



**Behind the Wall: East German football between state  
and society**

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Newly declassified archival sources, fans' recollections and recent research monographs have been drawn upon to trace the frequent restructuring of GDR football, the ruling SED's vain attempts to exploit the popularity of the game to boost the reputation of the socialist system, and football's success in retaining its position as a beneficiary of the state-run programme for elite sport. Despite the additional generous aid from patrons in industry and the regions, the national team and top clubs made little impact in the World Cup and European tournaments. This was true of the leading club in the 1980s, BFC Dynamo, which derived, much to the annoyance of envious rivals, special privileges as a result of the influence of the powerful Minister of State Security, Erich Mielke. This conflict between clubs, as well as between patrons eager for enhancement in status through links with the country's most popular sport, was typical of conditions in GDR football and reveals a degree of segmentation of political and social influence not normally associated with the finely-tuned system of elite sport.

### 1. Introduction

The history of GDR football was until recently virtually uncharted territory as regards its contribution to system legitimisation as well as its place within elite sport and mass culture. The literature in English remains sparse and pre-*Wende* general histories of the GDR, such as those by Hermann Weber and Dietrich Staritz, devoted little or no attention to the most popular sport in the country. Many gaps have now been filled thanks in no small part to the publication of special collections of archival documents (Spitzer, Teichler and Reinartz 1997; Teichler 2002), monographs by Leske (2004) and Spitzer (2004), memoirs of sports functionaries (Ewald 1994), and popular accounts of clubs and players (Luther and Willmann 2003; Willmann 2004). This welcome development owes much to the opening of the Federal, Regional and Stasi archives and interviews with former fans (Farin and Hauswald 1998; Franke and Pätzig 2006). These diverse sources and accounts have brought greater clarity as to how structural changes and doping practises were implemented in elite sport and have also uncovered the many endemic rivalries between powerful institutions such as the Ministry of State Security, the DTSB (*Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund*) and economic conglomerates like the Carl Zeiss Jena combine.

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Despite these undoubted advances in research, controversies continue to erupt over the effectiveness of sport's contribution to popular identification with the GDR's socialist system, the influence exerted by the central political and sports authorities on competitive football, and the reasons behind the GDR's emergence as a world power in sport. The latter success is attributed by some commentators, notably former GDR sports officials, to a highly efficient system which extended upwards from a base of widespread popular participation to the apex of elite sports clubs and associations (see Ewald 1994; Erbach 1995; Rohrberg 2001). Doping and the protection of the state's sports secrets by the secret police are attributed only a subsidiary role, unlike in the works of Gunter Holzweissig and Giselher Spitzer (2005). Holzweissig, a former member of the *Gesamtdeutsches Institut* and author of several books on the mass media and sport in the GDR, asserts that the ideological-propagandistic misuse of sport for the maintenance of power and internal and external self-legitimation is characteristic of totalitarian regimes (Holzweissig 2005: 1).

As Holzweissig's remark indicates, a polarised debate on sport is embedded in a broader discourse over appropriate paradigms and interpretative models of the GDR throughout its highly fractured forty-year history. Among the wide range of approaches, not all of them incompatible, are: various strands of totalitarianism with an emphasis on central steering mechanisms, political indoctrination and widespread abuse of human rights; analyses focussing on the inherent constraints on the power of the political, social and economic elites; a primary concern with the micro-structures of society and the diversity of interactions between subjects and rulers; and models of state-socialist paternalism and social welfare within the framework of a 'modern' dictatorship. A study of sport and football can shed light on these fundamental issues, as well as on topics generic to the game itself, such as the palpable failure of GDR football to match the standards attained in athletics and other areas of elite sport. While one of the concerns of this article is to explain GDR football's shortcomings, attention will also be paid to the shifting power relations between the major interest groups in sport as well as the determination of clubs and fans to retain their autonomy despite frequent interventions in their everyday lives by the ubiquitous security forces.

## 2. Football behind the Wall: an 'abnormal' world?

GDR football was, according to Ulrich Hesse-Lichtenberger, a freelance journalist from Dortmund, a 'strange world' in which 'Most of the things that happened ... seem utterly bizarre and often downright incredible to someone who has grown up in a completely different society...' (Hesse-Lichtenberger 2000: 278). The basic features comprising this allegedly 'abnormal' world of football behind the Berlin Wall include: the high level of political interference in the game; the indoctrination of players in socialist ideology and the inculcation of a socialist friend-capitalist foe image; the frequent and bewildering renaming and relocation of clubs; the delegation of players to other teams, often against their wishes; illicit payments to footballers at all levels of the game since the early 1950s; and a running battle for control over football between the sports central authorities and club sponsors. The list can be extended to include the defection of top players to the West, the cooperation of several referees, officials and players with the Stasi, and the intermittent doping of players of the national team since 1965 and those of BFC Dynamo and SG Dynamo Dresden since 1977.<sup>2</sup> Finally, a particularly striking characteristic of GDR football was the magnetic attraction of the clubs and the national team of the FRG for East German fans, thus undermining the attempts of the communist authorities to mobilise sport for the legitimisation of the SED regime. While the GDR did not enjoy a monopoly on the above features, most of which were to be found in the Soviet Union and the other countries of its East European outer empire (see Wilson 2006 and Duke 1995: 92-5, 101), this kind of picture of East German football does not fit in with the traditional image of the GDR as a highly centralised polity whose tightly organised and successful elite sports system (*Leistungssportsystem*) unswervingly served the ideological goals of the regime.

As in other areas of elite sport, football was assigned a wide-ranging societal mission at home and abroad, a mission which was given added impetus by the location of the two German republics on the geographical and ideological frontier between capitalism and state socialism during the Cold War. Football was expected to strengthen the identification of East Germans with their political and social system, to help break the diplomatic isolation of the GDR ('ambassadors in muddy boots'), to demonstrate the superiority of state socialism over the capitalist 'class enemy' and, in general terms, to boost the reputation and prestige of the GDR. Numerous statements by leading sports

and political functionaries, in private as well as in public, illustrate the significance they attached to football and top-level sport. In 1968, Erich Mielke, the Minister of State Security and a football enthusiast, told the Presidium of the Dynamo Sports Association that the appeal of GDR sport would be enhanced if football could attain world standards, and that the success of the GDR national football team and clubs such as BFC Dynamo would ‘highlight even more clearly the superiority of our socialist order in the area of sport’.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The structure of GDR football

Although the structure was modified from time to time, top-level football for men was clustered around the premier league (*Oberliga*), the second league (*Liga*) and several regional leagues (*Bezirksligen*). The latter two were subdivided into divisions whose number fluctuated over the four decades of GDR history. In addition to the league structure, a competition was held annually for the FDGB cup. Not until 1979 were women able to take part in a supra-regional competition, albeit without the official support, status and privileges associated with the men’s game. Turbine Potsdam was by far the most successful team.

