
Romanian Elite Sport during Communism (1952-1989): Athletes, Ethnicity and Control

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Résumé

During the communist regime, sport was used as a tool for propaganda, promoting the ideals of the "new man" and, at the same time, as a means of ideological expression. Elite athletes became central figures in building the international image of the state and in conveying internal ideological messages. In this process, athletes from ethnic minorities played a key role, contributing to Romania's first notable achievements in international sports. Although the communist regime promoted the idea of national unity and interethnic harmony through its official discourse and policies, athletes of different ethnicities were subjected to pressure during the Ceaușescu regime.

The study aims to identify and analyze the careers of Romanian athletes of different ethnicities who achieved notable results at the national and international level between 1952 and 1989, by examining the challenges posed by ethnic affiliation in the context of the policies and practices of the communist regime, as well as the ways in which they were integrated into the Romanian sports system of the time.

This study draws on two main sources: sports articles from Romanian newspapers like *Sportul Popular* and *Sportul*, and pertinent scientific literature.

The data shows that minority athletes endured political pressures, such as changing their names for "Romanianization". Their sports careers were defined by challenges and personal strategies for adapting to the policies imposed on them.

The study highlights a detailed analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and sport in the context of the communist regime. The research reveals that the experiences and reality of athletes belonging to ethnic minorities were different, their journey being marked by a particular complexity, reflected in the challenges of integration, but also in personal strategies for adapting to the constraints imposed by official policies and practices.

Mots-Clés: communist regime, elite athletes, state control, ethnic identity, Romanianization

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