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The Rings and the Swastika: Political Ambiguity in Sport before and during WWII

Keywords:

Olympics, Nazism, war, sports, politics

Abstract:

As WWII emerged and eventually unfolded, sport's context changed from a sense of normalcy to increased political tension and eventually to war. In this article, I will discuss the role of sport and how sports organizations responded to the increasing hostilities. What happens to the claimed 'un-political sport' when the context in which it takes place becomes ever more politicized? Should sport take a stand or should it stick to the favourite position of Western sporting officials in the 1930s that 'sport and politics should not mix'? What can be sport's main contribution in times of conflict and war? Although I shall here have a particular emphasis on the small, occupied nations in Europe, I shall also discuss the attitudes and politics of the IOC and other international sports organizations in the critical years leading up to and into the war: Was it possible to keep the Olympics going? Based on recent research with primary and secondary sources, archive materials from the IOC and other organizations, as well as international research literature, I conclude that sport's symbolic ambiguity as it related to peace and war was reflected in the different ways in which sportspeople and organizations reacted to WWII. Sport embraced contrasting actions, boycott and participation, watching and resisting, and still came out seemingly unstained. This enabled the idea of sport as a mainly un-political phenomenon to live on.

The Rings and the Swastika: Political Ambiguity in Sport before and during WWII.

The story of sport in small, occupied nations during WWII invites a big question: What happens to sport when presumably more important things start developing? The 1930s and early 40s were not mankind's most humane epoch; dictators like Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini ruled large parts of Europe, accompanied by smaller scale fascist leaders in other countries. The sport context changed; a sense of normalcy was replaced by increased political tension and eventually war. Although a growing amount of research on WWII and sport has been published in recent decades, only a limited number of studies has sought to explore the moral-political dilemmas that war and occupation presents to sport.¹ In this article, the role of sport and how sports organizations responded as WWII emerged and eventually unfolded is discussed.

What happens to 'un-political sport' when the context in which it takes place becomes ever more politicized is explored based on recent research with primary and secondary sources, archive materials from the IOC and other organizations, as well as international research literature. The focus is on sports in a specific situation. After having looked at some of the international sports organizations, particularly the Olympic movement as well as football and skiing federations, the focus will be on North-Western Europe and German-occupied Scandinavian countries. Sport in those nations faced moral and political dilemmas from 1939 onwards, captured in a Norwegian sports periodical in April 1940, shortly after the German invasion of Norway: "Can we keep on playing when our house is burning?"² Or in other words: What is the right thing to do when your country is invaded and occupied and the new rulers are illegal, both morally and politically? Should sport take a stand or should it stick to the favourite position of Western sporting officials in the 1930s that 'sport and politics should not mix'? What can be sport's main contribution in times of conflict and war? To offer entertainment and diversion in tough times? Or turn sport into a vehicle for resistance and thereby make it a political weapon? – These were real questions and problems in the early years of war. I shall explore and discuss how international sports organizations and sports in the occupied nations responded through different ways of acting and reacting.

IOC Treading Water

International organizations of sports have traditionally claimed to be un-political and independent, except for the international workers' sport, which was explicitly political. Their goals and ideals were to work for what they defined as 'the good of sport' and only that. It can be argued that the Olympic movement also sought to fit this description even if it had its own ideological superstructure, Olympism, vaguely value-based, however with an intended political blindness and with a social basis clearly on the opposite side of the political (i.e., socialist) workers sport. The situation of these 'non-political' organizations in the 1930s and 40s reveals a key dilemma: What to do when the world changes? Is it possible to cling to an un-political stance when the context becomes ever more oppressive? Could the organizations keep on as usual? Did they prefer to look the other way?

The Olympic Games of 1936 had demonstrated the problems related to the concept of 'non-political' sports.³ After the Games, which were technically successful but politically controversial, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) found itself in a demanding situation. Political tensions continued to rise, especially in Europe but also on other continents, parallel to the Nazi take-over of power in most societal spheres in Germany. The IOC came to realize that all their proposed candidates for host cities for the next games in 1940 were overtaken by the realities of the times and had to give up their Olympic plans. Before this reality hit them though, the advocates of Olympism as they saw it had been through a long and trying attempt to find host cities. Sapporo and Tokyo in Japan, who were supposed to host the next winter and summer games, had to throw in the towel in 1938 due to the Japanese-Chinese (or Sino-Japanese) war, which had already started the year before. Helsinki, Finland, who then took on the task of organizing the summer games, could no longer do so after the Finnish Winter War following the Soviet attack on Finland 1939.⁴ For the Winter Games the IOC had launched several candidates. Oslo was in the picture for a short while after applying in May 1937, even though Japan had already been selected to host the summer Games.⁵ After Japan withdrew, they were in the picture once again, however, this time to be hindered by a long standing argument between the IOC and the International Skiing Federation (FIS) over amateur definitions.