The umbrella organisation for all sports was the *Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund* (DTSB), created in 1957 as the successor to the *Deutscher Sportausschuß*. It had 3.7 million registered members in 1989. As president from 1961 to 1988, the autocratic Manfred Ewald was the key figure in the DTSB’s crucial contribution to transforming the GDR into one of the world’s three leading sports nations. The *Deutscher Fußballverband* (DFV), established in 1958 in place of the *Fachausschuß Fußball*, was the largest of the many sports associations incorporated into the DTSB. Two other bodies, the State Secretariat for Sport and Physical Culture (formerly Committee) and the SED Central Committee Department for Sport, also had a considerable say in the running of football. The latter was part of the Central Committee organ responsible for Security, Youth and Sport; its importance is reflected in the fact that two of its chief secretaries, Erich Honecker and Egon Krenz, subsequently became leaders of the SED.

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<sup>2</sup> On doping in football, see Spitzer 2004: 59-69.

<sup>3</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, BdL, no. 005701, ‘Referat des 1. Vorsitzenden der SV Dynamo Genossen Minister Mielke auf der Tagung des Präsidiums der SV Dynamo am 22. November 1968’, p. 18.

The head of the Department for Sport in their empire was Rudi Hellmann, who also served as Vice-President of the National Olympic Committee from 1973 to 1989 and as a member of the DTSB Executive from 1961 to 1990.<sup>4</sup> Although the guidelines for football were drawn up principally between the DFV and Hellman's Department, the SED Politbüro and Central Committee Secretariat also took a keen interest in football and from time to time gave their seal of approval to the plans and regulations drawn up by lower-level bodies covering matters such as the overall structure of the domestic game, safety measures and playing standards.

Among the earliest organisational changes were the dissolution of the traditional private club structure and the application of the production principle. In keeping with the latter and the primacy of the collective in socialism, teams received a prefix, the most common one being BSG (*Betriebssportgemeinschaft* - enterprise sports group), which signified the linkage with an industrial concern. Club names reflected this shift, a development which was derived from Soviet practice. Thus 'Chemie', 'Lokomotive' and 'Stahl' denoted the chemical industry, the railways and the steel industry respectively. The term 'Dynamo' was associated with the Ministries of State Security and Interior and 'Vorwärts' with the army. It is difficult to keep track of the frequency with which names were changed but in Leipzig and Halle, as typical examples, BSG Chemie Leipzig evolved in stages from the pre-war Leipziger SV and SC Chemie Halle from FC Wacker Halle.

Another aspect of the turbulence typical of the early years was the frequent and arbitrary transfer of teams from one part of the GDR to another. Among the many instances of what Karte and Zimmermann have called 'Leistungssteigerung durch Konzentration' is the sudden removal of SG Dynamo Dresden during the playing season, in November 1954, to East Berlin, where it became SC Dynamo Berlin and then BFC Dynamo twelve years later. To the fury of the thousands of fans in 'Florence on the Elbe', the depleted SG Dynamo Dresden dropped into a lower division, not returning to the *Oberliga* until 1962 (Karte and Zimmermann 1993: 22-24; Spitzer 2000: 190). Political factors and pressure by the Minister of State Security, Erich Mielke, were probably the main reasons for a move designed to provide the capital with a successful club and a counterattraction to Hertha, Blau-Weiß and Tennis Borussia in West Berlin. Several SC

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<sup>4</sup> The Department for Sport did not become a fully-fledged Department until 1965. Hellmann, who was born in Chemnitz and served in the Wehrmacht between 1944 and 1945, presided over sport in the Central Committee between 1959 and 1989.

Dynamo players found it difficult to adapt to life in East Berlin as they were separated from their families and forced to stay in a hostel.<sup>5</sup>

FC Vorwärts Berlin, one of the most successful and attractive clubs of the 1960s, was another casualty of 'relocation, relocation'. The army team had been shifted from Leipzig to East Berlin in 1953. Eighteen years later, it received its orders to decamp to Frankfurt/Oder, one of the weakest footballing areas in the country. It is difficult to reconstruct the reasoning behind the move, but it was probably the result of back-room bargaining between leading figures in the Ministries of Defence and State Security, the SED Frankfurt/Oder Regional Executive and, though less significantly, the DFV. Mielke, for one, must have welcomed the departure of the main rival in East Berlin to his favourite team – BFC Dynamo (Leske 2004: 185-92; Horn and Weise 2004: 106). The story of the 'grey mouse' of GDR football, Wismut Aue, shows that it could be more difficult to transplant the so-called civilian clubs than the teams of the army and security forces. An attempt to transfer Wismut Aue to the main city in the region, Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz), descended into utter farce when protests by local miners and the threat of a players' strike led to the abandonment of the plan. Although the Aue team never played in Karl-Marx-Stadt and went on to win the *Oberliga* on three occasions in the 1950s, it was obliged to call itself SC Wismut-Karl-Marx-Stadt between 1954 and 1963. Part of the club's success was attributable to its centre forward, Willi Tröger, who had lost his right hand in the closing stages of the Second World War (Leske 2004: 144-5; Luther in Willmann 2004: 34).

Relocation on orders from the DTSB and the State Committee for Sport and Physical Culture was so unpopular among players, fans and officials that the SED Politbüro and Erich Honecker, then Central Committee Secretary for Security and Sport, agreed, in 1963, that *Oberliga* players should only change club if they concurred, a procedure which left much of the initiative in the hands of the BSGs. This was untypical of many other sports, where the decision on delegation rested with the Associations (*Verbände*) and the DTSB (Stegemann 2001: 354-5, 370-1, 383). Although the relocation of complete teams declined sharply after the departure of FC Vorwärts from East Berlin, the 1963 compromise often proved unsatisfactory. This is apparent from the furore during the winter of 1981-82 surrounding the projected move of the highly promising 18-year-old Hans-Uwe Pilz from Sachsenring Zwickau to Dynamo Dresden. The

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<sup>5</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, Sekretariat des Ministers, no. 1000, 'Information', Berlin (East), 18 February 1964, pp. 87-9.

episode triggered protests to Honecker and direct intervention by Ewald, the First and Second Secretaries of the SED Karl-Marx-Stadt Regional Executive, Hans Modrow in Dresden, factory directors and the mayor of Zwickau. Despite the offer of a house by the mayor, Pilz opted for Dresden. Not only does this episode illustrate the lack of a firm steering mechanism in football but it also highlights the intensity of local rivalries, in this case between Karl-Marx-Stadt and Zwickau (Koch in Willmann 2004: 59-60).

After the initial reorganisation of football in the immediate post-war years, several attempts were made over the succeeding decades to implement structural reforms from above. These changes, often half-hearted, failed to achieve their main targets, that is, the wresting of control by the central sports authorities, notably the DTSB and the DFV, from the clubs and their institutional backers and, second, an appreciable improvement in the quality of the game. In 1954-55, 21 Sports Clubs were removed from the BSG system and set up as centres of excellence for the promotion of elite sport (Stegemann 2001: 357, 367, 370; Teichler 2006: 31-2). A decade later, in 1965-66, ten Football Clubs (the so-called *Schwerpunktclubs*), as well as SG Dynamo Dresden, were given permission to draw on the best players in the country. Among this small elite were BFC Dynamo, 1. FC Union Berlin, FC Carl Zeiss Jena, 1. FC Lokomotive Leipzig, 1. FC Magdeburg and FC Hansa Rostock. The creation of an upper tier of teams with privileged access to talented youngsters in a designated geographical and administrative region was sealed by their removal as football sections from the Sports Clubs. Their autonomy was underpinned by liberal financial support from the DTSB and large state-owned enterprises, such as 1. FC Magdeburg by the *VEB Schwermaschinenbau Ernst Thälmann* (Leske 2004: 166-8; Teichler 2006: 32).

