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## Nick Martin's Communism

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# Nick Martin's Communism

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## Historical Background



- Communist Dictatorship was established in 1948 after the occupation by the Soviet Red Army preceding WWII
- A violent uprising occurring in the month before the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956 which resulted in the communist part a new coalition government
- The Soviet Army invaded with 60,000 troops and 2,000 tanks and reinstate the previous communist government
- Leaders of the ousted Government were executed publicly



## Nick Martin



### Early Life

- Born in 1931 in Hungary to a well off family
- Father ran a hairdresser and was a pronounced capitalist that had his store taken away under Communism
  - This is relevant as he grew up in a wealthy family and was given opportunities that not everyone would have had under a communist regime in the beginning
- Started playing water polo at a young age a result of a heart defect as he was told he had to swim
- Water polo Olympic Gold medalist in the 1952 and 1956 games
- Decorated Member of the Police Force
- Received his masters in Art History

## Water Polo & Revolution

Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia 1956

November 22 - December



In the midst of the revolution, the Hungarian water polo players were flown out to Melbourne where the first action they did was replace the Hungarian national communist flag with the flag pictured here, the normal flag without the communist symbol in the middle.

The athletes received little to no news about the revolution and its progress until the only English speaker on the team, Nick Martin, was able to communicate with members of the media who updated the team on the horrors be experienced back home.



Blood in the Water match in the semifinals of the Melbourne Olympics in 1956, the game was played between Hungary and Russia. In the photo here we see Ervin Zador bleeding from the eye after being struck by a Russian player. Hungary went on to win the match 4-0.



2 - Clip from 2006 movie *Children of Glory*



3 - Summary of the 1956 Hungarian Olympic Waterpolo run

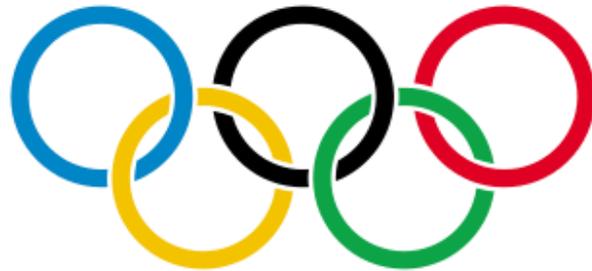
Directly preceding the Olympic Games many Hungarian athletes, not just members of the water polo team, defected to the United States with the help of *Sports Illustrated* and the CIA. These athletes included the likes of Nick Martin who knew they would not be welcomed back into Hungary, let alone did they want to return themselves after seeing the revolt crushed by Soviet force. Specifically, Nick Martin was the most fluent speaker on the team and was frequently quoted in the international press. As a result, he feared to return back to Hungary as he thought he might be labeled as the ring leader.

## Benefits of Being an Olympic Athlete

There are many benefits of being an Olympic Athlete or a famed athlete. These include the actions that the athletes were able to conduct that were frequently looked past and ignored in return for their international success. Looking specifically at Nick Martin's oral account of his privileges, we identified

three main benefits of his successful Olympic Career and how it affected his life at home and his future life.

1. Ability to travel
2. Ability to smuggle
3. Academic Opportunities



## Travel



One of the benefits of being an Olympic athlete during the Cold War period was the ability to travel for athletic competitions

- Most citizens who were not athletes were not able to travel easily due to the difficulty of acquiring a passport that would take years to acquire
- This was emphasized even more in Hungary after the revolution
- Martin was even so lucky as to be flown out to the United States with the help of *Sports Illustrated* for a Victory Tour

This travel that resulted from athletic competition and the need for communist and capitalist states to show off their political and physical prowess is the backbone to the numerous privileges that these athletes received. Without the ability to be removed from the heart of the communist state and constant surveillance, the athletes would not be able to make connections abroad or engage in acts that are illegal back in Hungary.

## Sports Illustrated

For a little bit of background, this idea to bring Hungarian refugees was started by Whitney Tower, who was related to exiled Hungarian royalty by marriage. One of his in-laws, Anthony Szapary also wanted to bring these athletes over as refugees. *Sports Illustrated*, under Time Inc., was only two years old at this point and was not making a profit. When Tower brought up the idea of helping these athletes come to the US to Henry Luce, founder of Time Inc., he loved it and decided to set the operation in action.



