



OccasionalPaper 50

Football and political freedom: the historical experience of divided Germany

Jutta Braun

Liberales Institut

JEDER MENSCH BRAUCHT
FREIHEIT, UM SEINE
ANLAGEN UND FÄHIGKEITEN
ENTFALTEN UND
VERWIRKLICHEN ZU KÖNNEN.
ER
WIRTSCHAFTLICH UND
WISSENSCHAFTLICH, STAGNIERT
DIE WIRTSCHAFT,
GÜNSTIGES LEBEN BRAUCHT
FREIHEIT GENAUSO, WIE DER
KÖRPER DIE LUFT ZUM ATMEN.

Imprint:

Editor

Liberal Institute

Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit

Karl-Marx-Straße 2

D-14482 Potsdam

Phone +49 3 31.70 19-2 10

Fax +49 3 31.70 19-2 16

libinst@freiheit.org

www.freiheit.org

Production

COMDOK GmbH

Office Berlin

2008

Football and political freedom: the historical experience of divided Germany

Jutta Braun

Paper prepared for the International Colloquium "Sports, Politics, Free Market and the State" organized by the Liberal Institute, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Potsdam, Germany, 27th June 2008.

Contents

Football and political freedom: the historical experience of divided Germany	5
The controversy over the 1988 UEFA Cup	5
Football between the two Germanys in the 1950s	10
<i>Republikflucht</i> as trauma for the SED	13
East Germany's triumph at the Olympics	16
Fans out of control	18
Towards football unity	21

Football and political freedom: the historical experience of divided Germany

While television viewers in Germany and abroad will be glued to their sets these days, following Euro 2008, few will remember just how highly politicised football was during the Cold War. Exactly 20 years ago, in 1988, a European football championship was also under way – the host country was the Federal Republic of Germany. However, a major political outrage in the run-up to the tournament almost put an end to West Germany's chances of playing host. It was caused by the rivalry between the different systems in the East and the West and the special position occupied by West Berlin in superpower machinations. The United States described the city surrounded by communist troops as a "defended island of freedom". The Eastern Bloc countries, on the other hand, condemned it as a "hub for spying and espionage", primarily because it was from here that several attempts had been made to escape from East to West. The Soviet Union had repeatedly tried to secure West Berlin as a political entity separate from the Federal Republic, the most familiar milestones on this path being the Berlin Blockade in 1948 and Khrushchev's ultimatum in 1958.

The controversy over the 1988 UEFA Cup

Today, we have virtually forgotten that West Berlin was often caught between the millstones of the Cold War, even within the international sports associations.¹ In 1985, the German Football Association (Deutsche Fußball-Bund, DFB), under its president, Hermann Neuberger, had applied to host the 1988 UEFA Cup. The organisational concept submitted to the Union of European Football Association (UEFA) envisaged eight match venues, among them Cologne, Hamburg and Munich. Yet West Berlin was not on the list. Neuberger had deliberately overlooked the *Frontstadt* or frontline city, fearing that its inclusion could well jinx the entire application procedure at the very outset. His worries were fuelled by his experiences. Fourteen years earlier, the Soviet Union had left no stone unturned in its efforts to exclude West Berlin from the list of venues identified for the 1974 FIFA World Cup in West Germany. On that occasion, however, Neuberger succee-

¹ See Braun, Jutta, 'Inselstadt im Abseits?', in: Braun, Jutta; Teichler, Hans Joachim (ed.): Sportstadt Berlin im Kalten Krieg. Prestigekämpfe und Systemwettstreit, Berlin, 2006, pp. 150–183.

ded in his efforts to include the "half city", as the collective votes of the Eastern Bloc on the board of FIFA, the governing body of world football, did not constitute a majority. Ironically, and as luck would have it, East Germany of all countries in the much despised "political unity" was drawn to play against Chile – which it did with gritted teeth. The situation in 1985 however was far more dangerous. As the Eastern Bloc enjoyed a comparatively strong position in UEFA, the president of the West German football association was prompted to play safe and put an end to the sports solidarity with West Berlin so as not to jeopardise his country's chances of hosting the 1988 UEFA Cup.

No sooner were these priorities set than there was a public outcry. More than anything else, the residents of this notoriously besieged enclave felt that they had



Red card for foul play

Reiser

In 1985, DFB president Hermann Neuberger decided, out of consideration for the Eastern Bloc, to put an end to the solidarity in sport with West Berlin. Although West Germany was chosen to host the 1988 UEFA Cup, Helmut Kohl's Government was incensed.

been left in the lurch. Ever since the 1950s, the people of West Berlin had invariably been able to rely on a supportive West German sports policy and on the backing of organised sport. Examples included an "air bridge for sport",² the choice of West Berlin as the routine venue of the final game of the German Championships before the launch of the Bundesliga,³ and a range of tax-related and practical measures that were initiated to assist associations and clubs. Had this era now come to an end? Were the "West Germans" no longer interested in securing freedom and viability for West Berlin at all levels? Yet whenever West Germany decided to side with the disappointed inhabitants of West Berlin, it would invariably unleash a storm of protest from across the political spectrum. The weekly magazine *Die Zeit* summarised the incredulous reaction to Neuberger:

„The Federal Chancellor has appealed to his national conscience, the executive committee of the SPD (Social Democratic Party) has expressed its "outrage", an entire FDP (Free Democratic Party) party conference has called for remedial action. There is turmoil because the football boss has left Berlin out of the reckoning for the European championships."⁴

