

## SPORTS AND THE CEAUSESCU'S REGIME – PROPAGANDA'S TOOL OR MASS PHYSICAL EDUCATION?

Corina Hațegan

Scientific Researcher, PhD, "Gheorghe Șincai" Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities of the Romanian Academy, Tîrgu Mureș

*Abstract: The aim of this study is to point out how political propaganda has ushered itself into sports activities, while politicizing sport both internally and externally, during the '80s in Romania. To illustrate, clearly, this phenomena we will use as a study case the articles from the "Sportul" newspaper from the last ten years of the Ceausescu's regime.*

*Keywords: sports, communist propaganda, mass-media, Nicolae Ceausescu, communism.*

From the point of view of physical and mental health, sport has always been promoted as an efficient, simple and accessible tool for all people. From the same optics, sport has been used to demonstrate the human physical ability, perfection and perseverance, as well as overcoming the body limits. At the same time, it was and still is a source of fun; mass sports groups people, athletes or just sports enthusiasts, allowing them to live happy moments or on the contrary, sports bring disappointment from the perspective of their favourite athletes.

History, on the other hand, gives us a multitude of examples in which sport has been used as a political strategy both domestically and internationally, the following statement being very argumentative "as a political resource [sport] has been used and manipulated for thousands of years since the Ancient Greeks and Romans - either externally in interstate relations, or internally, inter alia, as part of an attempt to create a sense of statehood among citizens"<sup>1</sup>. For example, the ancient Olympics were a good opportunity to maintain, for several months, peace between the Greek cities and to promote, among other things, harmony and friendship, but they also imposed some limitations on the categories of people who could participate as athletes. Ancient Rome also brought sport to a level of "bread and circus", while satisfying in the same time the citizens' need for entertainment and the need of the Citadel to impose its authority through human executions disguised as mass entertainment.

Not least, it is worth mentioning that, in general, a country's sports team represented the nation itself when it participated in international competitions, representing at the same time the ideology or the state policy. In other words, the use of sport or including national sports activities in politics and political propaganda indicate a high interest that political leaders, ancients or modern politicians, have shown in terms of opportunities to promote the success of their own governments among other governments.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix, "Sport under Communism. Behind the East German 'Miracle'", Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 14.

Clearly, modern governments have promoted mass sports, particularly through its many benefits such as cohesion and social integration, health benefits, youth orientation to potentially less harmful activities, and so on. Beyond these undeniable benefits of sport, governments, as we have already mentioned, have taken advantage of sports events, using them as a form of diplomacy which, peacefully but not without significance, was meant to show the superiority to other states. So many countries tried through sport to gain a certain image externally and internally, to create cohesion among citizens thanks to the capacity of sport to harmonize human relationships<sup>2</sup>.

James Riordan said in the introduction to his study that, "sport became truly international only after the First World War. It was then that politicians began to appreciate its potential as a vehicle of national values and policies - even for demonstrating and advertising the power of a political ideology"<sup>3</sup>. It should also be acknowledged that, as the author cited above points out, the sports practiced in a totalitarian regime were obviously controlled, while at the same time the international sports events were meant to feed the rivalries between states.

Indeed, it can be said that sport was used in authoritarian regimes as a means of propaganda, but the extent to which it was used and the ultimate goals varied over time. For example, in continental Europe, sport, towards the end of the 19th century and the 20th century, rather meant gymnastics and sports activities related to military training, the latter being linked to the rise of patriotic sentiment. However, "sports societies" have been seen as a real helper in terms of social bonding.

