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**THE HISTORY OF SPORTS IN MURES COUNTY  
BETWEEN 1948-1989.  
ELITES. PERFORMANCE. IMAGE.**

**- SUMMARY OF PH.D. THESIS -**

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**2015**

## **1. Summary of the thesis**

Nowadays, sport represents a way of recreation, of harmonious development of the body, a way of health maintenance, but also an expression of competition and success. Today more than ever, sport means a big industry, an industry which produces benefits, and if it is not well managed, it may produce failure and financial bankruptcy. Thus, these days sport means an advertising phenomenon, a promotion of companies, stadiums and gyms being decorated with publicity billboards, TV broadcastings of sport competitions being constantly interrupted by advertisements. Sport has become a means of publicity and propaganda in favour of regional and national identity. In our country, it has become almost a leitmotiv that great sportspersons are the best Romanian ambassadors. Great champions accompany with their image the country brand; they represent, next to ministers, the country at international summits where important decisions concerning Romania are taken. In election campaigns in Romania and everywhere in the democratic world sportspersons are present at public meetings.

In my paper dealing with sports and propaganda in the communist regime I have tried to emphasise such aspects. I have tried to reconstitute the history of sport, primarily in Mureş County, by underlining the propaganda aspect of competitions and results. However, just as I have shown, propaganda is not excluded from sport competition. But, in communism it was taken to extremes and it was indoctrinated. Sport results were a way of expressing the superiority of an ideology and of a political system, the communist regime, which was in competition with the capitalist regime. I insisted on the presentation of athletes and their exceptional results as well as on the way in which the regime confiscated their titles for its own image.

Our endeavour was based on the analysed historiography, dedicated to the history of sport and to the communist regime, but was also based on a documentary basis made up of published sources and documents taken from the National Archives, The Mureş County branch. I have taken into consideration the written press, including the online one, realising a content analyses: common themes, important sport subjects, propaganda advertising. Based on this, I have realised an incursion in the history of sport, around the world and in our country, since the ancient times up to today. I have also presented the idea of Olympics, as an idea of competition between men, freed of all constraints, an ideal which unfortunately is less respected, financial and image interests shadowing such aspirations. In this respect, the period I have analysed represented a good example with the two Olympics, from Moscow and the Los Angeles. I insisted more on the presentation of

the sport from Mureş County, the creation of clubs in the 50s, national and international results. However, I had in view first of all the aspects connected to propaganda, its construction, the way it mystified reality, mostly through the press. Surely, the presentation of the history of sport from the point of view of propaganda did not mean the annihilation of the results. The value of the athletes and their results is not questionable. That is why I insisted on the results, on the people from sport to whom I brought homage, symbolically placing them in the national pantheon.

With our research, I think we managed to underline the aspects regarding the communist society. Generally, people view communism differently. Some remember their youth, thus the regime means exuberance and optimism, lack of daily worries. For others, communism meant a period of austerity, queues for food, a lack of liberty, but also a period in which you could go to the seaside without great efforts and a period in which you got an apartment for free. It also meant a period in which with a TV set and an antenna in the old Dacia car, people tried to see on a hill the football games in the championship. The truth is that sport attracts many people, no matter if they practise it or simply watch it, charmed by the competition. So, I did not have in mind a lessening of the idea of sport, of the results or of the people who practise it. On the contrary, I presented with admiration the clubs, the players and the results. Those who practised a sport in communism did not think of the propagandistic aspect of the sport phenomenon. They did not think that they had to be good so that their country would be better than a western Europe country. Maybe just East Germans were educated in such a way. However, the sportsperson stays a performer anywhere, if he does not use drugs, and he has to be admired for his talent and work. Sport does not represent only the modernisation of the representation of the body, but also a modernisation of culture in general, a vision on time, on sociability and communication. I have thus analysed the term of sport as a social phenomenon with strong implications in history, since the Greeks until today's sportspersons. A whole world, philosophers, teachers, writers, politicians have practised sports and have written about it. Sport is a culture – said the French philosopher Bernard Jeu – as long as the performance of the athlete is creation. Many illuminated people have praised sport. Voltaire recommended as a recipe of human happiness, or even as a human ideal, the body of an athlete and the soul of a wise man. Starting from this, I have analysed the idea of Olympics, as a phenomenon of sport and human history, as a supreme idea of competition. In this sense, sport competition is a reason for joy. Mass media, with its development in the modern age, has made sport into a phenomenon of human entertainment, present in our daily life. There is no news without sport news. I illustrated this aspect