Yet Neuberger opposed all attempts at political intervention, insisting on the "autonomy of sport". Nevertheless, the West German Government under Helmut Kohl went to great lengths one final time to secure West Berlin's participation in the event. On 5 March 1985, the West German cabinet decided to hand over an aide memoire to the foreign ministers of the UEFA countries with which they maintained good relations. There was no time to lose as the final decision on which country would host the championships was scheduled for 15 March. The central statement in the communiqué read as follows:

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany would deeply regret it if the European Football Championships to be held in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1988 did not include West Berlin as a venue. In such a case, it would not consider it desirable to grant the hosting of the 1988 European Football Championships to the DFB.⁵

2 This included financial subsidies for sporting ties as well as transport for West German teams to the island-city.

3 Until the Bundesliga was introduced in 1963, six finals were held in West Berlin.

4 'Auf der Bananenschale der Politik', *Die Zeit*, 1 March 1985.

5 Federal Archives Koblenz (BAK), BAK B 136 24413, Witte, 6 March 1985 VS-NfD Plurez to Paris, The Hague, Rome, Lisbon, Reykjavik, Edinburgh, Vienna, Berne, London; memo to: Moscow, Prague, ChBK, Washington, Stäv.

UEFA's executive committee, meeting the following day in Lisbon, was not in the least impressed. On the contrary, various foreign politicians and sports officials criticised what they thought was a completely misplaced intervention by the West German Government. David H. Will, executive member from Scotland, was harsh in his criticism of the "incredible step": "I do not need a foreign ministry and most certainly not the government of another country in order to take a decision as a sports official."⁶ The DFB, also filled with consternation, expressed the "feelings" of its members in a resolution dated 19 March 1985. As a "free, autonomous sporting association in a free democratic state", it refused to accept "orders or instructions from any government or administrative body – and certainly not from representatives of political parties". The DFB continued to oppose the "massive threats of all kinds of reprisals and the offensive nature of the attacks" on Hermann Neuberger.⁷

In the sealed-off island-city, however, the people welcomed the West German Government's statement of support in the controversy over the European championships but believed that the DFB was a traitor. Excitement in West Berlin over the 1985 DFB Cup final to be staged in the city was therefore muted. The mood in the city turned against the football association and was fuelled by the inevitable feeling that the DFB Cup final had been accorded to West Berlin by way of "compensation" for the city's exclusion from the 1988 European championships. There was even fear of the DFB president being physically assaulted. Toni Kahl, the Rhineland football president, publicly cast doubt on whether "Neuberger's personal safety could still be guaranteed in Berlin". Taking the same line, Rolf Kramell, head of security in the Olympic stadium, stated: "In the VIP box we could have provided Neuberger adequate protection," but the situation could be dangerous "when awarding the trophy on the field."⁸ Eventually Neuberger did not attend the long-awaited first cup final in Berlin on 26 May 1985 – either because he had other commitments or because he was "afraid".⁹ Uwe Hammer, former head of the West Berlin sports association, believed that things had certainly changed for the better as regards the prevailing sports policy in Berlin:

„The 1988 European championship was a one-off event; we have long come to terms with not having been there. The DFB Cup, on the other hand, continues to matter to Berlin. The fantastic atmosphere that we have today, the enthusiasm and the chant 'We're going to Berlin' – in 1985 we could have only dreamed of this in this isolated enclave. Today it is a reality."¹⁰

The controversy of 1985 proves just how difficult it is to separate issues on the daily political agenda from the inherent logic of the "beautiful game". By its own definition, organised football in West Germany had been "apolitical" since its birth – at least to the extent that it positioned itself as an independent body that did not take instructions from a party or a government. Based on this definition, the body consciously distanced itself from the political reshaping and *Gleichschaltung* (alignment) of sports organisations during the Third Reich. However, the football association invariably adopted a political stance when it came to relations with the second German state. In the 1950s and 1960s, DFB essentially backed the line taken by the West German Government that claimed the right to be the sole representative of Germany. And until 1985 DFB was always at one with West German governments in the matter of expressing solidarity with West Berlin. The 1985 controversy does however reveal a historic divide, as it was the first time that the leading football association did not go along with Bonn – something that had always been taken for granted and that the association had always chosen to do. In terms of its organisation it was entitled to step out of line, but the politicians were caught off guard and were left helpless.

The uproar in 1985 occurred in the later stages of the Cold War. However, during the country's 40-year division, sport in general, and football in particular, was a symbol of the East–West rivalry and a field over which both sides fought. The following section will highlight various historical episodes and events to briefly pose two central questions: first, when and how was football instrumentalised by East Germany's Socialist Unity Party (SED) as a tool for political objectives? Second, to what extent did the history of the soccer ball and its fans follow its own laws¹¹ also in a dictatorship, even offering a level of freedom that transcended the ubiquitous pressure to conform?

6 'UEFA-Vertreter kritisieren Bundesregierung', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 March 1985.

7 BAK B 136 24413, 'DFB: Zur Kontroverse um die EM 1988 (mit Resolution des Beirats des Westdeutschen Fußballverbandes vom 19.3.1985).

8 'Neuberger nicht zum Finale – aus Angst!' *Bild*, 13 April 1985.

9 He did not attend out of choice; the official excuse offered was a World Cup organising committee meeting in Mexico. 'Neuberger hat für den Ostblock das Heu in die Scheune gefahren', *Kölnische Rundschau*, 16 March 1985.

