

Chapter 9

SECURING SPORT – OLYMPIANS
AND SOCCER HOOLIGANS

SAFEGUARDING THE ELITE

Given the importance attached to top-level sport in securing the international recognition of the GDR and in demonstrating the alleged superiority of socialism over capitalism, it is not surprising to find the MfS and its informers in all areas of elite sport. The GDR was a world power in sport: at the Olympic Games in Mexico City in 1968, the GDR team gained 25 medals (9 golds) and attained the unofficial third place behind the USA and the Soviet Union, a remarkable achievement for the 'diplomats in tracksuits' of such a small country. Twenty years later, its team won 102 medals, including 37 golds.

The GDR's successes owed much to the state drug programme and the concentration on those sports which were likely to reap a harvest of medals. An intricate organisational network was created in support of the state's goals. The German Gymnastics and Sports Association of the GDR (DTSB) was the key body for the integration of sport into the SED's central planning system and for the production of world-class athletes. Manfred Ewald, its president between 1961 and 1988, was the mastermind behind East Germany's achievements. Other organisations which had a vital role to play were the State Secretariat for Culture and Sport, the SED's Central Committee Department for Sport, the Research Institute for Physical Culture and Sport in Leipzig (FKS), the German College of Higher Education for Physical Culture (DHfK), also in Leipzig, and the Central Institute of the Sports Medical Service (SMD). The DHfK, founded in 1950, became famous for its systematic training of thousands of top coaches and instructors. Powerful incentives were on offer to the elite: foreign travel, payments in Western currency, bonuses and good career opportunities. As part of the tightly controlled system, highly gifted children were selected early in their school life for development at one of the GDR's 25 elite sports schools for children and youth (1989 figure) and talented performers were concentrated in about 30 well-endowed sports clubs and in the sports associations of the Stasi and the armed forces (*Dynamo* and *Vorwärts* respectively).

The role of the MfS in the sports system was to prevent sports stars from defecting to the West; to protect the secrets of the state doping programme; to ensure the smooth running of major sports events; to collect information on the opinions and behaviour of leading sports personalities; to maintain the GDR's position as a top sports nation; and to ensure success for the Dynamo Sports Association. The MfS used several Main Departments and set up numerous working groups and sections at regional and district level for sport but the main body for the organisation and coordination of sport was Main Department XX/3. Founded in 1964, it was relieved of other responsibilities in 1981 in order to concentrate solely on sport. In 1989, 30 officers were employed in its four desks.¹

IMs were the Stasi's 'main weapon' and were recruited primarily from the world of sport itself, for example, trainers, masseurs, journalists, functionaries, scientists and top athletes. During the 1970s and 1980s, about 3,000 IMs were employed each year in top-level sport.² Informers infiltrated the leading sports clubs and bodies such as the FKS and the executive of the DTSB. In 1978, about 20 per cent of the staff of the FKS worked for the Stasi as informers.³ An analysis of the files of 172 out of 320 informers who are known to have been involved in top-level sport in Leipzig since the foundation of the Stasi unearthed 25 trainers, 20 sports scientists (including lecturers) and 46 sportsmen/women or DHfK students. Among this group were seven Olympic, world or European champions, ten professors and a chairman of Leipzig's leading football team, Lok Leipzig.⁴ Professor Dr Hans Schüster, the Vice-Chancellor of the DHfK between 1964 and 1967 and director of the FKS between 1969 and 1990 was recruited as an informer in the mid-1960s. Unbeknown to the Stasi's Leipzig Regional Administration, he was controlled from the ministry's headquarters in East Berlin and was able to carry out his responsibilities in the state doping programme secure in the knowledge that he enjoyed Stasi protection.⁵

Informers were regularly deployed, especially during the 1980s, to stem the rising number of sportsmen and women applying to leave the GDR or defecting while abroad. An application was tantamount to ending a person's career. Between 1950 and 1989, 615 East German sport stars fled the republic (including 431 since 1961, mainly athletes, footballers and rowers).⁶ The highly delicate question of the temptation of the West was addressed at a central service conference in June 1981 where it was stated that:

¹ MfS und Leistungssport 1994: 59–60.

² Spitzer G. 1998b: 190.

³ MfS und Leistungssport 1994: 10.

⁴ Spitzer G. 1998b: 190–92.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁶ MfS und Leistungssport 1994: 31.

