REVIEW: Zoltán Rostás, Florentina Țone (coord.), *Scos din productie. Viața de sportiv în comunism și după...*

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Abstract: This review analyzes the oral history volume coordinated by Zoltán Rostás and Florentina Țone, which includes 38 interviews with individuals who participated in Romanian sports during the communist era and beyond. In this book, former athletes, who vary in terms of national recognition, articulate diverse aspects of experiences related to their careers. This review delineates the principal themes present in the interviews and suggests directions that may be beneficial for scholars in the field of sports social sciences.

Keywords: Romanian sport, sports under communism, oral history, athlete.

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It is a common practice to find interviews with athletes and former athletes in journals and magazines, but it is relatively uncommon to encounter such interviews published in book format. Zoltán Rostás and Florentina Țone offer us a substantial volume of oral history under the title *Out of Production. Life as a Sportsman under Communism and After...* The coordinators have curated interviews with former athletes, which were conducted by second- and third-year students from the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences and the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Bucharest. This volume complements a series of related projects initiated by Rostás and Țone, such as *Young student looking for a revolutionary*, and other oral history volumes produced by Rostás in collaboration with Sorin Stoica (*Round-Trip. Conversations About Working Abroad*), Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu (*The Other Half of History. Women Telling Their Stories*) and Antonio Momoc (*The small-time activists. Life stories*, and *Hustlers, resourceful people, survivors*).

The present work is structured not according to traditional chapters, but rather by sports disciplines, each corresponding to one or more interviews with athletes from the respective fields (athletics, boxing, rowing, kayak-canoeing, cycling, football, gymnastics, handball, horse-riding, bowling, amateur radio, rugby, fencing, hunting, volleyball). A total of 38 interviews were selected, the majority of which were conducted during the academic year 2013-2014. The subjects of these interviews include both well-known athletes, such as Iolanda Balaș, Ivan Patzaichin, and Cristian Gațu, as well as lesser-known athletes, who were selected based on the opportunities available to the students. The interviews do not conform to a specific format, there is no standardized structure governing the flow of questions. This variability arises from the fact that each interviewee was paired with a different interviewer, who was granted autonomy to formulate their own questions.

The analysis of the interviews reveals several recurring themes that are prevalent in the narratives of former athletes. As suggested by the title of the book, a significant issue relates to the concept of exemption from work, which functioned as a bureaucratic mechanism allowing athletes to be relieved from typical labor or civilian employment. This exemption enabled them to concentrate fully on their training and competitions while

maintaining their amateur status. Boxer Ion Dolana remarked: "I didn't go to work ... all day training and competing"[1]. Another common theme is the exploration of childhood and the initial encounter with sports, and initiating the discussion with this aspect facilitates a swift connection for the subjects to the origins of their athletic careers.

Training is a topic that has received limited coverage in the communist press and, as a result, has largely remained unfamiliar to the general public. Nonetheless, athletes vividly recall their training experiences, highlighting their significance in their personal development. The extensive nature of training emerges as a recurring theme among numerous interviewees, who share a variety of coping strategies. For example, Veronica Cogeanu-Cochela describes how, during her rowing training, she simultaneously studied for university, which helped her to alleviate the effort by engaging with the academic material[2]. Furthermore, training is often closely associated with the issue of injuries, another frequently discussed topic, as nearly all interviewees have experienced some form of injury, the consequences of which have profoundly impacted their lives.

Another prominent theme that has emerged pertains to the influence of family on an athlete's life. This encompasses the various ways in which family members support the athlete's career, as well as the athlete's efforts to establish their own family, often with a partner who also comes from the sports domain. Systematically, the discourse surrounding the intersection of family and sports careers inevitably leads to considerations regarding post-sport career trajectories. Numerous athletes articulate their responses to the conclusion of their athletic careers and elucidate the rationale behind their subsequent professional decisions. This topic is particularly relevant in contemporary discussions and represents a significant concern for professionals seeking to provide guidance to athletes as they transition from their sports careers.

The questions posed by the students are both inquisitive and audacious, addressing topics such as the nostalgia expressed by former athletes for the communist regime, notable career setbacks, and the sensitive issue of doping, to which the interviewees respond without hesitation. The fact that many of the interviews are conducted by students who possess limited knowledge of sports paradoxically gives a plus to the book, as it forces the interviewees to explain many sport-specific concepts and aspects to individuals unfamiliar with the field, often resulting in the provision of valuable insights.

Overall, the book offers an engaging and accessible narrative for sports enthusiasts who seek to explore various aspects of the field that are frequently overlooked by the general public. The interviews included in this book reveal a complex landscape of sports, providing researchers of Romanian sports history with valuable insights. These interviews serve as social documents that can be utilized in professional studies to analyze the nature of sports in communist Romania and to address the previously mentioned discussion themes.

Bibliography

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1. Zoltán Rostás, Florentina Țone (coord), *Scos din producție. Viața de sportiv în comunism și după* (București: Eikon, 2024), 61.
2. Ibid., 109.