There are many examples in history that display another face of sport, sport as a propaganda instrument, although not always the government's goal, at least the authoritarian's ones, were honest. An example in this way is Kwame Nkrumah, president of Ghana during 1960-1966, who promoted sports, football especially, with great efforts to strengthen the national identity of the republic. The Ghanaese football players, nicknamed the "black stars of Africa", were seen as heroes rather than as performance athletes<sup>4</sup>. Mobutu Sese Seko, leader of the Democratic Republic of Congo during 1965-1997, also a football passionate, made great financial efforts to qualify the national team, known as the "leopards", at the World Championship in 1974. The national team, unfortunately, lost, and many feared the fate of the Congolese football players who have failed to bring the fame their leader hoped for. With the desire to create a positive image both internally and internationally, Mobutu paid a fabulous amount for any government, let alone an African country, to organize the boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Kinshasa, known as "The Rumble in the Jungle"<sup>5</sup>. The illustration may continue, but although all the sports actions have been aimed to gain prestige internally and externally, the methods used by some governments and leaders, have been terribly frightening.

The dictator Saddam Hussein (Iraqi's president during 1979-2003) is known to have demonstrated during his leadership time tremendous sadism surpassed only by one of his sons, Uday, who first seemed a real passionate about sports but in fact, he was passionate about torturing the Iraqi's infamous athletes. Initially, Uday decided to use sport as a propaganda tool, raising sport to the level of sport in the Soviet countries, but his behaviour, including beatings, torture, crimes and humiliation of the athletes, rather recalled a satrap's behaviour than of a director of the Olympic Committee<sup>6</sup>.

Focus on sport is also found in former Soviet states, such as the example of the Kazakhstan's leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev (formerly First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party, President of

---

<sup>2</sup> See more in Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>3</sup> James Riordan in Pierre Arnaud and James Riordan (editors), "Sport and International Politics", Taylor & Francis e-Library, London, 2003, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Pedro Arturo Aguirre, "Istoria megalomaniei", București, Nemira, 2016, pp. 193-200.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp.221- 226.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 253-259.

the Kazakh Republic since 1991 and re-elected president in 2015 with a majority of over 90%) who uses sport as an instrument of international propaganda, while feeding the cult of personality. Despite corruption charges, he has built many stadiums, one of which is ultra-modern but extremely expensive and, last but not least, the government finances a cycling team called "Astana"<sup>7</sup>, which unfortunately has been subjected to many debates regarding the positive athletes' doping test (the team included non-Kazakh athletes, too) and financial issues.

The question many researchers have tried to find the answer to is whether sport can be non-political, especially when a national team is seen, in most cases, as the avant-garde of the nation, as we have seen from previous examples. In this view, it has often been observed that international sport has, in some form, continued the political or economic competition between states, being an extension of the diplomatic battles. At the same time, the fans of the sports teams trigger violence that often has xenophobic, racist or political roots, and are not related to sports at all.

From the point of view of some researchers, sport has been used in international politics as a means of representation, but also for propaganda purposes: "here, sports victories by a national team contribute to strengthening the image of respect in the world, strength and vitality, and even the legitimacy of a political regime [...]"<sup>8</sup>, for coercive or repressive purposes: "the freezing or banning of sports competitions between national teams. A government may prohibit its representative team from meeting such an opponent for strictly political reasons. This would be a political use of sport for the purposes of reprisal [...]"<sup>9</sup>, and, last but not least, can simultaneously trigger a wave of nationalism and xenophobia: "popular discontent expressed in protest can lead to disorder and even violence either at the sports event itself or in the city / city where it is taking place, or both. Through word and action, it can result in a kind of nationalism and xenophobia, and the 'anti-sentiments' can be political or sporting [...]"<sup>10</sup>.

Speaking strictly about communist propaganda, it presented the international world as a struggle between the working class - honest but oppressed, and bourgeois class - corrupt, imperialist and capitalist. Without hesitation, at least in terms of propaganda, as a result of this confrontation, the working class will always be the winner. So, for these reasons of a political and social nature, the use of sports, athletes and the outstanding sports performance has completed the propaganda's tools used throughout the history of political propaganda. In this regard, we consider the Diego Ciobotaru<sup>11</sup> and Pompiliu Nicolae Constantin<sup>12</sup> studies about sports communization and its use for propaganda purposes, very useful.

The same visions related to the political and propagandistic use of sport can be found in the study called "The Sociology of Sports: An Introduction" by Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan, where the authors consider that sport had in the past and still has today, different political functions. Among these are: international cooperation - the Olympic Games being an example; promoting national ideology and

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 270-277.