10 Interview with Uwe Hammer, a contemporary, on 23 May 2005 in Berlin.

11 On the concept of *Eigensinn* (self-determination or wilfulness) in sport, especially in East Germany, see Teichler, Hans Joachim: Einleitung, in Ders. (ed.): Sport in der DDR. Eigensinn, Konflikte, Trends, Cologne, 2003, pp. 5–18.

Football between the two Germanys in the 1950s



In the 1950s thousands of sports meets, including numerous football matches, between East and West were held each year. These sporting events that took place mainly on holidays such as Easter and Christmas had the character of all-German fairs. The Germans still felt like one nation despite the existence of two politically opposite states. The SED initially encouraged such meets between the two Germanys, seeing them as an opportunity to influence the West German public. Hence a match between East and West was invariably accompanied by an intensive propaganda campaign: political fliers, public debates and the image of Stalin were routinely used at East German stadiums. With the help of the Committee for Unity and Freedom in German Sport, an organisation under the SED, the propaganda campaign was extended on West German soil too. West German sport, much like West German politics, objected to the political hype of the communists, and in late 1952 the German sports authority, or DSB as it is known by its German initials, briefly snapped sporting ties with East Germany citing "misuse". Relations were re-established only when East Germany

Sports meets were politicised by the SED. Here a football match between East and West Germans is used for propaganda for the "People's Survey" conducted by the SED in 1952 against the Western integration of the Federal Republic. (The provocative question is: "Are you against the remilitarisation of Germany and for the signing of a peace treaty with Germany in 1951?") (Private)

signed an agreement stating that it would forego further politicisation—a pledge that never went beyond mere lip service.¹² Eventually, however, the Politbüro had to acknowledge that its strategy of infiltrating sporting events was in any case ineffective. "Blame" for this was attributed to the concept of uncontrollable *Eigensinn* or wilfulness of players and fans alike – the simple fact that football fans in East and West were, after all, primarily interested in the happenings on the field and not in political slogans, an attitude unsuccessfully derided by the SED as "nothing

but sport". To complicate matters further for East German ideology, West German football presented itself as the far more attractive option. The SED was taught the first lesson in this regard after the surprise World Cup win by Sepp Herberger's team when the unexpected victory was publicly celebrated not only by West German football fans but also by their counterparts in the East.¹³ A far less known propaganda disaster but one that longer-lasting effect for the SED followed in 1956. The friendly match to be played between 1. FC Kaiserslautern and SC Wismut Karl-Marx-Stadt on 6 October 1956 was sensationalised by the East German press as "The Great Football Battle". This attention-grabbing football event was to be held on the evening of 6 October 1949 to commemorate the anniversary of the founding of East Germany the following day. The spectacular game was also intended to inaugurate the recently built Central Stadium (*Zentralstadion*) in Leipzig. The match between the two clubs was a meeting of the two undisputed football giants from East and West Germany. Fritz and Ottmar Walter, Werner Liebrich, Werner Kohlmeyer and Horst Eckel, the five living "heroes of Berne", travelled with the team from the state of Rhineland-Palatinate to Leipzig, the trade fair city. Football fever was spreading. The overwhelming demand for 400,000 tickets far exceeded the number of tickets available; most of the tickets were distributed directly via state-run businesses mainly to "deserving" party comrades. Diehard football fans held a night-long vigil in front of the ticket counters, standing room tickets were sold twice over, and so for the much awaited high-profile game the "hundred-thousand stadium" was transformed briefly into an arena for 110,000. The organisers had to survive a moment of panic when Fritz Walter missed the inter-zone train on his way to the match, but managed to reach the venue on time in a police car with a blue light. East German sports journalists also had cause for worry—a match between the cities of Berlin and Moscow, scheduled for the afternoon of 6 October in the East German capital, was to end just under an hour before the whistle went in Leipzig. In the editing rooms of East Berlin's *Sportecho*, reporters were "weighing, assessing, pondering" the options of how to make it from one venue to the other on time. "We need a plane!" Indeed, shortly after the match in East Berlin had ended, Nikolai Snekow, the Russian Lufthansa pilot, turned on the engines of his aircraft and 33 minutes later the frantic reporters were in Leipzig.¹⁴ Their arrival was soon followed by the thunderous applause that greeted the two teams as they entered the stadium for 90 unforgettable minutes in German football history. On the field the in-form 'red devils' fought against the East German champions who also boasted five national players in their ranks and were playing brilliantly. The

12 On 21 September 1952, the DSB board decided to sever sporting ties with East Germany (the Oberwesel resolutions); these were re-established on 12 December 1952 following an agreement in West Berlin between representatives of the German Sports Association of the GDR (DS) and the DSB.

13 See chapter 'Die ungeteilte Freude beim Wunder von Bern', in: Wiese, René; Braun, Jutta (ed.) *Doppelpässe. Wie die Deutschen die Mauer umspielten*, Hamburg, 2006, pp. 62–67.

14 'Zwischen zwei großen Spielen', *Deutsches Sportecho*, 8 October 1956.



The "Great Football Battle" on 6 October 1965 between 1. F.C. Kaiserslautern und SC Wismut Karl-Marx-Stadt in Leipzig's Zentralstadion was watched by over a hundred thousand enthusiastic spectators.