ERANE LEAVES BEHIND MEMORY OF THE NEW YORK FOR GYMNASTS ANDREA GODO, MARTIN RUDY

### HUNGARIANS DISCOVER AMERICA

Here, in pictures that they took themselves, members of the Hungarian Olympic team who sought freedom in the U.S. after Mussolini record their first snapshot impressions of their new-found land. Their Freedom Tour, which involved numerous east-to-coast exhibitions of swimming, diving, fencing and gymnastics, kept them busy—but not too busy to enjoy the discovery of a continent



ALL THINGS NEW (left) and new (right) from Hungary, including Lilla (center) at University Air Academy



WELCOMING HUNGARIAN athletes (left) to the U.S. and their arrival during war's end in Miami



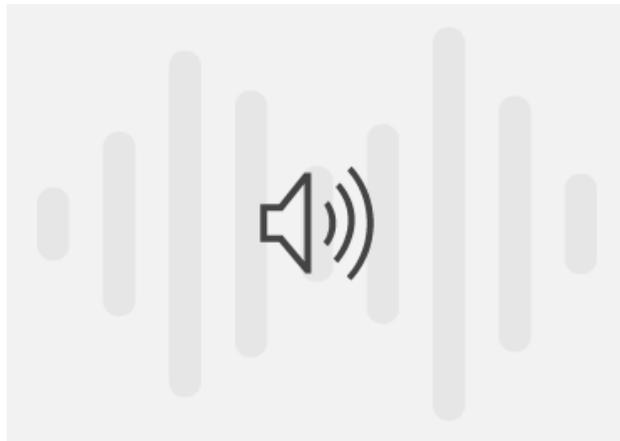
## Smuggling



- Athletes had the ability to smuggle because their actions were frequently overlooked as their smuggling privilege was traded for athletic success
  - After winning a championship in France, Nick Martin and his team decided to smuggle rubber-soled shoes back to Hungary on the plane they were boarding and taking back.

The plane was so weighed down from these rubber shoes that the athletes decided to remove seats from the plane to get rid of weight.

- Martin and his team were able to smuggle watches back to Hungary on a train by stuffing them in water polo balls after a routine match in Western Europe.
- None of this smuggling would have occurred without the unique ability of athletes to travel to foreign cities and countries where the goods they smuggled back were present in high volumes. You can also see a clear linear relationship between the level of success and the amount teams were able to get away with. After winning a championship, they were able to remove seats on a plane versus after a normal exhibition match they only took apart water polo balls.
- This can also be seen of athletes of a slightly different time period, like Erdos Gabor, who fenced in 1960s-1980s
- While not an Olympic athlete like Martin, Gabor still was able to smuggle, emphasizing the point that this smuggling happened over a long span of time branching through many eras of communist regimes in Hungary



<https://sway.office.com/TbAfr4V6OVCjuxie#content=RSnxqOTxZYCGg4>

4 - Nick Martin describing the smuggling of watches

Academia in America



As a result of the United States victory tour of the defected Hungarian Olympians, specifically Nick Martin, hosted by *Sports Illustrated* tour, there were many academic and athletic opportunities available to the athletes.

- Martin received the first ever water polo scholarship to the University of Southern California where he proceeded to play one year before quitting, citing that it was too "Mickey Mouse" for him
- While at USC, he was able to become a French professor due to his fluency in a multitude of languages including French
- Offered the Woodrow Wilson, a scholarship that allowed him to attend any university of his choice; he chose Princeton where he obtained his Ph.D. in Foreign Languages

It is important to note that none of these academic opportunities would have arisen if not for his success as an athlete to be able to travel abroad on the Olympic National team.

"I thought there was money in water polo, and then I'd—with the money, I'd go back to Melbourne, buy that mountain and start skiing there. But, when I saw the opportunity in the U.S., I mean that was the time when the United States was overflowing with wealth, with money, with everything. I quickly changed my mind, and strangely enough, I was the only one who took advantage of all the possibilities in the United States, scholarships, all the schools..."

Here, Martin describes how if possible, he would stay in Melbourne, where the athletes were accepted, after making a little bit of money in water polo. However, once he discovered the wealth and opportunities the United States had, he had no second thoughts about seizing these opportunities that the US had to offer.

## Summary

Nick Martin, as a result of his outstanding athletic ability, was privileged in ways most citizens could not imagine. He was able to travel to many cities, which enabled him to smuggle things back to Hungary. His travel ability also opened up doors for him, like the education and opportunities he received in the United States. His status as an Olympic Athlete was the sole reason he was able to be in the position to do any of these things.

## Why Does this Matter?

Modern-day athletes are given benefits that most are not. For example, international student-athletes are given various scholarships to come play sports in America because of the high level they can play at. This gives them an edge that most students will not have. This may seem like it does not matter that much, but it shows that this idea is still prevalent today, and that history should be learned and never forgotten.