The young sportsmen and sportswomen are the biggest group of young GDR citizens who, on account of their visits to capitalist countries for training and competition, are sometimes exposed for a lengthy period to targeted systematic influence by the enemy. Not infrequently these young cadres are 'impressed' by the targeted measures to influence them. Thorough investigation and analysis of just such reactions and behaviour and then the evaluation for further political-operational security work coordinated with official measures are central to security checks.⁷

Those who fled were designated 'sports traitors' and their flight could trigger the kind of investigation launched against the rowing trainer Richard Wecke. He defected while in the Netherlands in 1977. 'Operation Ring' was designed to prevent his wife and son from following him, to destroy his marriage by smear tactics and to discover why he had defected. Not until December 1984 were his wife and son allowed to leave the GDR.⁸

Elaborate precautions were taken to control GDR sports delegations abroad. At the 1980 Winter Olympics held in Lake Placid, out of a party of 176 athletes, officials and journalists 35 were IMs (10 of them sportsmen and sportswomen). Their tasks included the detection and prevention of attempts to encourage East Germans to defect, to safeguard sports equipment and medicines, and to uncover hostile actions against the GDR, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.⁹ The level of surveillance was also high at international sports events in the GDR, like the prestigious Leipzig Gymnastics and Sport Festival, in order to prevent close contacts between Westerners and GDR citizens, including those women who were described in official parlance as 'persons who frequently change their sexual partners'.¹⁰

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

The monitoring of football games between teams from the GDR and the FRG was planned meticulously, partly because the Stasi was anxious to prevent any damage to the GDR's international reputation from the kind of football hooliganism which plagued games between premier league (*Oberliga*) teams such as Lok Leipzig and FC Union Berlin. Premiership football attracted over 2 million spectators per annum in the mid-1980s.¹¹ Incidents abounded and the MfS was perplexed throughout the entire decade by the failure to curb the problem. The disturbances were committed primarily by young people aged between 14 and 22 years of age. Incidents included insulting spectators, members of the armed organs and passers-by; causing damage to train coaches

⁷ Cited in MfS und Leistungssport 1994: 16. Our translation.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24-6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21, 23-4.

¹¹ MfS ZA, BdL, no. 3122, 'Information', p. 11. This report stems from the Department for Sport of the SED Central Committee for Security Affairs.

and not paying fares; and penal offences such as physical assaults and damage to property.¹² The football hooligans were referred to as 'rowdies' by the MfS and, like punks and skinheads, were classified as 'negative-decadent'.

In a Stasi report dated July 1981, FC Union Berlin was identified as a focal point of much of the violence committed by youths and young adults. The club, situated in the Köpenick district of East Berlin, was popularly regarded as a 'genuine' football club in contrast to the Stasi-sponsored BFC Dynamo. In the period 23 February to 7 December 1980, of the 472 registered arrests, just over half occurred at matches involving FC Union.¹³ Although incidents were less frequent at BFC matches as security measures were much tighter,¹⁴ the Stasi was particularly concerned about the fan clubs which had a violent and right-extremist element like the club's 'Anale Berlin', which was founded at the start of the 1987-88 season. Some of these 'hard-core hools' linked up with the 'rowdies' of FC Union in the East and Hertha Berlin in the West. The following extract from a Stasi report is not untypical. It concerns six young men who met in the Mitropa restaurant in Leipzig's main station prior to leaving by train for Lok Leipzig's away game against BFC:

Under the influence of alcohol they decide to travel without paying and to use the money for alcohol. Having got themselves worked up, the word goes round: we'll smash the rival fans. On the train they go on drinking and bawl obscenities to rhyme with the other team and to show their superiority over them. At the Berlin-Schönefeld station they insult transport policemen. At the Planterwald station they try to break open a stamp machine and a food kiosk but without success. A statue is in their way and it is promptly knocked off its base. They are in this frenzied state of mind when two men come towards them. They block the way for no reason, hit them in the face and kick them in the back and stomach. The men try to defend themselves but this only causes one of the drunken hooligans to use his knife in a frenzied attack. Shortly afterwards the two men are found unconscious and bleeding on the ground.

In the meantime, the gang moves on, waving flags, and trashes three summer houses where they intended to sleep. The culmination of their trail of violence was not the football stadium but a police cell.¹⁵

Despite a variety of countermeasures coordinated between the various interested parties, among them the clubs, the police and the Stasi, football hooliganism persisted throughout the 1980s. The MfS was keen to recruit IMs among the so-called 'negative-decadents', which included the hard core of violent fans. It was recognised that this was a difficult task as group norms and feelings of solidarity formed a barrier to snitching on pals, as did their mistreatment by the police.¹⁶ The recruiting officers preferred to concentrate

¹² MfS ZA, BdL, no. 3122, 'Information', pp. 11-12.

¹³ MfS ZA, BdL, no. 1684, p. 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14. Our translation.