<sup>8</sup> Arnaud and James Riordan (editors), *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Comunizarea sportului. Cazul Complexului „Gata pentru muncă și apărare”, în *Represiune și control social în România comunistă*, Anuarul Institutului de Investigarea a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului românesc, Vol. V-VI, Polirom, Iași, 2010-2011, pp. 249-263 sau „Sportul românesc între tentațiile deviate și tendințele de înregimentare (1944-1948)” în *Marginali, periferii și frontiere simbolice. Societatea comunistă și dilemele sale identitare*, Anuarul Institutului de Investigarea a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului românesc, Vol. IX, Polirom, Iași, 2015, pp. 113-142.

<sup>12</sup> „Viața pe stadion: publicul sportiv în regimul comunist între presiunea propagandei și libertatea de exprimare”, în *Între transformare și adaptare. Avataruri ale cotidianului în regimul comunist din România*, Anuarul Institutului de Investigarea a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului românesc, Vol. VIII, Polirom, Iași 2003, pp. 173-188.

propaganda - use by the Soviet Union or Germany during Hitler's time; gaining prestige; diplomatic recognition (see the cases of countries that emerged after the State Unions, like former Yugoslavia) and, last but not least, the protests<sup>13</sup>.

The purpose of this study is to highlight how political propaganda has ushered itself into sports activities, while politicizing sport both internally and externally. In fact, the politicization of sport can be seen mostly from this two points of view: internally and externally.

With a five times on week appearance, on its four pages (around the festivities of August 23 or other events with national importance the number of pages grew), the "Sportul"<sup>14</sup> magazine offered substantial information from the sports world to the Romanians who were passionate about sports. It also, offered information stating from the usual New Year's message of Nicolae Ceausescu, statistics showing the improvement of the sports camps or centres and the glorious results of the athletes in the years of "prodigious leadership", competitions and results at the local, national and international level, sport demonstrations on the occasion of the various events, to the visits of Ceausescu couple abroad or foreign diplomats visiting Romania. Just as all the newspapers used to be during the '80s, the first page of the newspaper was reserved to articles of great interest, sometimes political issues and/or sports issues, as well as to the results of the participation of Romania's representatives in international championships. Also on the front page we find the famous slogan "Proletarians from all corners unite!" and the affiliation of the publication in question: "newspaper of the National Council for Physical Education and Sport".

It is interesting to note that, from the point of view of the newspaper, we can see the importance given to sport and physical education in those times; for example, an article shows that the remarkable achievements of the Romanian sports performers would have the ability to influence positively others and to follow them: "The people out of the working hours stopped. Some just to meet someone, others could find out that their comrades have spent a pleasant, relaxing weekend in the sports community. And they wondered, "Why should not I go?"<sup>15</sup>. This article, in fact, highlighted one of the propaganda's tools, showing to others how their commanders that joined the sports community and practiced sports as leisure had a perfect time, often mentioning that "Daciada" has given this opportunity to every Romanian to have the same entertainment.

In the same newspaper number, another article tells the reader that in student hostels, at six in the morning, in some dorms, students took advantages of the sports benefits, like morning gymnastics, pointing out the differences between those who follow this routine and those less interested. Even more, the author of the article presents the views of some students, members of the Youth Associations, testifying that the morning warm up is being seen as a good start in work and study among students<sup>16</sup>.

In fact, this link between sport performance and work performance, probably seen from an ideological point of view too, was meant to certify the idea that a good communist equals to a good performer in all sectors either work, sport or social and family life. An article written in 1986 exemplifies this link, on a smaller scale, where workers from a textile factory in Bârlad city started their working day with gymnastics. The author thus describes a scene in which, perhaps, dozens of

---

<sup>13</sup>Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan , "The sociology of sports: an introduction", McFarland & Company, Inc., USA. 2015, pp. 331 – 335.

<sup>14</sup>The translation of the magazine name, in English, is "The Sport" but I will use in this paper the original name only.