Above, a tackle involving W. Mangold from Kaiserslautern and S. Wolf from SC Wismut. (Federal Archives)

leather ball resembled a white dot, bouncing back and forth. As the floodlighting was inadequate, it had been painted with white oil paint. All those who witnessed the match will never forget the thirty-second minute with the score at 3:1. As a corner kick from the right sailed into the Wismut penalty area, the then 36-year-old Fritz Walter dived forward and hit the ball back-heel at full stretch. The spectators watched with bated breath. The ball landed right on target in the upper corner of the net. This back-heel strike was to go down in sports history books as the "goal of the century". Heinz-Florian Oertel, an East German reporter otherwise loyal to the party line, was so taken by the West German team that his metaphors strayed into the realm of Italian opera: Fritz Walter was a "Mario Lanza", the "first tenor in German football".¹⁵ The team from Rhineland-Palatinate won 5:3 to public euphoria. The all-German football festival culminated in a farewell banquet at the Hotel Astoria. Yet below the veneer of cordiality, things had already begun to simmer. For the

SED's taste, the East German football fans had been a little too enthusiastic about the "class enemy". The Wismut players too had been taken aback by the support shown for a rival team by a primarily East German public. "It was very much like a difficult away game,"¹⁶ said the dispirited footballers. The East German sports leadership panicked when, in late 1956/early 1957, DSB president Willi Daume declared a "year of sporting ties between the two Germanys" and the West German Government pledged generous financial assistance.

The upper echelons of the SED sounded the alarm. The East German sports authorities warned publicly of an alleged "abuse of German-German sporting ties" by

¹⁵ *Fußballwoche*, 9 October 1956.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the government in Bonn, claiming that West German capitalism was intent on undermining the socialist structure with the help of sport.¹⁷ Thus the "Great Football Battle" of Leipzig remained one of the final high points of inter-German football rivalry before the SED started to distance itself more and more from joint sporting relations. On the day that construction of the Berlin Wall began, a symbolic gesture put a final end to the inter-German football mania. Fritz Belger, coach with the East German sports association, took up guard for the Workers' and Peasants' State, weapon in hand: "I have swapped the track suit for the obligatory uniform of the combat group," he declared, "the leather ball for the machine gun, because the need of the hour is to protect our borders."¹⁸ The German-German game of attack and defence was now more than just a game.

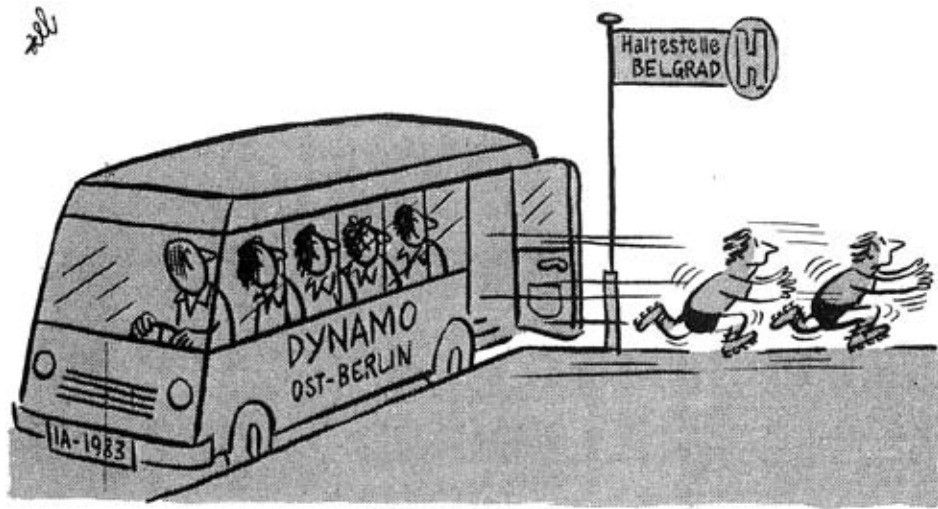
Republikflucht as trauma for the SED

Then came the decision to build the Wall, a defining moment of the era. The actual motive behind the construction of the Wall was diametrically opposite to the tale of the "anti-fascist protection wall" being propagated in East Germany, as it was losing its people in droves. The problem of *Republikflucht* or escape from the Republic (*Republikflucht* was the official term for fleeing the country), was extremely rampant in the world of football too, both before and after the border was brutally sealed on 13 August 1961. But in the course of time East German footballers seeking salvation in the West started to choose different ways and means. In the 1950s, entire teams fled the country, including Union Oberschöneweide from East Berlin and Dresden's traditional club SG Friedrichstadt. Helmut Schön, the Dresden coach who several years later became popular as coach of the West German national team and was known as the "man with the cap", encountered no problems when crossing the border in his car in 1950 and continued with his career in the West, starting a new life first in West Berlin and subsequently in Wiesbaden and Saarland. Nobody will "shed tears" for him or his team mates *Neues Deutschland*, the SED's official mouthpiece, called out after the defectors.¹⁹ In later years however players often used away games as a means of defecting discreetly from East Germany. Defections mounted in the case of BFC Dynamo, a club under the

¹⁷ 'Der gesamtdeutsche Sportverkehr darf nicht missbraucht werden', *Fußballwoche*, April 1957.

¹⁸ *Fußballwoche*, No. 34, 22, August 1961.

¹⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 7 June 1950.