¹⁶ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21466, 1989, pp. 16, 26.

on those youths who were not already integrated into a 'negative-decadent' football group and who, potentially, had some respect for law and order. Material incentives and offers of 'atonement' were also on offer.¹⁷

The failure to stamp out football hooliganism, together with its awareness of the activities of militant skinheads in the soccer scene, prompted the MfS to seek an explanation of its prevalence in the GDR. Some of the factors identified by MfS officers and groups like the Office of the Leadership could have been found in Western analyses of the problem – drunkenness, provocative behaviour by players, the hooligans' search for excitement and their desire to provoke the security forces.¹⁸ However, official ideology dictated that the emphasis be placed on Western political-ideological diversion in the form of foreign media reports and personal contacts between East and West German fans. The receptive Eastern hooligans were labelled as unstable and negative-decadent persons who adopted Western habits uncritically and glorified the Western style of life and football.¹⁹

Referees' controversial decisions, another trigger for hooliganism, also caused arguments in the upper echelons of party and state, especially over matches involving BFC Dynamo. The Stasi team, which dominated GDR football in the 1980s to an even greater degree than did Sir Alex Ferguson's Manchester United the English Premiership in the following decade, was widely believed to enjoy preferential treatment by referees. On one occasion, during the 1985 FDGB cup final between BFC and Dynamo Dresden, Harry Tisch, the trade union boss and a member of the Politbüro, was so incensed by the performance of the referee that he protested to Mielke that such referees were ruining the reputation of the FDGB cup.²⁰ Even the SED-controlled daily newspapers such as *Neues Deutschland* and the specialist football press were sometimes critical of referees for their bias towards Mielke's favourite team.²¹ A report in this vein appeared in March 1986 on the game between Lok Leipzig and BFC in the Free German Youth's organ, *Junge Welt*. The referee, Bernd Stumpf, had controversially sent off Liebers, one of the Leipzig players, and awarded a disputed penalty to BFC in the 95th minute. The report demanded referees who do not 'provide doubtful justice which does harm to our champion team BFC, its reputation acquired by continuous high performance, indeed to each and every player in this team'.²² This report and the performance of referees generally were discussed soon afterwards at a meeting

¹⁷ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21466, 1989, pp. 21, 23–4.

¹⁸ MfS ZA, BdL, no. 1684, 1981, pp. 4–6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10–12.

²⁰ MfS ZA, HA XX, no. 2701, 'Information', p. 15. This is from the meeting of IM 'Harald' with his controlling officer on 28 June 1985.

²¹ See MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 4331, 'Einschätzung', 1971, pp. 57–77. The assessment covers the second half of the 1968–89 season to the end of the first half of the 1970–71 season.

²² Article in *Junge Welt* on 24 March 1986, p. 5, cited in Reinartz K. 1999: 382. Our translation.

between Mielke, Ewald and Hellmann, the head of the Central Committee Department for Sport and a BFC supporter. Although it was agreed by all concerned that the standard of refereeing in the GDR left much to be desired, Mielke complained: 'What is the point of all this scribbling in *Junge Welt* about Liebers? What's it all about? Why was this scribbler from *Junge Welt* given this job? Why? Both BFC and the standing of the Dynamo Sports Association are harmed by this kind of reporting'.²³ Like any football fanatic, he insisted that the penalty had been awarded just before the end of the match and that there are 'some people who can't accept the position, the leading role of BFC in the top league. On top of that there are poor refereeing decisions that increase hostility to BFC even more'.²⁴

DOPING IN SPORT

Perhaps the Stasi's most important task in sport was to secure the GDR's illegal doping programme. Indeed, without the records of the Stasi, it would be extremely difficult to reconstruct the history of doping in GDR sport. The significance of the Stasi's role in the programme can hardly be over-estimated as the systematic use of anabolic steroids was crucial for the GDR's achievements and for its international reputation in sport. Leakage of vital scientific information, as in the case of Dr Alois Mader who fled in 1974,²⁵ would, it was feared, help its rivals boost their own standards but, as the programme was illegal and a health risk, also discredit the GDR and cause parents to stop their children from entering the elite sports schools. Hence, IMs, whether athletes or top officials like Schüster and Höppner, were planted in the leading clubs and scientific organisations. Performance-enhancing drugs were first used in 1964 in the Dynamo Sports Association and were specifically authorised by Mielke. Dynamo's successes in sport encouraged the DTSB and the army's own *Vorwärts* Sports Association to follow its example.²⁶ The early attempts to coordinate drug research and applications, such as the formation of a Sports Commission under Ewald in 1967–68,²⁷ culminated in the State Research Plan 14.25 of November 1974. An integral element of this plan was the Research Project 'Additional Performance Reserves/Complex 08-Additional Performance'; the latter term was the euphemism for drugs.