<sup>15</sup>Viorel Tonceanu, "Panoul sportiv-îndemn la practicarea exercițiilor fizice", *Sportul*, 23. 01. 1980, p. 2. The article refers to the fact that the workers could find banners or sports ads on hallways which promoted the national sports events called "Daciada".

<sup>16</sup>Tiberiu Stama, "Înviorarea demarează lent, puțin convingător pentru că nu i se cunosc îndeajuns foloasele...", *Sportul*, 23. 01. 1980, pp. 1-3.

employees, in unison, near their sewing machines or other machines, do full body warm up, arms workout, stretching, etc., while giving us some testimonies of the beneficiaries: "Many of the successes of those working with us are also explained by the fact that gymnastics is practiced here [...]"<sup>17</sup>. So, there are a generous numbers of articles that place the equal sign between work, sport and well-being, all having a common theme which regarded the work performance linked to the sports performances. To be more precise, often, in the factories that occupied leading positions in the top of productivity, the employees were also athletes with results as remarkable as those in production field<sup>18</sup>.

Last but not least, the sport was used in various national celebrations, the best known being, of course, the demonstrations on the occasion of the celebration of 23 August (the National Day)<sup>19</sup> but in the newspaper, journalists tell us about the unfolding of such events on other occasions too. For example, newspaper correspondents, in a group of articles, describe the organization of sports competitions on the occasion of the celebration of another historically important day, 24 January, or the election of deputies in the Grand National Assembly and the popular councils (March 9, 1980)<sup>20</sup>.

Indeed, the most extensive sports demonstrations took place on the occasion of the celebration of the August 23 under the slogan consecrated by the journalist "the fight against fascism and imperialism". To illustrate the magnitude of this sporting phenomenon, we will discuss some articles that appeared in the "Sportul" newspaper, not before remarking that the newspapers numbers dedicated to this event, besides the usual monochrome writing and photos, were also gratitude with red written titles, and the usual four page newspaper reached six or eight pages.

For example, from a number released in 1980, we find out from an article that "a lot of sporting actions are taking place in the whole country or are in the course of development, with enthusiasm among children, youth and working people from towns and villages"<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, the editors take advantage of this moment to draw attention to the achievements of the communist leadership, which we also notice in other sectors: industry, agriculture, education, etc., highlighting the fact that during 1944-1980, Romania had hundreds participants in the Olympic, World and European Championships, while until 1944 the number of participants was up to 10<sup>22</sup>.

The articles emerged on those days of celebration described in detail the atmosphere of sport-cultural events, "the showcase of the athletes was a symbol of the unfailing trust in party politics, high esteem, deep love and warm gratitude to Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu [...] the initiator of all our successes"<sup>23</sup>.

The August 23 national anniversary was not only a sports parade, it was also a military parade too, the allegorical chariots symbolized the economic prosperity, the greatness of the industry, the success of the scientific research etc. The representatives of the major cooperatives, enterprises or mammoth factories were also features alongside people dressed in popular costumes representing the Romanians roots, traditions and finally, the Romanian peasant; together paying homage to the most

---

<sup>17</sup> Tiberiu Stama, "Gimnastica la locul de muncă – în sprijinul producției și al...performanței", *Sportul*, 01.07.1986, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Other articles on this theme: Geo Raetchi, "Eficiență sporită a muncii, calitate superioară a vieții, coordonate noi activități sportive...", *Sportul*, 26.02.1980, pp. 1-3; Tiberiu Stama, "Bunăstarea oamenilor se exprimă atât prin recolte bogate, cât și prin grija pentru sănătate și vigoare", *Sportul*, 04.03.1980, pp. 1-3; Tiberiu Stama, "Printre tinerii de la Autobuzul ferm angajați în muncă și în sport", *Sportul*, 14.08.1986, pp.1-3; Tiberiu Stama, "Pulsul muncii entuziasmate și al pasiunii pentru sport – la cote tot mai ridicate", 19.08. 1986, pp.1-3.