In 1969, football managed, crucially, to secure a position in the top tier when elite sport was divided into two spheres by the so-called *Leistungssportbeschuß*. This pivotal directive, issued by the DTSB and endorsed by the SED Politbüro, aimed to channel resources into those sports with the greatest record and medal potential (see Reinartz 1999: 58-68). The reorganisation of sport had assumed great urgency as the GDR would be fielding, for the second successive time, a separate national team at the 1972 summer Olympics in West Germany, thus bringing into sharp relief the sporting prowess of the two Germanies and their respective social and political systems. Together with swimming, athletics and weightlifting and several other sports, football was placed in 'Sport I', which qualified for generous state subventions. Those in 'Sport II', such as tennis, water polo and basketball, were denied the full range of advantages and



privileges of the GDR's comprehensive elite sports system. The latter consisted of a plethora of Training Points, Training Centres, Children's and Youth Sports Schools for youngsters from the age of 14, a host of full-time trainers and coaches, and the elite Sports Clubs. This multi-tiered structure, together with the state-doping programme instigated in 1974, lay behind the GDR sports miracle of the 1970s and 1980s (Dennis 2000: 114-15, 208).

The allocation of a place in 'Sport I' to football owed much to the backing of Mielke and other top SED politicians, aware of the game's popularity with East Germans. Not only did Ewald, the mastermind behind the whole *Leistungssportsystem*, have little enthusiasm for football, mainly because success was less predictable than in sports such as weightlifting and bobsleighbing and, as a team game, it offered far fewer medal opportunities than athletics and swimming. This helps explain why it did not enjoy equal access to the pool of youngsters produced since 1973 by the GDR's rigorous and far-reaching talent spotting programme, called *Einheitliche Sichtung und Auswahl*. According to a former President of the DFV, Günter Schneider, football occupied a lowly 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> position in this system (Stegemann 2001: 369).

Although GDR football enjoyed a rare run of international success in the early 1970s, not least because of the able and single-minded national coach Georg Buschner, this proved to be short-lived and further changes followed. In 1976, six football clubs were created as centres of excellence. They were 1. FC Magdeburg, BFC Dynamo, FC Carl Zeiss Jena, 1. FC Lokomotive Leipzig, FC Vorwärts Frankfurt/Oder and SG Dynamo Dresden.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the Frankfurt/Oder club, they would constitute the dominant forces in GDR football until 1989. In 1983, the so-called 'Football Decree' (*Fußballbeschuß*) sought to clear up the serious organisational confusion in the lower leagues. The number of divisions comprising the *Liga* was reduced from five to two. And yet another attempt was made to impose wage limits. However, as the enforcement of the guidelines fell primarily on the enterprises and the football clubs, under-the-counter payments and sham work contracts continued. Not until 1989 was a belated effort made to grasp the nettle of clandestine professionalism and players' contracts (Spitzer 2000: 201-3; Spitzer 2004: 89; Leske 2004: 211-16).

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<sup>6</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, Sekretariat des Ministers, no. 1281, 'Beschuß des Präsidiums des DTSB vom 14.4.1976 zur weiteren Leistungsentwicklung im Fußballsport der DDR', p. 216.

#### 4. Football's unique position within GDR elite sport

Studies by Leske, Spitzer, Stegemann and Teichler indicate that football enjoyed a unique position within top-level GDR sport. Although subject to intrusive political interference by the SED and comprehensive surveillance by the Stasi, football clubs managed to escape the tight administrative and financial control exercised over many sports by the DTSB and other central authorities. This can be seen in the repeated failure of the DTSB, the DFV and Hellmann's Central Committee Department for Sport to impose binding regulations on players' wages and employment contracts and to curb bribery in the form of an apartment or a car. While information about malpractices leaked out from time to time in the specialist sports press and SED statements, it awaited the opening of the archives before a detailed picture could be obtained of the situation. A report compiled in 1953 by the State Committee for Physical Culture and Sport drew attention to what would be a recurring grievance of the central authorities, that is, the relatively high payments made by all enterprise sports groups (BSGs) to players, for example, at SG Dynamo Dresden and SV Wismut. One of the main motives for such payments and the generous allocation of other resources, not only by the industrial enterprises but also by local SED and governmental agencies, was an anticipated boost to their prestige from links to a successful football club. As is discussed below, this could sometimes backfire as the inducements failed to stop the defection of several talented players and trainers to West Germany (Stegemann 2001: 381, 385).

Covert semi-professionalism continued to spread throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In the latter decade, sums in excess of 100,000 GDR Marks were paid by the Carl Zeiss combine in Jena and by the Wismut mining conglomerate to persuade players to remain with the clubs sponsored by these economic giants (Spitzer 2004: 31). One of Carl Zeiss Jena's most famous players, the flamboyant striker Peter Ducke, was recruited at the end of the 1950s in the face of competition from Vorwärts Berlin. Among the incentives was a small monthly payment to his parents (Stridde 2006: 25-7). Some of these abuses are described in Erich Loest's novel, *Der elfte Mann*, which first appeared in the GDR in 1969. The bait of a modern flat and an undemanding job persuaded a fading *Oberliga* striker to leave Leipzig for a lower-league team subsidised by a chemical enterprise (Loest 2006: 190-3, 267).

The appearance of Loest's novel coincided with a campaign spearheaded by Manfred Ewald's DTSB to put football's house in order. The DTSB homed in on what it regarded as the crux of GDR football's problems and the mediocrity of playing standards: the lack of firm controls, which left the game prey to 'egotistical' and powerful local and regional interest groups. Among these groups were combine and enterprise managements, SED Regional Secretariats, government ministries, and functionaries attached to trade unions, sports organisations and local authorities. As a result, football clubs were economically independent and almost totally free of the control of the DTSB and the DFV. Their autonomy produced what the DTSB referred to as 'machinations' not dissimilar to those in capitalist countries, such as providing players with a bungalow and an apartment, loyalty bonuses, and payments for goals and points. Wages and bonuses amounted to about 3,000 GDR Marks per month, far in excess of the 800 to 1,200 GDR Marks to which footballers were entitled in accordance with their level of vocational qualification (see the detailed analysis in Leske 2004: 171-81, and the documents in Stegemann 2001: 395-7 and Teichler 2002: 574-5). With mediocrity so generously rewarded, established players such as Bransch and Frenzel and even juniors like Jürgen Sparwasser had, in the opinion of the DTSB, little incentive to improve their game (Teichler 2002: 575-6).