Stürmer und Türmer

This cartoon appeared after Falko Götz and Dirk Schlegel, both with BFC Dynamo, defected to West Germany via Yugoslavia on 3 November 1983. (*Berliner Morgenpost*, 5 November 1983)

patronage of the Ministry for State Security (*Staatssicherheit* or *Stasi*). Given its successful record, the champion club played more often than others in “non-socialist countries abroad” and the visits could be used by players to defect. In the 1980s, fans in East German stadiums would chant derisive slogans about having to play for Dynamo if you wanted to defect. Many well-known footballers like Falko Goetz crossed over to West Germany. Even the Magdeburg player, Jürgen Sparwasser, whose name was synonymous with the undisputed highlight in East German football history when he secured the sensational 1:0 victory against the West German national team during the World Cup in Hamburg in 1974, stayed on in the West after participating in a veterans' game in Saarbrücken. But the case of the former BFC Dynamo forward, Lutz Eigendorf, attracted particular attention. Erich Mielke, Stasi minister, took Eigendorf's defection as a personal slight and mobilised the power of his security apparatus to follow and watch the player not only in the East but also in the West. His each and every move was shadowed by unofficial staff, and at home in East Berlin, his wife, Gabriele, was under pressure to file for divorce. An unofficial Stasi employee had been commissioned to start an affair with and eventually marry her. The plan was successful, the couple married and had a daughter. One of the intentions of this perfidious intrigue was intended

to ensure that the “name Eigendorf disappears from the East Berlin telephone directory”.²⁰ Indeed, the SED leadership and the slavish East German journalism left no stone unturned in their efforts to ensure that renegade East German athletes were deleted from collective memory, much like the ‘damnation memoriae’ in ancient Rome when politicians had monuments erased of the names and inscriptions of rulers who had fallen into disrepute. Thus elite athletes who had defected to the West were deleted from official medal lists without much ado. A write-up on the coach Jörg Berger in the East German football encyclopaedia was removed from subsequent editions following his defection. The punishment meted out to another Oberliga (Premier League) player involved touching up team photographs to remove his image. Whether the SED's campaign of revenge against Lutz Eigendorf stopped short of murder is still open to question. The circumstances surrounding the car accident on the night of 5–6 March 1983, which led to Eigendorf's death the following day, have yet to be clarified. Stasi files contain evidence of the East German secret service having had a hand in the accident.²¹ Almost 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, many of the athletes who fled East Germany continue to harbour a lurking fear of the long arm of state security. Some are afraid that the old networks of the dictatorship's power apparatus are still intact and are therefore reluctant to speak openly about their experiences. Falko Goetz, the then head coach at Hertha BSC, said in 2004: “Lutz Eigendorf died in an accident before I defected. I never spoke publicly about this and would like to keep it that way. I believe networks exist, even today.”²²

20 According to the journalist and historian Dr Heribert Schwan, at an expert discussion with Dr Jutta Braun, Dr Heribert Schwan and Dr Jürgen Stumm on 29.2.2008 in Braunschweig organised by the Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (a foundation for the examination and reappraisal of the communist dictatorship in East Germany) with reference to the Eigendorf case.

21 Schwan, Heribert, ‘Tod dem Verräter! Der lange Arm der Stasi und der Fall Lutz Eigendorf’, Munich, 2000.

22 ‘Kontaktgift im Kalten Krieg’, *taz*, 7 March 2008.

East Germany's triumph at the Olympics

The construction of the Wall snapped most of the direct ties between teams from the East and the West. Over the next decades, West German football could continue to update its success story of 1954 with two further World Cup titles (1974 and 1990) and two UEFA Cup titles. In stark contrast, East German football led only a shadow existence in professional football at international level and qualified just once for a final. That was at the 1974 World Cup when the East German team managed to pull off a surprising coup with Sparwasser's legendary goal. How does one explain this lack of success? In retrospect, the most difficult hurdle in East German football seems to have been the priorities in sport that were set by the country's leadership. While the East and West German Olympic teams were under instruction from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to appear as one German team from 1956 to 1964,²³ as of 1968, East Germany could, for the first time, participate independently in Olympic competition. The SED saw the 1972 Munich Olympics as a crucial challenge to its sports policy and its declared goal was to obtain a ranking higher than that of West Germany in order to "inflict a home defeat on West German imperialism at the Olympic Games".²⁴ To win as many medals as possible became the *leitmotif* of East German politics; all other categories of sport had to take a back seat. With its "decision on elite sport",²⁵ taken in 1969, the party leadership undertook a memorable rationalisation measure that also proved extremely effective. Sport was divided into two categories: Sport 1, which qualified for "special support", and Sport 2, which received "less support". The first category encompassed "medal-intensive sports", namely those disciplines in which an athlete could collect several Olympic medals, for example, swimming, rowing or light athletics. But sports such as water polo, where a potential medal required substantial training inputs as well as stadiums to accommodate an entire team, were ruthlessly relegated to the category of Sport 2. The disadvantages and restrictions that Sport 2 was now subject to were manifold: substantially reduced funds and resources, state-ordered restrictions on media reporting and a ban on participation in future international competition. The shock suffered by the affected athletes should not be underestimated. The East German national basketball team

23 A recent related publication: Braun, Jutta, 'Sportler zwischen in Ost und West, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte', 'Sportpolitik und Olympia', 29/30 2008, pp. 38–45.

24 SAPMO DY 30/IVA2/1002/14, SED/ZK/Westabteilung, 'Sportpolitische Argumentation für die weitere Vorbereitung unserer Olympiakader auf die Olympischen Spiele 1972 in Sapporo und München'.