<sup>19</sup> "Manifestări sportive dedicate aniversării Unirii", *Sportul*, 23.01. 1980, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> "Numeroase competiții dedicate alegerilor de la 9 martie", *Sportul*, 7.03. 1980, p. 1; "Sportivii țării au omagiat alegerile de la 9 martie prin entuziaste întreceri de masă", *Sportul* 11.03.1980, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> "Numeroase acțiuni sportive de masă", *Sportul*, 22.08.1980, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> "Bilanțul celor 36 de ani de activitate sportivă în țara noastră", *op.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Valeriu Ghiose, "Parada sportivilor", *Sportul*, 23.08.1980, p.1



beloved leader. In other words, as a title of an article noted, a "bright image of Romania in celebration"<sup>24</sup> is presented to us, where the athlete, along with the industrial worker, the peasant and the teacher, all thanks to Nicolae Ceausescu for the possibilities offered for development at all levels (economic, social spiritual etc.), and furthermore, for organizing the grandiose sports-cultural parades. From the testimonials of those who have lived through those moments, especially the 80s, we find out that at least the last years' parades, presented to the leader, have nothing to do with the desire of people deprived of primary rights to show gratitude but with the fact that they were obliged to participate. As a result, we might consider that "the semantics of the festivities orchestrated for the National Day of Communist Romania reveal the megalomaniac, greatness, super propagandistic character of the communist regime. All the living beings of the country were kneeling at the dictator's feet, showing him the highest gratitude of all"<sup>25</sup>.

In fact, some memories of those who have experienced those moments are sad and for some funny but for most of them, the demonstrations they were seen as being stupid, ridiculous and they were trying to find ways to avoid the "obligation" to pay tribute to the leader. Not even the endless rehearsals resulting in losing consciousness for some of the overtired participants, strong sun or rain, nothing could stop the parade, as a witness remembers: "It is the festivity I have always hated as a pupil, and still when I grew up, when I was employed. I remember that in the last 23 August when I attended I got sunburn and a drop of severe calcium crisis so, that they pulled me out of the row. Luckily that the rehearsal formations had not been closed, otherwise I would stay there ..." <sup>26</sup> and others, with a note of irony, confessed they were sent home from parades because they did not fit the required standard, they did not have the proper clothing: "I did not have black shoes, they were dark brown. And so, they took me out of the line and sent me home, I just defied the system!!!"<sup>27</sup>.

Obviously, this magnificent personal image demonstration that we have seen throughout the journalistic activities of those times were meant to support the Nicolae Ceausescu's personality cult, which proved to be, among other things, a visionary in terms of sports. The author of a study on sociology of the human body summarizes very clearly the sports-cultural demonstrations of Nicolae Ceausescu's leadership: "In fact, these pseudo-sportive manifestations express nothing but the symbolic force of the human body, the essence of a totalitarian regime in which the individual is only a part of a whole, who has to put his whole existence in the service of the good functioning of the whole socialism"<sup>28</sup>.

For instance, we find out from an article that the development of the Romanian sports is an idea, a strategy, attributed to the creative genius of Nicolae Ceausescu: "On these coordinates of light, in this happy context, the activity of physical education and mass sports, which has in the person the general secretary of the Party, the president of the country, a permanent mentor, a counsellor, a

---

<sup>24</sup> "Imagine luminoasă a României în sărbătoare" is the title of a group article released in August 23, 1983 and it describe the never ending sports events and cultural too, unrolling all around the country during the festivities for August 23.

<sup>25</sup> Hadrian Gorun, "Megalomania lui 23 August: 40 de ani de la revoluția anti-imperialistă", *Historia magazine*, online: <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/megalomania-lui-23-august-1984-40-de-ani-de-la-revolutia-anti-imperialista>, accessed in 7.10.2017.