What should be done? Although a need for better political and ideological 'education' for players was mentioned, the major changes proposed in the *Fußballbeschluss* of April 1970 concerned finance and contracts. The elite Football Clubs (*Schwerpunktclubs*) such as Carl Zeiss Jena were to be removed from their enterprise sponsor and placed under a steering body consisting of representatives from the DTSB and DFV. While the football sections of the *Oberligagemeinschaften* were to remain with their existing BSGs and enterprises, full-time section leaders and trainers were to be controlled by the DTSB and the DFV. Players' pay was to be based on their occupational qualification and the regulations of the DTSB and the DFV. As a norm, footballers were expected to train only outside their normal hours of employment, in the case of *Oberliga* players for up to 20 hours per week and those in the *Liga* for a maximum of 5 hours per week. One of the ways in which enterprises had found extra sums for players and trainers was to raid their cultural and social funds. This loophole was to be closed. A further aspect of the scheme was to transfer the financing of the Football Clubs from the enterprises to the Federal Executive of the DTSB, thereby asserting central control over the clubs and the BSGs. Together with the application of 'scientific' training principles, this was, in

the opinion of Ewald and his colleagues, the key to the replication in football of the success enjoyed by other top-level sports. In order to plug the gap in funding as a result of the downgrading of the enterprises, the Ministry of Finance was to provide about 5 million GDR Marks annually and a further 2 million GDR Marks to compensate the enterprises for the release of players for training and matches. As these regulations would mean lower earnings for players and trainers, a temporary ban on GDR teams from playing in European Cup matches in capitalist countries was contemplated for fear that players might be tempted by offers from professional clubs in the West (Leske 2004: 171-81; Teichler 2002: 576-9). Here was a fundamental weakness of the proposals: players were expected to raise the level of their game while working longer hours for lower wages.

Despite the new directive and the imposition of fines and the demotion of teams for infringing regulations, as in the case of Stahl Eisenhüttenstadt in 1970, the abuses continued and central direction remained weak. Bernd Stange, a former GDR national trainer and coach of FC Carl Zeiss Jena, recalls that Wolfgang Biermann, the director general of the Carl Zeiss Jena combine from 1975 to 1990 and a member of the SED Central Committee, was determined that the team would remain within the elite as it enhanced the reputation of his industrial empire. Biermann used both stick and carrot. The rewards for success in European competitions were so high that players, allegedly, did not put their money into an account in the only savings bank in Jena but took it home in bundles and hid it in the vegetable rack (Mallwitz 2004: 207-13). Another leading club, Hansa Rostock, offered each player a bonus of up to 2,000 GDR Marks per victory in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent relegation from the *Oberliga* in the 1985-86 season (Koch in Willmann 2004: 80). The problem of surreptitious payments and other forms of bribery, which meant that players were in effect professionals, remained so widespread that it attracted the attention of the West German press.<sup>7</sup> It was a state of affairs which the political authorities found difficult to reconcile with their public commitment to a form of semi-amateurism in socialist sport and their diatribes against the commercialisation and professionalisation of sport in the capitalist world.<sup>8</sup> As SED rule drew to a close, officials were still struggling to cope with the abuse of regulations and the problem of mediocre playing standards. An audit conducted by the

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<sup>7</sup> Although the full story was not uncovered, the topic was addressed in an article in *Die Welt*, 5 August 1987, a copy of which is in BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XX, no. 221, p.170.

GDR Ministry of Finance in 1987 uncovered myriad offences among four clubs in the *Liga* and the *Bezirksligen*, all of whom, like BSG Glückauf Sonderhausen and TSG Gröditz, were attached to a parent enterprise. The players earned about 1,770 GDR Marks per month from their basic salary and bonuses. Although above the GDR average, these payments did not in principle infringe DFV regulations. The actual transgressions concerned a number of undeclared payments from enterprise funds, putting players in wage groups above their level of qualification and taking more than the permitted time off work.<sup>9</sup> When Egon Krenz suggested a meeting between those heads of combines with a football club under their wing and the First Secretaries of the SED Regional Executives to try and find a solution, Erich Honecker turned it down (Teichler 2006: 33). It is little wonder that athletes who reached world standards complained bitterly of the privileges and far higher payments enjoyed by underperforming footballers (Fuchs and Ulrich 1990: 90-1). When in 1989 the thorny problem of players' wages, contracts and transfers was finally tackled and arrangements were made for the changes to be implemented in the 1989-90 *Oberliga* season (Leske 2004: 230-7), the game was up not only for sham amateurism but also, more significantly, for the SED too.

### 5. The people's game in a 'people's state'

One of the reasons why the SED leadership and the DTSSB dragged their feet was football's popularity with GDR citizens. Although the East German public enthused over the successes of their top athletes and swimmers, which recent research suggests underpinned support for elite sport from the 1970s to about the mid-1980s (see Fetzer 2003: 290-302, 347-51), football was not seriously challenged as the country's most popular sport. Television, radio, two specialist papers, *Fußballwoche* and *Deutsches Sportecho*, and the regional press catered for the avid interest in football. Viewing figures for football on GDR television were, except for special events such as the Olympics, usually higher than for other sports. An indication of the extent of interest is available from the surveys undertaken by the GDR television authority. The *Sport aktuell* programme on Saturday evenings attracted a high percentage of viewers for

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the draft document emanating from the Stasi's Main Department XX: BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XX/AKG, no. 1637, 'Information', Berlin (East), July 1986, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/4966, 'Information über Verstöße gegen die sozialistische Gesetzlichkeit beim Einsatz betrieblicher Mittel und Fonds für die Finanzierung aus Betriebssportgemeinschaften', Berlin (East), 29 May 1987, pp. 127-33.

games such as Bayern Munich against Dynamo Dresden in 1973 (58.4 per cent) although somewhat lower for the latter's meeting with Liverpool in 1972 (25.6 per cent). *Sport speziell*, which was transmitted on various days of the week, had figures of 31 per cent for BFC Dynamo versus Werder Bremen in the 1988 European Cup and 24.7 per cent for the return match. When the GDR met West Germany and Argentina in the 1974 World Cup, the percentages were 70.7 and 60.9 respectively.<sup>10</sup> These and other sports programmes were allotted a broad societal function, which included, according to the ideological guidelines compiled by the Main Department for Sport of GDR TV, the enhancement of a state consciousness among GDR citizens and the representation of 'the triumphal march of GDR sport and the certainty of victory in the class struggle with West German imperialism'.<sup>11</sup>

Attendances at *Oberliga* games were relatively high. The all-time record of 3,620,000 spectators was set in the 1951-52 season and the highest average per match of 14,004 was achieved two years later. Throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s, the average attendance stood at around 11,000 to 12,000, falling below 10,000 for the first time in 1985-86 (Horn and Wiese: 2004: 419-20). BFC's long run of success dampened interest in the *Oberliga*, as did failure in Europe. One BFC player complained, after the calamitous loss to Werder Bremen in 1988, that it was dispiriting to play in front of sparse crowds in East Berlin, unlike in Dresden where the atmosphere was much more stimulating.<sup>12</sup> Dynamo Dresden usually played before about 25,000 spectators.

