

Athletes From East Germany Were 'Chemical Field Tests'

The era of global dominance by East Germany was not something that athletes of the country are proud of. With the 30th anniversary of the first [World Athletics Championships](#) in Helsinki where athletes bedecked in the blue and white of the GDR won 22 medals, including 10 golds, testimonies from athletes of that era are pouring in.

Ines Geipel, a former world record holder in the women's sprint relay, said we were a large experiment, a big chemical field test and the old men in the regime used these young girls for their sick ambition. They knew the mini-country absolutely had to be the greatest in the world. That's sick. It's a stolen childhood.

The depth and extremities of the [systematic doping](#) program on the eastern side of the bricks and barbed wire were exposed by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. A fearless campaigner who gained access to many files belonging to the Stasi, the secret police, and uncovered the sins of the past, said it originated for one reason that was national importance. Professor Werner Franke added that annually, about 2,000 athletes were added to the program and we know this very exactly because there have been many court cases with all the details. Franke added that the young athletes were around 12 or 13 and it was not just pills, injections also.

Geipel remembers reading about the system in place at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich and said the secret police had built wooden crates, like rabbit crates, in hotel rooms. She added if they believed an athlete was going to flee - because the Games were in West Germany - they would put this athlete in the crate and carry them back to the GDR and she finds it so symbolic and we were objects, we weren't people.

Geipel is now president of a group called Help for Victims of Doping and explained that her sadness and pain have been converted into action.

As many as 10,000 athletes, according to estimates, were part of the program and the drug of choice was Oral Turninabol, an anabolic steroid targeted particularly at young females because the effects were more dramatic, at a time when women's sport internationally was under-developed and therefore ripe for domination.

In the year 2000, a lawsuit was filed by thirty-two women against the perpetrators and the court in Berlin heard tales of woe regarding hearts, livers, kidneys and reproductive organs, with mothers blaming the disability of their children on the wrecking ball of drugs.

Andreas Krieger, who represented East Germany as Heidi Krieger in the mid-1970s and underwent a sex-change operation two decades later and was one of the plaintiffs, said we had an economy lacking many things, like fruit, in our country and continued that so we were told we were taking vitamin pills that would compensate for our lack of nutrition and they played God with us back then.

The unified German government set up a compensation fund of £2.5m and the Berlin court case ended with suspended sentences for the head of the East German Sports Ministry, Manfred Ewald, and the

chief doctor, Manfred Hoepfner. More than 300 athletes were each awarded around 10,000 euros (£8,500, \$13,000).