of the development of sport by presenting the performances obtained by Romanians at Olympic Games, underlining their successes, with special attention given to athletes from Mureş County present in national delegations. I have dedicated a special chapter to sport from Mures County. After the Second World War, connected to the changes in political regime, many new sections were born: bar bells, wrestling, target shooting, fencing, basketball, volleyball, football, table tennis etc. Many athletes from Mureş County will represent Romania at different sporting competitions. In 1980, at the Moscow Olympic Games, the following athletes from Mureş County were part of the national delegation: Radu Voine - handball, Poingraz Antal - fencing, Berki Jozsef – target shooting with a bow, Nagy Jozsef – discus throw, Nyilka Sandor - fencing, Radu Gele – bar bells, Aurora Chiu – target shooting with a bow, Terezia Preda – target shooting with a bow, Eugen Pop - pentathlon, Nicolae Pop – volleyball.

After presenting sport from a historical point of view, I presented sport as a phenomenon of the communist regime. As it is widely known, socialist society wanted to create a new man, communism rejecting individuality, considering it just a manifestation of the conflict between man and society. A new man was created, a man whose specific characteristics were: the sense of duty, the wish to go beyond oneself, the wish to overpass difficulties, a fighter for the triumph of socialist principles.

Relaxed for a while, the idea of the creation of the new man came back after the Communist Party Plenum from July 1971.

The communist ideology imposed itself through the apparatus of the communist party, through the socialising process, in which the mass media played a major role. In the multitude of methods, sport had a special place, attached to propaganda. Any sport initiative or performance was part of the party's politics, the results being the natural outcome of the politics of the party. Nicolae Sotir, volleyball coach in Turkey, owed his international recognition to the politics of the party. The propaganda through sport had more levels. First, it was mass sport, as a means of educating the people in order not to waste their time, sport being accessible to all people, far from the “star aura” which characterised sport in capitalism. Nationalised, mass competitions are included in the competition named “Daciada”, Romanians identifying themselves with their historical past, the national vernacularity from the 70s and 80s being transferred into sport as well. The second level, professional sport, organised in clubs, wanted to transfer competition from factories in sport. Then, there were international competitions, European and international championships and the Olympic

Games. First, the results were obtained by copying the soviet model, coaches learning from the advanced experience of soviet science. Romania had a new discourse in presenting the results, after cooling off relations with Moscow. Nadia Comaneci, the Montreal hero, became a product of socialist society. Nadia Comaneci's and Ilie Nastase's successes were presented in such a way as to create Romania an idealised external image.

The same propagandistic register can be seen in the case of athletes from Mureş. Leon Rotman, winner of two Olympic medals at Melbourne, owed his successes to the boat built in Reghin, the victory being shared with the workers from Reghin. The truth is that with the performance in sport, the canoe from Reghin internationally became a product of the success of socialist economy.

Of course, I have not intended to lessen the performance of athletes in the communist regime. Political propaganda was not their target. That is why I ended my thesis with the presentation of the biography of great Mureş athletes, their destiny, a remember of Mureş sport. I created a page of the history of sport, with the presentation of professional sport from two points of view: as sport and as propaganda, actually, a history of man in a totalitarian regime, in which ideology interferes with sport, with domains which are free by their nature.

## **2. Key words:**

sport, history, communist regime, performance,propaganda, image

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