Despite the fluctuation in attendance figures, East Germans remained committed to their local team. Rivalries were often fierce, for example in Leipzig between Chemie, the traditional underdog, and the privileged Lokomotive, and within the Stasi's own security empire between BFC Dynamo and Dynamo Dresden. Indeed, so sensitive were SED leaders in Dresden to the impact of the team's performance on the mood of the population that Hans Modrow, the First Secretary of the party's Regional Executive, received regular Stasi reports on Dynamo Dresden's games during the 1970s and 1980s (Pleil 2001: 284; Spitzer 2004: 49). Some idea of the emotions aroused by supporting a club can be obtained from the recollections of former fans. Thomas Brussig, the playwright and author of several best-selling novels, among them *Am kürzeren Ende der*

<sup>10</sup> See the materials in the *Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv* in Babelsberg: DRA, 'DRA Zuschauerforschung des DDR-Fernsehens – Sehbeteiligungskartei, Ergebnisse der Sofortresonanz', not paginated.

<sup>11</sup> DRA, Schriftgutarchiv Fernsehen: DDRF, Vorbereitende Planmaterialien der HA Sport, no. 267, 'Grundkonzeption 1969', p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, Sekretariat des Ministers, no. 254, 'Information', 29 November 1988, pp. 52-3.

*Sonnenallee* and *Helden wie wir*, became fascinated with the game as an 8-year-old while watching the TV transmission of the GDR victory over the FRG in 1974. With the national team usually both unsuccessful and dull, his interest soon shifted to BFC. This faded, too, when the team's long run of success from 1979 onwards rendered the outcome of the *Oberliga* predictable (Brussig 2003: 171-2). Andreas Gläser, a fellow East Berliner and author came under BFC's spell too. The atmosphere at his first match, BFC against FC Vorwärts Frankfurt at the end of the 1977-78 season, left him hoarse with shouting and proud of BFC's victory. In his view, BFC played attractive football and the distinction between BFC and its bitter city rival, Union, as representing the 'Bullen' and workers respectively, was a false one. His loyalty to BFC and one of its fan clubs, the 'Bobbys', led him into fights with Union and Dynamo Dresden fans (Gläser 2003: 22-6, 39-42). Christoph Dieckmann, a former editor of the weekly *Die Zeit* and a long-time fan of FC Carl Zeiss Jena recalls the many attractions of football from his East German base. At the weekend, he was able to watch his favourite team live, whether in a local league or the *Oberliga*, follow *Bundesliga* matches on West German TV, and pick up the second-half of *Oberliga* clashes on GDR radio (Dieckmann 1999: 311).

Except for a brief period in the early 1970s, East German fans did not have much to cheer about when GDR teams stepped into the international arena. Only 1. FC Magdeburg managed to win a European competition, beating the illustrious AC Milan in the European Cup Winner's Cup final in 1974. Greater success was enjoyed in less demanding tournaments: the national team won Olympic gold in 1976, as well as silver and two bronze medals on other occasions. The junior team took the European under-18 title in 1965, 1970 and 1986. Matthias Sammer, Michael Ballack, Jens Jeremies, Bernd Schneider and Andreas Thom are some of the former GDR footballers to represent Germany since unification, a belated testimony to the quality of the training of young talent in the GDR. The most notable success in East German football history occurred at the 1974 World Cup when the national team defeated West Germany in Hamburg. The surprise victory was greeted with great enthusiasm in the GDR, and East Germans took some pride in showing Westerners that they too could achieve something (Fetzer 2003: 293-4). The 1974 tournament was, however, the only time the 'beautiful losers' of the GDR (Dieckmann 1999: 323) qualified for the final stages of the World Cup, and the result against West Germany, secured by Sparwasser's goal, was not without a certain irony as the West Germans were managed by the former star of Dresden football,

Helmut Schön. There would be no opportunity for revenge for the West Germans as the SED was not prepared to risk a rematch.

Many, if not most, East German fans had a double football identity: not only did they support their local team but they were also attracted to the more successful and glamorous West German national team and clubs, whether Bayern Munich and Werder Bremen or Schalke 04 and Hamburger SV. With restrictions on visits to the West so tight after 1961 for all but pensioners and those with special permission to travel, many East German football fans had to seek gratification by watching Western TV or seeking out European matches involving West German teams either in the GDR or in neighbouring socialist states such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary. For example, hundreds of GDR supporters crossed into Czechoslovakia when Dukla Prague or Slovan Bratislava played Hertha Berlin or to Warsaw when Poland met the FRG in October 1971. The latter game attracted the attention of the SED Central Committee Secretariat, as is apparent from the record of its meeting on 17 November 1971. Of the 1,300 GDR fans who had crossed the border, 204 had supported the West German team. Forty-one, it was alleged, had been especially 'hostile' to the GDR: they had chanted 'Germany, show it to the Poles – we want victory' and 'Chemnitz greets the German national team and Kaiser Franz'. It was also noted that Helmut Schön had personally provided GDR citizens with tickets for the match, had 'idealised' the stars of West German football and had extolled living conditions in the FRG (Teichler 2002: 610-13).

There were similar expressions of allegiance for West German teams at other games: banners openly displayed messages such as 'Jena greets Uerdingen' and cries of 'Deutschland, Deutschland' sometimes echoed around East German grounds. Even the construction of the Berlin Wall failed to sever contacts between fans and members of Hertha Berlin on both sides of the border.<sup>13</sup> Such was the affection for Hertha that some East Berliners managed to obtain scarves and players' autographs, to meet Hertha fans clandestinely in East Berlin pubs, and to attend the team's games in Eastern Europe. Particularly close contacts were forged between Hertha and 1. FC Union fans, both teams being perceived as underdogs in their respective leagues. With greater freedom to travel, Hertha supporters in the West frequented Union home games, especially the explosive derby with BFC.

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<sup>13</sup> A detailed study is to be found in Wiese 2006: 239-84 and the catalogue of the exhibition *Doppelpässe. Wie die Deutschen die Mauer umspielten*, held in the Prenzlauer Berg Museum in Berlin in 2006.



The GDR authorities, not least the SED Politbüro and its 'shield and sword', the Stasi, were alarmed by these personal contacts and the provocative chant of 'Hertha und Union – eine Nation'.<sup>14</sup> They served as disturbing reminders of a common German identity which clashed with the SED's theory, as propagated since the early 1970s, of the development of a socialist nation in the GDR and its capitalist antithesis in the FRG. This novel thesis represented a radical – and ultimately unsuccessful – revision of the SED's initial adherence to a unified Germany, even though this stance had become devoid of any political substance by the late 1950s. The SED's original position on the national question helps explain why the 'Miracle of Berne' in 1954 could be hailed enthusiastically as a 'German' achievement by the East German population, including, albeit with certain ideological reservations, many functionaries. The Free German Youth daily organ, *Junge Welt*, acclaimed West Germany's 3-2 victory over Hungary as 'the greatest German success in the history of the sport of football'. The SED soon sought, however, to dampen popular enthusiasm, drafting in its formidable propagandist, Eduard von Schnitzler, to warn that West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and President Theodor Heuss were misusing the success for political ends, analagous, he claimed, to Hitler's manipulation of the 1936 Olympics for preparations for war (Becker and Buss 2004: 393-5).