<sup>26</sup> Olivia Tulbure și Roxana Găgiu, "Ziua comunistă de 23 august a traumatizat bucureștenii. Vezi ce scriau ziarele și ce făceau oamenii atunci", *Historia magazine*, online: <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/video-fotogalerie-ziua-comunista-de-23-august-a-traumatizat-bucurestenii-vezi-ce-scriau-ziarele-si-ce-faceau-oamenii-atunci>, accessed in 7.10.2017.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> Petruța Teampău, "Muncă, tinerețe, frumusețe. Corp, feminitate, sexualitate în regimul comunist", în Laura Grunberg (coord.), "Introducere în sociologia corpului. Teme, perspective și experiențe întrupate", Polirom, Iași, 2010, p. 124

friend"<sup>29</sup>. In other words, the development of sport, like all other sectors, the society as a whole, is attributed to Nicolae Ceausescu, and the results are displayed in the pages of the newspapers through the numerous statistics and names of athletes – the European champions, mostly testified the prodigious activity of the Romanian leadership. The activity of the "brilliant leader" was not all excited, considering that the selection of the best future performance athletes was made by schools, as a bystander recalls: "During school sports classes, for example, we had to put together all sorts of ludicrous thing that I do not think will ever served someone later, and in no case did it create to us who knows what physical form"<sup>30</sup>.

One of the primary sports achievement attributed to the president of the country is "Daciada"<sup>31</sup>, a competition meant to give young talented people, and not only to them, a chance to discover their sports abilities, being first of all addressed to amateur athletes and to the development of mass sports. Obviously, from this amateur athletes participating in competitions were also chosen those who later participated in professional performance sports. Although, the promotion of sport and participation in sporting events under the generic name "Daciada" has brought many benefits, such as the establishment of sport clubs, the support of less practiced sports and the discovery of new talented sportsmen, not least there are those who consider that, in fact, everything was just a mischievous propaganda, a kind of factory of medals and athletes, reasons of pride for the Party and the leader.

Less positive voices regarding "Daciada" also consider that "N. Ceausescu developed the sport through "minimal investments and patriotic work", and the citizens of the Romanian state were involved in the phenomenon with or without their desire. "Daciada" appeared as a result of the Communist leader's visit to China and North Korea and consequently, the cult of the personality of the ruler was not lacking in this area. For the Romanian Communist Party, "Daciada" was a good management of people's leisure time"<sup>32</sup>. This vision, of sport used as a leisure management, of limiting activities outside the work schedule or school or just to orientation people's attention towards a certain direction, is shared by the witnesses of those times, as well as by researchers who give East Germany as an example: "It was hoped that mass sport as a collective undertaking would enrich citizens with ideals and discipline in tune with socialist values. While the elite sport stars set about gaining much needed external legitimacy, mass sport would help mould citizens at the domestic level"<sup>33</sup>.

The free time was therefore managed by the Party, providing the necessary fun for citizens who became sportsmen and workers in the same time, sports clubs were being attached to an institution as a consequence. It should also be mentioned that "Daciada" was promoted as an "initiative of the President of the country, Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu [...]. Today it is not to be conceived that in any work collective [...] there are no actions not to be carried out under the name of "Daciada" [...]"<sup>34</sup>.

No less important is the fact that sport or physical education were seen as defining factors for the formation of the "New Man", considering, besides the strong civic-patriotic training, that the

---

<sup>29</sup> Constantin Alexe, "Dezvoltarea sportului românesc urmează ideea fundamentală exprimată magistral de tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu: mișcarea noastră sportivă să se transforme într-o puternică mișcare de masă care să cuprindă practic întregul tineret al patriei", *Sportul*, 19.03.1980, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Oana Ocneanu Thiery, "Eu, una, n-am suferit! ", în Radu Pavel Gheo și Dan Lungu (coord. ), "Tovarășe de drum. Experiența feminină în comunism", Polirom, Iași, 2008, p. 178.

<sup>31</sup> The name of the sports competition originates from the historical territory inhabited by the Dacians , Dacia.

<sup>32</sup> Stan Bogdan George, "Daciada, olimpiada românească", *Historia magazine* , online <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/daciada-olimpiada-romaneasca>, accessed in 10.10.2017.

<sup>33</sup> Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix, op.cit., p.20.