The scientific centre of the whole programme was Leipzig's Research Institute for Physical Culture and Sport, which was founded in 1969 and was

²³ MfS und Leistungssport 1994: 105. Our translation.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 103. Our translation.

²⁵ Franke W. W. 1995: 914. Mader was co-responsible for the doping programme in the Halle *Bezirk*.

²⁶ Spitzer G. 1998a: 19, 21–4, 221, 409.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 54, 408.

attached to the State Secretariat for Physical Culture and Sport. The key group which was responsible at the institute for the Research Project 'Additional Performance' was directed by Professor Alfons Lehnert. It cooperated closely with trainers and partner institutions such as the Academy of Sciences and the Central Institute for Microbiology and Experimental Therapy.²⁸ Another pivotal body, the Central Research Institute of the Sports Medical Service Kreischa, served as a doping control laboratory. Not only were thousands of leading athletes, such as the shotputter Margitta Gummel and the sprinters Renate Neufeld, Marita Koch and Marlies Göhr, caught up in the doping programme but so were many talented children. Cases are well documented of the systematic administering of drugs to minors, especially swimmers and athletes, without their parents' consent. Recent investigations indicate that from 1972 onwards at least 2,000 top sportsmen/women were doped each year and that between 1,500 and 2,000 doctors, trainers, functionaries and others were involved in the distribution of drugs.²⁹

Dr Manfred Höppner, the deputy director of the GDR Sports Medical Service and head of the Research Group 'Additional Performance', was the senior figure in the doping programme. He was also IMB 'Technik' – a case of 'Vorsprung durch Technik?' – who reported in detail to Ewald on the programme's successes and problems, thus giving the lie to Ewald's later protestations of ignorance.³⁰ Indeed, at one meeting with Höppner in 1975 on the development of the state doping research programme, Ewald stated:

... that for me the performance levels are crucial and every possible means must be fully exploited to achieve them. He emphasised to the IMV (Höppner) that sports medicine had to make its contribution to achieve this goal and, going into some incidents regarding the health of sportsmen, he commented that communists don't kill people.³¹

At the time, some medical practitioners were unhappy about the damage to the health of the athletes. One Dynamo doctor referred to the concern among some of his colleagues after the Olympic Games of 1976:

Some sports doctors have made comments to the effect that measures taken, especially in the case of sportswomen, are to a certain extent criminal. It raises the question to what extent the sports leadership in the GDR is at all interested in sport being clean.³²

At least 500 of the 10,000 East Germans who were doped are expected to develop cancer, gynaecological damage and heart and liver problems.³³

Despite the success of the doping programme in enhancing performance, the country's sports functionaries and the MfS had much to worry about: the introduction of tighter international tests, the defection to the West of sports stars and medical personnel, and the practice of 'wild doping', especially in weightlifting. Cases are also documented of athletes selling anabolic steroids in the form of tablets to other sportsmen.³⁴ After a cutback in the use of anabolic steroids under the impact of more rigorous international controls in the later 1980s, a report dated May 1989 warned that: '... with a consistent application of the ban, the previous performance levels, mainly in swimming and weightlifting and in some winter sport disciplines, can no longer be achieved'.³⁵ Although it was decided to terminate the doping of junior athletes, the same report noted that doping would continue for a smaller circle of about 600 athletes in various sports and that efforts would be stepped up to devise more effective ways and means of managing to avoid positive testing.³⁶ When informed by Ewald in 1986 of the failure to attain targets in some winter sports disciplines such as ski jumping and reminded of the country's relatively poor performance in that year's Winter Olympic Games, Mielke urged an improvement in the quality of trainers and in the political commitment of sports functionaries.³⁷ Although the former would obviously have helped, the GDR's standing as a leading sports nation was under serious threat. Under these circumstances, the Stasi's activities in elite sport were not dissimilar to its function in the securing of the economy: it could collect endless data, mobilise its IMs, try and prevent defections, investigate contraventions of regulations and guard state secrets, but it could not overcome problems of a systemic nature.

²⁸ Spitzer G. 1998a: 409.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 411–12.

³⁰ MfS und Leistungssport 1994: 142, 160–62.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 147. Our translation.

³² Cited in Spitzer G. 1998a: 172. Our translation.

³³ *Ibid.*, 412.

³⁴ See the MfS report on Höppner's meeting with Ewald in 1985 in MfS und Leistungssport 1994: 198–9.

³⁵ Cited in *ibid.*, 205. Our translation.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 88–91.