## 6. Securing football

Even though the GDR finally came out of the diplomatic cold soon after Erich Honecker became SED leader in 1971 and the East and West German sports authorities concluded a formal agreement in 1974 on sporting relations between the two countries, the SED and government officials remained wary of East-West contacts. The arch-Stalinist Mielke, with typical paranoia, warned that détente was a Trojan Horse of imperialism. His ministry went to great lengths to curtail contacts between football fans on both sides of the Wall, contending that the West was using football as part of its political-ideological subversion of East German youth. It was partly with this in mind that football was integrated into the Stasi's blanket surveillance of elite sport, which was designed to prevent sports stars defecting to the West, to protect the secrets of the state doping programme, to maintain the GDR's position as a world power in sport and

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<sup>14</sup> See BStU, MfS, ZA, ZAIG, no. 2731, Appendix to a letter from Mielke to Krenz, Berlin (East), 10

to ensure success for the Stasi's own Dynamo Sports Association. Athletes, trainers, journalists, officials and sports scientists were recruited as *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* (IMs – unofficial co-workers), the ministry's 'main weapon' in its counterintelligence activities. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it is estimated about 3,000 IMs were employed annually in top-level sport (Spitzer 2000: 205). As far as football is concerned, three national coaches – Eduard Geyer (IM "Jahn" from 1972 to 1986, and then a GMS until 1989), Bernd Stange (IMS "Kurt Wegener") and Georg Buschner (GMS "Georg") - were deployed as IMs (Leske 2004: 281-323). Top football referees also served the Stasi: Adolf Prokop (OibE "Gustaf"), Rudi Glöckner (IM "Hans Meyer") and Bernd Stumpf (IMS "Peter Richter"), as did leading players such as Ulf Kirsten and Gerd Weber.

The thoroughness of infiltration can be judged by the example of Kirsten and Weber's club, SG Dynamo Dresden. Ingolf Pleil has shown that 18 out of 72 players were registered as IMs in Dresden's final twelve years as an *Oberliga* club and that detailed reports were submitted to controlling officers on matters such as the internal affairs of the team, the character of other players and links with people in the West (Pleil 2001: 32-53, 116-24, 128-39; Spitzer 2004: 46). In 1988, the Stasi planned to put under surveillance all those Lok Leipzig players who played for the national team.<sup>15</sup> Not all recruitment targets succumbed. The Stasi made determined efforts for several years from 1971 onwards to enlist the defender Gerd Kische of FC Hansa Rostock, hoping to use him as an informer at the 1972 Olympic Games and the 1974 World Cup. He played a cat-and-mouse game until the Stasi finally gave up hope of catching him (Leske 2004: 368-72).

Despite the intensive surveillance of Dynamo Dresden, three of its players became implicated in a major scandal in 1981. Shortly before Gerd Weber, Peter Kotte and Matthias Müller were due to depart for Argentina to play for the GDR national team, they were arrested on suspicion of planning to defect to the West in order to join teams in the *Bundesliga*. Weber was imprisoned and the other two, who had not intended to leave the GDR, were banned from playing in the *Oberliga*. Ironically, Weber had been an IM since 1975, providing his controller with information about his colleagues' attitudes to sport and politics and their private contacts. After his release from prison in

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October 1977, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> BStU, MfS, Außenstelle Leipzig, BVfS Leipzig, Abteilung XX, no. 01218, 'Jahresplan des Leiters der Abteilung XX', Leipzig, 28 December 1988, p. 38.

December 1981, he continued as an IM until May 1982. When Weber and his wife applied at a later date to leave the country, this prompted the Stasi to investigate the matter in an operation known as OPK “Ratte”. However, the couple eventually managed to escape to West Germany via Hungary and Austria in September 1989 (Leske 2004: 336-51). One of BFC’s leading players and a former member of the Stasi’s Guard Regiment, Lutz Eigendorf, managed to defect in 1979. He went on to play for Kaiserslautern and Eintracht Braunschweig, during which time his wife and parents in the GDR were kept under close surveillance by 17 IMs. His wife divorced him and married a former boyfriend, who had been planted on her as a Stasi Romeo agent (IM “Peter”). The four agents who observed Eigendorf in West Germany were part of a campaign to undermine him both professionally and personally. His death in March 1983 from injuries suffered in a car crash has fed suspicion that he was murdered by the Stasi. While Mielke was certainly not averse to the execution of ‘traitors’ and had been angered by the defection of an outstanding player from his favourite club, evidence is lacking which unequivocally corroborates the murder thesis (Leske 2004: 351-68).

Crowd control, especially at games involving West European teams, was another important task performed by the Stasi. The security arrangements, which were carried out in cooperation with the German People’s Police (DVP) and local clubs, often resembled a minor military operation. The Stasi was keen to prevent disorder and any sign of support for the class enemy. Stasi records show that when clubs such as Magdeburg, Dynamo Dresden and BFC Dynamo hosted West German and English teams, tickets were largely restricted to approved fans and members of the security forces. In addition, Stasi and police officers were allocated specific areas in the stadium and the visiting team’s hotel was put under close observation by IMs and Stasi contact persons. When BFC played Nottingham Forest in East Berlin’s Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn stadium in the quarter-final of the European Cup in March 1980, the leader of the Central Operational Staff emphasised the need to forestall any disturbances which would undermine the reputation of the GDR and its sports movement.<sup>16</sup>

The Stasi was keen to prevent young fans from disorderly behaviour at *Oberliga* and *Liga* games, too. While crowd trouble was not uncommon in the early years of the GDR, it was not until the 1970s and in particular the 1980s that state and party authorities became seriously concerned about the spread and escalation of football

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<sup>16</sup> BStU, MfS ZA, HA XX, no. 1823, ‘Plan’, 12 March 1980, pp. 39-40.

hooliganism, notably in East Berlin and Leipzig (Dennis 2006: 59-62). Despite the greater use of stewards, police and Stasi officers, hooliganism spilled over from the stadia into the streets and on to public transport. Most of the incidents were committed by young males and tended to take the form of drunken behaviour, provoking the police and opposition fans, and throwing missiles on to the pitch. Physical assaults and damage to property and installations were also frequent occurrences. Much of the trouble was triggered by local footballing rivalries, disputes over refereeing decisions and alleged discrimination against a particular team or region. It was difficult to contain for many reasons, one of which, according to the Stasi, was the failure of police officers to take adequate preventive measures and the unwarranted discrimination against BFC travelling supporters. Another problem was poor coordination between Stasi units at district and regional level.<sup>17</sup>

Although perturbed about unruly behaviour among fans, the Stasi and the police were more anxious about what they described as the 'hard core' hooligans who incited young fans to commit acts of violence and theft, get drunk and chant nationalistic and racist slogans.<sup>18</sup> This hard-core element was the precursor of a more threatening and xenophobic development associated with the skinhead infiltration of the hooligan scene, especially at BFC and 1. FC Union Berlin games. In July 1988, the MfS estimated that about 30 Union Berlin supporters belonged to the militant skinheads, and a similar number to the 'hard core' group. The influence of the skinheads, it was noted, had extended since the start of the 1987-88 season from the capital to the Potsdam, Leipzig, Halle, Rostock and other *Bezirke*.<sup>19</sup> Despite an official campaign launched in late 1987 to subvert and crush the skinhead movement in the GDR, the FDGB cup final between Carl Zeiss Jena and BFC in June 1988 coincided with some of the most serious violence ever witnessed at an East German football match. About 100 to 150 skinheads and other football hooligans gathered together in the East Berlin suburb of Pankow and marched en masse to the nearby *Stadion der Weltjugend* chanting fascist songs and clashing violently with other supporters.<sup>20</sup> While the SED and the Stasi sought to explain away hooliganism as a result of the impact of political-ideological subversion by the Western

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<sup>17</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XX/AKG, no. 1637, 'Bericht zum negativen Fußballanhang des BFC Dynamo in der Spielsaison 1984/85', Berlin (East), 9 July 1985, pp. 56-7, 62.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2, 54.