25 'Grundlinie der Entwicklung des Leistungssports in der DDR bis 1980', in Teichler, Hans Joachim (ed.), 'Die Sportbeschlüsse des Politbüros', Bonn, 2002, p. 567.

was in the midst of training for the European championships when it was given the devastating news of its demotion. Six out of seven players withdrew immediately from the SED in protest against this decision. Their coach had to spend a few weeks in a hospital, recovering from the shock.²⁶ This two-way categorisation was accompanied by a completely new system of spotting fresh talent – the so-called Standard Screening and Selection method. Since the early 1970s, schoolchildren across the board in East Germany were weighed and measured in order to predict whether they potentially qualified for certain sports. The declared goal was that East Germany had to "discover and promote every hidden talent".²⁷ This was not however just about the early identification of a predisposition to a particular sport, but talented children were also trained by the state primarily in those sports that promised a large medal haul. Football therefore systematically lost many talented athletes to disciplines that enjoyed political privileges²⁸ and the structurally determined lack of new talent severely weakened East German football in the long run. In 1985, a West German reporter asked Lothar Kurbjuweit, the coach of 1. FC Carl Zeiss Jena, why the East German national team had very few tall players. "Our tall footballers are all rowers," was the grim but honest reply.²⁹ Kurbjuweit's open criticism of the distortions in East German sport was reproduced in the West German daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and he was sharply reprimanded by the party leadership.³⁰ Ultimately, however, the East German strategy of differentiating between disciplines paid off in the Olympic arena. After the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, East Germany managed to climb higher than its West German nemesis in the medal standings. The Olympics are therefore certainly a special case in German–German history: "What East Germany failed to achieve in vital sectors from the economy to society, it achieved in sport."³¹ Although not in football, the most popular sport, one should add.

26 See Wonneberger, Günther, 'Die Auswirkungen des Leistungssportbeschlusses von 1969 auf den Basketballsport in Leipzig – Erinnerungen eines Zeitzeugen', in Spitzer, Giselher; Braun, Harald (ed.): 'Der geteilte deutsche Sport', Tagung der dvs-Sektion Sportgeschichte vom 24–26 März 1995 in Potsdam, Cologne, 1997, pp. 155–158.

27 SAPMO BA DY 30/IVA2/18/3, 'Seminarplan für den Komplex "Nachwuchsleistungssport" vom März 1971.

28 Because of its popularity, officially football continued to be the top-ranked sport, but was neglected when it came to training a new generation of players.

29 'Der Fußball-Trainer aus Jena leistet sich Träume, weil er Realist ist', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 September 1986.

30 Author interview with Lothar Kurbjuweit on 7 July 2006 in Jena.

31 Möller, Horst, 'Worin lag das „national" Verbindende in der Epoche der Teilung', in Hockerts, Hans Günter (ed.), *Koordinaten deutscher Geschichte in der Epoche des Ost-West-Konflikts*, Munich, 2004, pp. 307–324.

Fans out of control

While East Germany shone at the Olympics, the overall performance of its footballers was disappointing, a few high points notwithstanding.³² It therefore comes as no surprise that fans would routinely focus their sights longingly across the border on the West German Bundesliga teams and the DFB national team.³³ Not allowed to travel to the West, East German fans could not be present at matches held in West Germany, but they travelled in the hundreds, and sometimes even in the thousands, within the Eastern Bloc countries to watch a match that involved their West German idols. The appearance of the West German national team in Warsaw in 1971 was both a crucial and an alarming political experience for the SED. German-German slogans on banners carried by East German fans such as "Chemnitz welcomes the German national team and Kaiser Franz" caused the SED to shudder. All East German citizens who had come for the game were checked and some of the party members among them had to reckon with unpleasant sanctions.³⁴ In the 1970s, the Stasi started to take its task "of ensuring security at large sporting events" more seriously when "football teams from the West German professional league" were involved.³⁵ The "politically operative defence" was intended above all as a preventive measure to forestall the "mass-impact performances involving the citizens of the GDR, waiting fans, autograph hunters and souvenir collectors."³⁶ Yet all these hasty directives came to naught and fans continued to throng into the stadiums with self-made banners proclaiming, among other things, "Leipzig welcomes FC Bayern München". But the banners were not up for long, as a Stasi officer would invariably be on the spot ready to tear them down. The SED had a particular "problem" in Berlin. Since the 1970s, the fans of the traditional West Berlin soccer club Hertha BSC and those of East Berlin's 1. FC Union had continued to maintain strong ties across the Iron Curtain. Hertha fans travelled in the hundreds to games involving the East Berlin club. "Hertha und Union – eine Nation" (Hertha and Union – one nation) was the chant to be

32 This included the fact that the 1.FC Magdeburg was the only East German team to win the European Cup Winner's Cup in 1974.

33 Braun, Jutta, Wiese, René, 'DDR-Fußball und gesamtdeutsche Identität im Kalten Krieg', in Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung, 4 (2005), pp. 191–210.

34 See related discussion in the ZK, 17 November 1971, in Teichler, Hans Joachim (ed.), 'Die Sportbeschlüsse des Politbüros', Bonn, 2002, pp. 609–614.

35 BStU MfS HA XXII no.1738, 'Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse der politisch-operativen Abwehrarbeit im Zusammenhang mit Großsportveranstaltungen, insbesondere Fußballspielen'.

36 Ibid.

- 3 -

Ministerium für Staatssicherheit

Unter den 1.162 Besuchern aus der DDR befanden sich nach den Ermittlungen des MfS 106 Personen, die in verschiedener Art und Weise für die westdeutsche Mannschaft auftraten.

