
How Women Managed to Win More Olympic Medals than Men in Communist Romania?

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Résumé

During the Cold War, Romania, like other countries of the Communist Bloc, had an important policy of promoting elite sports. The medals won at the Olympic Games represented the success of this policy. Among the measures taken was the increase in the number of women practicing performance sports. Women's participation in sports was part of the policies of the communist government. Socialist feminism was a limited and controlled way of discussing women's issues in society. The notions that constitute feminist socialism were patriarchy, gender and capitalism. But in Eastern European countries, feminist socialism was based on the notions of modernization and emancipation of women, a process imposed from top to bottom. Also, in Eastern Europe, women's organizations were controlled and imposed by the state. They were part of the feminism state and primarily represented the government and the communist policy of control rather than women and feminism. And in Romania, women expressed and manifested the limits imposed by society in different forms. Even though gender equality was imposed by the socialist economic model, it constrained women in many ways. If at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, out of the delegation of 114 athletes, only 4 were women, and at the 1988 Seoul edition, 31 women out of a total of 68 participated. Athletes such as Nadia Comaneci, Lia Manoliu, Iolanda Balas and numerous other athletes marked the history of sports at a global level, not just nationally. Using newspaper archives from the period 1952-1989, the paper aims to analyze how the press highlighted the success of women athletes at the Olympic Games and how this was done. The female athlete and the female champion represented a model of success for communist society and policies.

Mots-Clés: Women, emancipation, docility, champion.

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