<sup>19</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XX, no. 221, 'Bericht zum Stand der Sicherheit und Ordnung bei Fußballspielen im Spieljahr 1987/88', Berlin (East), 15 July 1988, pp. 260-1.

media and of personal contacts between Westerners and susceptible young East Germans, they failed to take account of internal conditions in the GDR. Among the latter were the growing disenchantment of GDR youth with the socialist system, their hostility towards the *Vopos* and other guardians of the authoritarian state, and the BFC ‘*Problematik*’.

## 7. The BFC ‘*Problematik*’

By the early 1980s, a nexus of problems had formed around the GDR’s leading football team, BFC Dynamo, *Oberliga* champions between 1979 and 1988. The resources of its parent *Sportvereinigung Dynamo* and the political clout of the Minister of State Security and SED Politbüro member Erich Mielke left all rivals in its wake. When Mielke entered the dressing room of Dynamo Dresden players celebrating their *Oberliga* title at the end of the 1977-78 season, it was not just to congratulate them as chair of the *Sportvereinigung Dynamo* but to bring the unwelcome news that it was now the turn of BFC to be champions (Luther and Willmann 2003: 70-1). Given the traditional rivalries between the two cities and teams, not forgetting the controversial relocation to East Berlin of SG Dynamo Dresden in 1954, it is not surprising that matches between the two Dynamo teams were frequently marked by serious crowd trouble. The drawn game between BFC and Dresden in December 1978 resulted in the arrest of 38 fans of both teams and accusations in Dresden of the manipulation of the match by the referee in favour of BFC as yet one more instance of the general discrimination suffered by the city.<sup>21</sup> The hostilities even found their way into units of the Stasi’s own Guard Regiment. In 1985, members of the Dresden unit shouted abuse at the Berlin team, calling them ‘bent champions’.<sup>22</sup>

‘Bent champions’, the criticism most frequently levelled at BFC during the 1980s, referred to an alleged bias by referees towards Mielke’s team. It was seen as more than coincidence when referees handed out yellow cards which debarred key players from forthcoming matches against BFC. Among the many notorious incidents was the award

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<sup>20</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, no. 21493, Rainer Taraschonnek, ‘Erfordernisse der Erziehung und Befähigung von inoffiziellen Mitarbeitern (IM) zur operativen Bearbeitung von rechtsextremistischen Erscheinungen unter Jugendlichen der Hauptstadt’, 1989, p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, Sekretariat des Ministers, no. 180, ‘Bericht über negative Erscheinungen im Zusammenhang mit dem Oberligaspiel Dynamo Dresden gegen Dynamo Berlin am 01.12.1978’, Dresden, [1978], pp. 7-11. Also Pleil 2001: 219-20.

of a penalty by referee Stumpf in the 95<sup>th</sup> minute against Lok Leipzig in 1986, which decided the championship in BFC's favour. Scurrilous verses penned by an unknown author which were circulating in 1988 summed up popular perceptions of the partiality of referees and fans' contempt for BFC's poor record in European competition:

***Gemeinsam klapps!!!***

*Beim BFC geht's gut voran  
mit Prokop, Stumpf und Habermann.  
Auch Rossner, Scheurell sorgen prompt,  
dass der BFC nach vorne kommt...  
So schafft man mit vereinter Kraft  
für den BFC die Meisterschaft.  
Doch ist der Schirie mal neutral,  
bleibt auch der BFC nur zweite Wahl.  
Im Meistercup gibt's schwere Stunden:  
BFC gewogen und zu leicht gefunden!!!<sup>23</sup>*

It was perhaps just as well for Prokop, Stumpf and several other top referees who often officiated at BFC games that opposing fans were unaware of their collaboration with the Stasi as IMs. While there is no evidence that these referees were under direct orders from the ministry to favour BFC, gifts to their wives, the benefits of controlling matches in Western Europe and other forms of patronage all helped to influence their performance (Leske 2004: 530-3). Sections of the mass media, too, played a role in BFC's supremacy by attempting to conceal biased decisions from the public. The cover-up enjoyed limited success as some regional newspapers joined in the chorus of disapproval. Furthermore, not only did complaints from aggrieved fans pour into the offices of party and state, but even members of the security forces were concerned that referees' errors provoked unrest in the stadia and damaged the reputation of the police and the Stasi (Leske 2004: 502). Such was the pressure of popular dissatisfaction with the unfair advantages derived by BFC that SED members and officials in East Berlin

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<sup>22</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XX, no. 2701, 'Information', Berlin (East), 22 May 1985, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> A copy of the document is in BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XX, no. 221, p. 222.

were of the opinion that a ‘clean socialist development’ was more important than the continuing supremacy of BFC.<sup>24</sup>

With DFV functionaries, as well as Egon Krenz and other SED leaders, becoming increasingly uneasy about the negative reactions, an analysis was undertaken by the DFV of the video recording of Dynamo Dresden’s 3-1 victory over BFC in the 1985 FDGB cup final. The panel concluded that referee Roßner and his two assistants, Scheurell and Hermann, had committed an above-average number of errors, most of them favouring BFC. As a result, Roßner was banned from refereeing future international and *Oberliga* matches.<sup>25</sup> Since unification, the former BFC goalkeeper, Bodo Rudalweit, ex-coach Jürgen Bogs and others associated with the club have insisted, not without some justification, that the quality of their play and the thoroughness of their work with talented youngsters earned them their titles, not referees (see the interviews in Luther and Willmann 2003: 93, 119). On the other hand, this overlooks a significant advantage enjoyed by BFC as, unlike other clubs, it was able to draw on talented juniors from all parts of the GDR.<sup>26</sup>

There is an interesting footnote to the 1985 cup final which illustrates the tensions inside GDR football and members of the political elite. An IM reported that after the match Krenz, Tisch and Mielke had fallen out over Roßner’s performance. Whereas Mielke thought that he had refereed the game well, the other two begged to differ, Krenz jokingly asking whether the match had been played under a new set of rules. Tisch, who was the chair of the FDGB and, like the other two, a member of the SED Politbüro, commented caustically that such referees threatened to destroy the reputation of the FDGB cup competition.<sup>27</sup> A more bitter dispute arose between Erbach, the State Secretary for Physical Culture and Sport and the President of the DFV, and Colonel Ransch of the Ministry of State Security. Ransch, who, unlike Erbach, thought that Roßner had performed well, accused Erbach of being prejudiced against BFC. And when Zimmermann, the DFV general secretary, backed Erbach, Ransch became even more agitated, attacking Zimmermann for his hatred of BFC.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> SAPMO-BArch DY 30/35743, Dreher to Lorenz, 6 December 1985, n.p.