<sup>34</sup> T. Bădețeanu, "Daciada – marea competiție sportivă națională a statornic o puternică tradiție în sportul de masă", *Sportul*, 26.01.1983, p. 2.

acquisition of good communist qualities like the vigour, the youth or the inclination towards sports performance are fundamentals, as it is often emphasized in the newspaper articles<sup>35</sup>.

Sport will remain a sensitive topic and can be seen from many points of view. On one hand, promoting sport among the masses is an action with huge benefits, be it in the communist period or present times, and these actions cannot be attributed to political propaganda exclusively, and obviously cannot be considered harmful for the population. On the other hand, as has been shown in various studies, sport has been a political propaganda tool since antiquity, since the earliest Olympic Games.

Indeed, dictatorial regimes, in the name of the ideology, have abused sports to a certain extent, giving it a political character both domestically and internationally. The articles in the newspaper "Sportul" deserve attention because the newspaper itself completes the image of the Romanian society in the 80s, and illustrates, at the same time, the ideological imperatives of those times. So, we have, first of all, a newspaper that provides general sports information, promotes sports and sports competition among the masses, and second, like all the publications of that period, has a predetermined role in promoting the Party ideology, the Nicolae Ceausescu's personality cult, to create links between sports performance and work performance, both of which are considered to be features of a good communist. The communist ideology promoted, in the same time, the mass training in the idea of creating a group mentality which makes the people more united and submissive. In other word, the sportsmen should have train having in mind the image of the Glorious Ruler, bringing him the much needed respect and least bun not last, mass sports should transform an ordinary man into an extraordinary communist.

It is not wrong to say in the end, that the Ceausescu's regime created a slight, superficial and confused interpretation of various notions, well established by the sociology of sport like the differences between a person with a sustained physical activity and sports performance, or between leisure, recreation or institutional sport. Certainly, from the point of view of propaganda, sport was meant to provide young people an alternative to actions that could be considered to be subversive to the State and to maintain and direct their attention to a highly competitive and potentially prestigious activity.

Unfortunately, the testimonies of those who remember the events of the last years in Romania under the leadership of Nicolae Ceausescu draw us a completely different picture of the articles and happy photos from "Sport" newspaper where people were willing to participate in demonstrations or sports games. Most of the time the grandiose sports games and sports demonstrations had nothing but a strong propaganda character, where, especially in the later years, nobody wanted to be a part of.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

„Sport” Newspaper 1980-1989

Aguirre Pedro Arturo, "Istoria megalomaniei", București, Nemira, 2016.

Anuarul Institutului de Investigarea a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului românesc, vol. V-VI, Polirom, Iași, 2010-2011; vol. IX, Polirom, Iași, 2015; vol. VIII, Polirom, Iași 2003.

Arnaud Pierre and James Riordan (editors), "Sport and International Politics", Taylor & Francis e-Library, London, 2003.

---

<sup>35</sup> Aurelian Bredeanu, "Indicațiilor tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu prețios îndrumar pentru formarea omului nou al societății noastre socialiste. Principii comuniste de muncă și de viață – coordonate etice pentru tineretul nostru sportiv", *Sportul*, 20.03.1980, pp. 1-3; Emil Drăgănescu, "Tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu, părinte iubitor al tineretului sportiv", *Sportul*, 22.03.1980, pp. 1-3.



**Iulian Boldea, Dumitru-Mircea Buda, Cornel Sigmirean (Editors)**  
**MEDIATING GLOBALIZATION: Identities in Dialogue**  
**Arhipelag XXI Press, 2018**

---

Delaney Tim and Tim Madigan , "The sociology of sports: an introduction", McFarland & Company, Inc., USA, 2015.

Dennis Mike and Jonathan Grix, "Sport under Communism. Behind the East German 'Miracle'", Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Gheo Radu Pavel și Dan Lungu (coord.), "Tovarășe de drum. Experiența feminină în comunism", Polirom, Iași, 2008,

Grunberg Laura (coord.), "Introducere în sociologia corpului. Teme, perspective si experiențe întrupate", Polirom, Iași, 2010.