Außerdem wurden 41 DDR-Bürger, die für die westdeutsche Nationalmannschaft und für den westdeutschen Fußballsport demonstrative Handlungen begingen, z. B. mit Losungen wie

"Chemnitz grüßt die deutsche Nationalelf und den Kaiser Franz"

"Leipzig grüßt Kaiser Franz und Co."
(gemeint ist Franz Beckenbauer)

"Guben grüßt die deutsche Elf"

BStU-Kopie
BStU

18. 3. 1981:

Ostrava Banik Ostrava – FC Bayern München

7 Transparente bei der Ausreise eingezogen
Täter bekannt, Ausreise verweigert

"Fürstenwalde grüßt den FC Bayern München"
"DDR-Fans grüßen den FC Bayern München"
"Wir grüßen aus der DDR den alten und neuen Meister FC Bayern München"
"Zwickau grüßt Bayern München"
"Doberlug-Kirchhain grüßt den FC Bayern München"
"Altenberg – Bayern München"
"Die Fans der DDR grüßen den FC Bayern"

6 Transparente (im Stadion festgestellt)

"Suhl grüßt den FC Bayern München" (eingezogen), Täter bekannt
"Kirchhain grüßt den FC Bayern" (eingezogen), Täter bekannt
"Robotron Hartmannsdorf grüßt den FC Bayern München"
"Landkreis Leipzig grüßt FC Bayern"
"Neustadt/Sachsen grüßt FC Bayern"
"Dresden grüßt den FC Bayern München"

The East German Stasi kept a close watch on East German fans at matches involving the West German national team or popular clubs such as FC Bayern München. Support for West German players was considered "subversive" and banners carried by East German fans welcoming the teams were taken down by Stasi officials. (Bundesauftrage für die Stasi-Unterlagen/Federal Officer for Stasi documents)

heard from the ranks of spectators in the Köpenicker Wuhlheide in Berlin.³⁷ Yet it was not only the all-German nationalist feeling that spelt danger for the SED from the ranks of its spectators, but criticism of the dictatorial tendencies of the state was also voiced more clearly and openly here than elsewhere by spectators who took comfort in the anonymity of a crowd. Hence the shout "The Wall must go" to coincide with a free kick had connotations that went beyond sport.³⁸ East Germans could project much of what they missed in their own country onto the West German Bundesliga clubs and football stars: international success, pan-German identification, unrestricted travel. The SED could not and would not accept a sporting public that was so inclined and it lost no time in creating its own spectators. To be able to parade its loyal band of supporters in front of the world, the state put together a cohort of handpicked fans who operated under the label of "tourist delegations", to use the bureaucratic terminology of the SED. Party membership was the minimum requirement and several official bodies had a say in picking the cadre. These appointed fans were often conspicuous among international spectators however because of their rather too stilted slogans that brought at most a tired smile to the faces of genuine fans.³⁹ Yet the SED wanted to show off with its devoted band of supporters not only outside the country but even in its own stadiums, and it was intent on guaranteeing the highest degree of political reliability especially at matches between the two Germanys. A bizarre instance was the match between HSV and BFC Dynamo in 1982. There was no free sale of tickets to start with and the seats in the stands at the Friedrich Ludwig Jahn stadium had been taken mainly by members of the "East German security agencies".⁴⁰ In other words, this was a game in which the Stasi played the role of fan and spectator – perhaps no better example of the very spirit of sport being eroded by the SED's political interference. Yet one could see through the harmonious façade erected by the SED regime. The overall impression on West German observers at the time was far more reminiscent of the military-like security measures in place when the West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, visited Gü-

strow, Mecklenburg-Pomerania, in December 1981 and the entire city had been sealed off for the visit.⁴¹

Towards football unity

The fall of the Berlin Wall was a key event also for sport in East and West Germany. For both amateur and professional athletes, open borders brought a new and unimaginable freedom of mobility. On 17 November 1989, the sports leadership in West and East Germany took the historic decision to "open up" German–German sporting ties.⁴² For the first time, athletes could now decide on their meets themselves, without having to first clear bureaucratic hurdles and, above all, without any limits on numbers.⁴³ In 1989 itself there were hundreds of meets, and early the following year the number "exploded" to 5,000 events. The new-found freedom was not limited to inter-German competition but there was also a simultaneous massive westward migration by East German athletes and coaches on the lookout for new career opportunities in West Germany. The first East German Oberliga soccer player who relocated with the permission of the East German football association was Andreas Thom from BFC Dynamo. On 1 January 1990, he was signed on by Bayer 04 Leverkusen for a transfer fee of 3.6 million German marks. He was soon followed by several other players who switched over to West German clubs, among them names like Matthias Sammer, Thomas Doll, Steffen Freund and Ulf Kirsten. Just as liberalisation had caused upheaval, so did the democratisation of sport in East Germany. The East German football association (DFV) was at the crossroads and faced a crucial test. Not all the officials were enthusiastic about the necessity of democratising the association's systems and adapting to Big Brother DFB. In the face of disturbing economic developments, the people in the regions and districts demanded that things be pushed through more quickly. State subsidies were drying up and business establishments were shutting their doors by the day. Football clubs were fighting for their very survival. It seemed imperative to reject the former structures and to deprive the old leadership clique of its power, in order to prove that one was serious about a new beginning. On 31 March 1990, the

37 Wiese, René, 'Freunde hinter Stacheldraht – "Es gibt nur zwei Meister an der Spree – Union und Hertha BSC!" in Krüger, Michael; Schulze, Bernd (ed.), *Fußball in Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Tagung der dvs-Sektionen Sportgeschichte und Sportssoziologie vom 29.9.–1.10.2004* in Münster, Hamburg, 2006, pp. 47–56.