<sup>25</sup> SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/4963, ‘Protokoll der Videoauswertung des Endspiels im FDGB-Pokal vom 8. Juni 1985 zwischen dem BFC Dynamo und der SG Dynamo Dresden zur Beurteilung der Schiedsrichterleistung’, 3 July 1985, pp. 195-7.

<sup>26</sup> See the interview with Jürgen Nöldner in Stegemann 2001: 380. Nöldner played for the GDR national team and ASK/FC Vorwärts Berlin and was on the editorial board of the sports magazine *Kicker* until June 2006.

<sup>27</sup> BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XX, no. 2701, ‘Tonbandbericht IMS “Michael Hirsch” vom 3.7.1985’, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

## 8. The confusion of powers

The clash between Mielke and his Politbüro colleagues is symptomatic of the rivalries and confusion which dogged GDR football throughout its history. A 1985 DFV paper was but one of the many occasions when criticism was voiced by the central football and sports functionaries. An improvement in the general standard of GDR football, it contended, ‘was hindered in part by territorial modes of thinking and behaviour’, ‘excessive material and social privileges’ and ‘illegal payments in the spheres of the *Oberliga*, *Liga* and *Bezirksliga*’.<sup>29</sup> This view was shared by Hellmann’s Central Committee Department for Sport and the DTSB. Manfred Ewald took up this theme in his memoirs written a few years after the collapse of the GDR. He attributed the mediocre quality of GDR football to the lack of firm central direction by the DFV and his own DTSB; instead, the game had been run by people outside the world of sport, by political and economic functionaries at central level and, above all, by those in the *Bezirke*. These individuals had, in Ewald’s opinion, misjudged – rather than misused - their influence and opportunities. Some had sought to promote their personal reputation in their town or beyond by supporting a popular local team, others had believed that success on the pitch would lift the spirits of the workers and improve productivity in the factories (Ewald 1994: 57).

While his diagnosis of the poor standard of GDR football played down his own responsibility for the situation, Ewald was correct to highlight the competition for reflected glory among central and regional authorities and individuals. Mention has already been made of Wolfgang Biermann, the head of the Carl Zeiss Jena combine, and referred to by one of the club’s former coaches as the “Berlusconi of Jena” (Mallwitz 2004: 210). Other powerful interest groups included numerous directors of other large economic units, SED Regional Executives, and Mielke and his *Sportvereinigung Dynamo*. The limits on the authority of the DTSB and the Central Committee Department for Sport are well illustrated by the failure of Ewald and Hellmann in 1968 to cut the Dynamo Association down to size by dissolving it as a central organ (Spitzer 2004: 71). Indeed, such was its influence that when, in 1985, the issue of referee bias in favour of BFC came up for discussion, Krenz wrote on a document ‘Keine BFC-Diskussion’ (Spitzer 2004: 75-6).

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<sup>29</sup> SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/4963, ‘Einschätzung zum Leistungsstand und zur Leistungserfüllung im DFV der DDR’, [1985], p. 206.



While football was a sphere thoroughly infiltrated, both politically and ideologically, by state and SED bodies – for example, the Stasi’s use of informers and party efforts to foster a friend-foe image among players –, the game did enjoy a surprising degree of autonomy at local level. Many fans managed to frustrate the efforts of the DVP, the Stasi and the SED to curb what the authorities perceived as undesirable behaviour, including hooliganism, and the emulation of facets of football culture in the West. Not only does this testify to the self-determination of fans – their *Eigen-Sinn*, perhaps –, but it also highlights the degree to which the GDR was open to Western influences. Football, a game which spanned the inter-German border, could not be put into socialist isolation and the SED and its security forces were obliged to take into account outside reactions to events in the GDR. Furthermore, as football enjoyed so much popularity at home, it was able to acquire a level of freedom of manoeuvre which other elite sports do not seem to have achieved. The tug-of-war between the football clubs and fans on the one hand and various central authorities on the other shows that the SED dictatorship should not be viewed as a system imposed on society and one in which policy was implemented by fiat but that it involved consensus and some give-and-take. Finally, the rivalries between the mini-empires of army and state security and the bid for football success by large economic concerns and regional politicians reveal a fragmentary distribution of power. This is a far cry from the notion of a unitary political system presided over by the SED Politbüro and Central Committee Secretariat. In the case of BFC Dynamo’s success from the late 1970s and the ‘demotion’ of its army rival, this seems to have been a case of the fittest and the most able leadership. To what extent this principle applies elsewhere in society and politics is one of the key questions facing researchers in analysing the anatomy of the SED dictatorship.

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## Abbreviations

AKG – Auswertungs- und Kontrollgruppe

BArch - Bundesarchiv

BFC – Berliner Fußballclub Dynamo

BSG - Betriebssportgemeinschaft  
BStU – Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik  
BVfS – Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit  
DFV – Deutscher Fußballverband der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik  
DTSB – Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik  
DVP – Deutsche Volkspolizei  
FC - Fußballclub  
FDGB – Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund  
FRG - Federal Republic of Germany  
GDR – German Democratic Republic  
GMS – Gesellschaftlicher Mitarbeiter  
HA - Hauptabteilung  
IM - Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter  
IMS – Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter zur politisch-operativen Durchdringung und Sicherung des Verantwortungsbereiches  
MfS – Ministerium für Staatssicherheit  
OibE – Offizier im besonderen Einsatz  
OPK – Operative Personenkontrolle  
SAPMO-BArch - Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv  
SC - Sportclub  
SED – Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands  
SG - Sportgemeinschaft  
Stasi – see MfS  
SV - Sportvereinigung  
ZA – Zentralarchiv  
ZAIG – Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe  
ZSG - Zentralsportgemeinschaft

### **Note on archival sources**

‘BStU’ refers to the central and regional archival holdings of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former GDR. ‘ZA’ denotes documents from the BStU Central Archive and ‘Außenstelle’ to its Regional branches. ‘SAPMO-BArch’ and ‘BArch’ indicate materials located in the Berlin branch of the Federal Archives.

### **Biodata**

Mike Dennis is Professor of Modern German History at the University of Wolverhampton. He has written extensively on the GDR. His publications include: *Social and Economic Modernization in Eastern Germany from Honecker to Kohl* (1993), *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic 1945-1990* (2000), *The Stasi. Myth and Reality* (2003). He has also co-edited books with Eva Kolinsky, *United and Divided. Germany since 1990* (2004) and Karin Weiss, *Erfolg in der Nische? Die Vietnamesen in der DDR und in Ostdeutschland* (2005) This piece draws in particular on his article 'Soccer hooliganism in the German Democratic Republic', in A Tomlinson and C Young (eds.), *German Football. History, Culture, Society* (2006), pp. 52-72.