



The Race Against the Stasi: The Incredible Story of Dieter Wiedemann, The Iron Curtain and The Greatest Cycling Race on Earth

Herbie Sykes

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Cycling Book of the Year 2015 - Cross British Sports Book Award

Unbeknownst to the authorities, however, he had fallen in love with Sylvia Hermann, a girl from the other side of the wall. Socialist doctrine had it that the two of them were 'class enemies', and as a famous athlete Dieter's every move was pored over by the Stasi. Only he abhorred their ideology, and in Sylvia saw his only chance of freedom. Now, playing a deadly game of cat and mouse, he plotted his escape.

In 1964 he was delegated, once and once only, to West Germany. Here he was to ride a qualification race for the Tokyo Olympics, but instead committed the most treacherous of all the crimes against socialism. Dieter Wiedemann, sporting icon and Soviet pawn, defected to the other side.

Whilst Wiedemann fulfilled his lifetime ambition of racing in the Tour de France, his defection caused a huge scandal. The Stasi sought to 'repatriate' him, with horrific consequences both for him and the family he left behind. Fifty years on, and twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Dieter Wiedemann decided it was time to tell his story. Through his testimony and that of others involved, and well as through the Stasi file - an organization that has stalked him for half a century - Herbie Sykes uncovers an astonishing tale. It is one of love and betrayal, of the madness at the heart of the cold war, and of the greatest bike race in history.

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