup>65</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2553.

<sup>66</sup> Dimeo, Hunt, and Horbury, "The Individual and the State": 230.

<sup>67</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2557.

<sup>68</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2557.

<sup>69</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2557.

<sup>70</sup> Dimeo, Hunt, and Horbury, "The Individual and the State": 220-221.

<sup>71</sup> Dimeo, Hunt, and Horbury, "The Individual and the State": 231-232.



IMs (unofficial co-workers of the Stasi) were also important in this, as they, as doctors or trainers, reassured their children that they were receiving only harmless and regenerative substances, thus keeping the doping program secret. However, while children were easier to deceive, more experienced athletes became suspicious and were sometimes obliged to swear an oath of silence.<sup>72</sup> It was of the greatest importance that the doping program was kept a secret, as it constructed and conserved a specific, superior East German image. Leaking of the program would relativize the glory of the GDR, and the role of socialism in bringing forth such great athletes.

Maintaining the perfect image of contemporary socialist heroes did not just concern keeping doping a secret, but was actually a lot more work, leading to both success stories, and loss of face.<sup>73</sup> The worst thing that could happen, in this regard, was defection, as not only did it destroy the image of the perfect, socialist sportsman, it could also be explained as a form of critique on the state ("better career and material prospects" of the West were known reasons for defection), and lead to reputational damage and the defection of more people. It was therefore an important job of the Stasi to prevent athletes from defecting. For this purpose an extensive network was set up that made sure most athletes were extensively watched and observed. This was not only done by agents of the Stasi, but also very much by the already-mentioned "unofficial co-workers" (IMs), of which there were about 175.000 in the 1970s and 1980s. Elite sport was one of the most heavily penetrated areas, among the IMs were trainers, sports scientists, sportsmen and -women and professors.<sup>74</sup> Not only did IMs help in the extensive surveillance program, knowledge about the existence of IMs also contributed to extensive self-surveillance. The presumption of someone planning to defect could already be enough to be arrested and tried. However, this tactic wasn't always very effective, as this could also lead to discontent among supporters.<sup>75</sup>

If an athlete did defect, history, in an Orwellian way, was entirely re-written by the Stasi. Whereas this sportsman, or sportswoman, used to be the "perfect

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<sup>72</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2561-2562.

<sup>73</sup> Magdalinski, "Sports History and East German National Identity": 543, and: Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2565.

<sup>74</sup> i.e. Becoming an IM could be rather beneficial as it could advance career perspective, give job insurance, provide financial privileges and give access to goods and services that were in short supply. See: Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2559-2560.

<sup>75</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2565.

socialist", he or she was now denounced as a "sports traitor".<sup>76</sup> After his defection, Eigendorf was classified as such and to contribute to this image, he had to be both personally and professionally undermined. Thus, forty Stasi agents were spying on him while he was already living in the west and took photos of his new girlfriend and even of his doorbell. Braun and Wiese note: 'He was also subjected to *damnatio memoriae* in a very perfidious way: in order to erase his name altogether, the regime not only urged his wife, Gabriele, to file for divorce, but also set an "IM Romeo" on her, who was under orders to begin a romantic relationship with her and to marry her.'<sup>77</sup>

The Eigendorf affair was the most notorious (as it ended with the footballer's death) and embarrassing example, however, other defectors shared many of his experiences. Stasi informers were deployed in the West to undermine the new careers of the so-called "sports traitors" and to elicit information to West German sports institutes, for instance about the use of doping. Informers were also used to persuade athletes to return as part of a propaganda counter-offensive. If successful, history - of course - would be re-written again, restoring the perfect, socialist image and at the same time exploiting the situation by drawing attention to the "obvious" shortcomings of western capitalism, that had led to the athletes return.<sup>78</sup> If persuasion failed, plans could even be made to kidnap a defector, as in the case of Olympic ski-jump champion Hans-Georg Aschenbach.<sup>79</sup>

In any way, defectors tended to live in constant fear that the Stasi kept them under observation, and that their friends and family, who still lived in the GDR, would be harassed. These fears had the additional "advantage" for the SED and the Stasi that athletes were rather enforced to co-operate with the sports program.

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<sup>76</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2564-2565. And: Jutta Braun, and R. Wiese, "Tracksuit Traitors: Eastern German Top Athletes on the Run." *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31.12 (2014): 1520.

<sup>77</sup> Braun and Wiese, "Tracksuit Traitors": 1527.

<sup>78</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2565.

<sup>79</sup> Dennis, "Securing the Sports 'Miracle'": 2565.

## Conclusion

Fear of being compared with totalitarian states, the US, in the 1950s stayed away from developing a concrete physical curriculum that all children had to conform to. However, doing nothing was not an option, as the image of capitalism creating a society of unfit, and effeminized people was no option within the Cold War context. Therefore, the government decided to facilitate fitness and sports. But this program was actually not as passive as it might seem. Within a discourse that glorified certain "American" characteristics, that created a normative benchmark for what a "true" American should look like, and that emphasized the danger of communism if nothing was done, people were actually subjected to self-surveillance. This ties Cold War anxiety to the process of producing productive, yet manageable subjects (*subjectification*), and it highlights the interconnection of identity and structural relations of power emanating from the capitalist state.

In the GDR, not so much mass sports, but rather elite sports were put to use for the same reasons. Winning was important, but the image of the perfect, socialist athlete that embodied the ideologies and ideals of the state, mattered just as much. In this process of creating, and maintaining, these images, the Stasi played an important role. It is this what makes the GDR different from the US. Whereas in the GDR both surveillance and self-surveillance were important to the cause, in the US self-surveillance prevailed.

Although the exact ways differed, the two countries both used sport as an instrument in creating national identities, and controlling societies. Maybe we should become more critical towards sports, and not be carried away so much by nationalistic sentiment. After all, Orwell, who saw sport as "mimic warfare", argued that 'you do make things worse by sending forth a team of eleven men, labeled as national champions, to do battle against some rival team, and allowing it to be felt on all sides that whichever nation is defeated will "lose face".<sup>80</sup> We can truly say that sports are a serious game.

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<sup>80</sup> Beck, "War Minus the Shooting": 83.

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