38 With reference to fan surveillance, see Braun, Jutta, 'Sportfreunde oder Staatsfeinde? Fans im Visier der Staatsmacht', in *Deutschland Archiv* 3 (2004), pp. 440–447.

39 Wiese, René; Braun, Jutta (eds.), 'Doppelpässe – Wie die Deutschen die Mauer umspielten', Hamburg, 2006, p. 113.

40 Leske, Hanns, 'Erich Mielke, die Stasi und das runde Leder', Göttingen, 2004, pp. 412–416.

41 'Abschirmung bis ins Stadion an der Berliner Mauer', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 September 1982.

42 'Grünes Licht für weitgehend ungehinderten Sportverkehr', *Tagesspiegel*, 18 November 1989.

43 On the earlier stringent quotas for sports contacts, see Braun, Jutta, 'Klassenkampf im Flutlicht – Innerdeutscher Sportverkehr 1974–1989', in Teichler, Hans Joachim (ed.), 'Sport in der DDR. Eigensinn, Konflikte, Trends', Cologne, 2003, pp. 61–132.

eighth anniversary of East Germany's DFV, a pro-reform president was elected in the first free elections in the history of the association: Hans Georg Moldenhauer, lecturer at the Technical University in Magdeburg and current vice president of DFB. Together with the DFB president, Neuberger, he spent the following months conducting numerous discussions to pave the way for a football merger. However, Neuberger did not believe that this could happen before early 1992 for "sport-related technical and legal reasons". Moldenhauer, on the other hand, sensed the dynamics of the social developments. During the World Cup in Italy, in a private conversation he appealed to Horst R. Schmidt, the DFB head of department: "Did you see how the Wall came down? Do you know that an entire bloc has collapsed? Armies have been swept away! Armies, state security, everything is collapsing and disappearing, and in all this I am expected to keep alive an independent football association until '92 with the name GDR, of all things!?"⁴⁴ The DFB finally agreed to an accelerated merger of the associations. On 21 November 1990, the newly formed DFV Leipzig (as the north-east German football association) joined DFB as a regional association. Thus, in microcosm, the sports association had followed the model of German unification according to Article 23, which set forth the accession of five new German states to the Federal Republic.

Today, almost 20 years after unification, the euphoria of the early months has long died down. In the east, there was widespread disappointment that they could not compete with the West German clubs. In 2008, only Energie Cottbus plays in the first division while the majority of the former traditional East German clubs are to be found in the newly created third division. The problems of coming to terms with the SED dictatorship – Stasi involvement and doping practices – that afflict society as a whole are also potent in football and make for negative headlines. There are complaints that there is a lack of awareness of the 40-year-old history of East German football. Hans Mayer, former East German Oberliga coach, when looking back on the football merger, remarked in 2003: "It was quick and painless. After it had happened, the East no longer had a history."⁴⁵ Historical research projects (including one on the history of modern sport at the University of Potsdam) should rectify the deficit in knowledge. And Franz Beckbauer's prediction made in the heat of the moment following the 1990 World Cup win in Rome: "If we are now joined by the East German players, we will be unbeatable for years",⁴⁶ was

44 See Barsuhn, Michael, 'Die Wende und Vereinigung im Fußball 1989/90', in Braun, Jutta; Teichler, Hans Joachim (eds.), 'Sportstadt Berlin im Kalten Krieg', Berlin, 2006, pp. 376–415.

45 *Tagesspiegel*, 6 July 2003.

46 As cited in Braun, Jutta; Hagemann, Ullrich (eds.), 'Deutschland – einig Fußballland? Deutsche Geschichte nach 1949 im Zeichen des Fußballs. Fachdidaktische Handreichung zur politisch-historischen Urteilsbildung', Baltmannsweiler, 2008, p. 119.



Hans Georg Moldenhauer, president of the East German football association, and Hermann Neuberger, DFB president, shake hands after sealing "unity in German football" on 21 November 1990 in Leipzig. (Federal Archives)

refuted by reality. However, a definite outcome of the football merger has been the imperceptible growth of a common enthusiasm for football across the country which was openly displayed during the 2006 World Cup. It may also be said that Michael Ballack, captain of the German team at Euro 2008, symbolises a successful German–German football biography. Ballack, now under contract to Chelsea, has spent many years with FC Bayern München. But his first merits in sport were earned a long time ago at BSG Motor Fritz Heckert. That was in the 1980s, in Karl-Marx-Stadt in erstwhile East Germany.

If you wish to support our work:
Commerzbank Berlin
BIC 100 400 00
Donations account: 266 9661 04
Donation receipts will be issued.

Dr. Jutta Braun, born 1967, studied Contemporary History, Eastern European History, and Sinology in Munich. The subject of her doctoral dissertation was the politics of expropriation in the German Democratic Republic. Currently she is a staff member at the Department „Contemporary History of Sports“ of Potsdam University. She publishes regularly on Judiciary History and on Sport Relationships between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

If you wish to support our work:
Commerzbank Berlin
BIC 100 400 00
Donations account: 266 9661 04
Donation receipts will be issued.