The IOC, a traditional proponent of strict amateur rules, did not welcome skiers who worked as ski instructors for income. The FIS, adhering to their own amateur ideals, disagreed vehemently. They stressed that whether a skier skied for prize money must be the defining question, and their members did not.⁶ FIS, as the governing body of organized and competitive ski sport, claimed that their rules, including their amateur rules, must oversee ski competitions, whether the competitions were Olympic or not. In 1939 the conflict had reached a point where the FIS voted to have skiing dropped from the program of the Winter Olympic Games and instead to prioritize a world championship in Oslo and Rjukan, Norway 1940. The IOC insisted that skiing should be part of the Olympic program, at least as a demonstration sport.⁷ Sources reveal internal Norwegian disagreement. The dominant winter sports nation held prominent positions in the FIS, as president and general secretary respectively. After it had become clear that Oslo would not host the Winter Olympics, Thomas Fearnley, the Norwegian IOC member, commented in a letter to his IOC colleagues: "In this matter, so far as Norway is concerned you must do all you can to put the blame on the FIS".⁸

The next formal candidate was St. Moritz of Switzerland, which had been assigned the Games in September 1938, but which also inherited the ski instructor conflict, and they were no closer to a solution than their predecessors had been. While the Swiss contemplated, the IOC looked into North America. Lake Placid and Montreal were "successively envisaged".⁹ None of these, however, became a formal candidate city. St. Moritz had not yet given a formal answer when the IOC session in London, June 1939, after having rejected a proposal from the Norwegian IOC member Fearnley, to "suppress" or refrain from organizing the 1940 Winter Games, decided to return to a former and in their eyes more secure and reliable organizer. Hence, the IOC landed on Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany once again.

Return to Garmisch-Partenkirchen: Not the IOC's Finest Hour.

Garmisch-Partenkirchen had not been on the agenda for the IOC meeting held between June 6-9 of 1939. After Japan withdrew, however, it came up as a substitute for another substitute. Two arguments clearly spoke in the 1936 venue's favour: facilities were still relatively intact, and the city was willing

to take on the event. Contrary to the Norwegian and Swiss candidates, The German Alp venue did not have a strong FIS influence to consider. Nevertheless, this was a controversial and revealing decision. It revealed the blindness of the IOC who bluntly refused to see what kind of regime they now, unanimously, assigned the honour of inviting and assembling the ‘youth of the world’ for peaceful and brotherly sports. The IOC must have known about the general state of affairs in Nazi Germany. The Games of 1936 after all had raised some arguments, which the IOC had had to consider and thereby make demands to the organizers. There had been pressure on Jewish rights to be included, which the organizers had to pretend to pay attention to, at least formally.¹⁰ There were no similar discussions before the second Garmisch-Partenkirchen decision. The assignment contained no preconditions about general attention, even though the four years that had passed had not exactly seen an improvement of the civil, including the Jewish, rights situation. The ‘Kristallnacht’ or ‘Novemberpogromen’ had taken place only half a year earlier. The 1940 allocation was not the IOC’s finest hour. The German historian Hajo Bernett characterizes it as: “a sorry sign for the political-moral indifference of the IOC”¹¹ The perhaps most demonstrative sign of the IOC’s political-moral indifference was the poster for the winter games in 1940. (see image 1.)

[image 1: Poster for the V. Olympic Winter Games, Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Source: The Avery Brundage Collection. LA84 Foundation. Permission granted].

In retrospect, the combination of the swastika and the Olympic rings presents an un-rivalled mix of powerful and contradicting symbols. The IOC of today is not too happy about it and excludes it from their museum. With good reasons one might say; the formal one being that these games never took place.¹² Viewed from 1939 one might also add that at the time, the poster perhaps was not as shocking as it appears today. At that time, the swastika flag was the German national flag and a combination of Olympic symbols and national flags on posters and other propaganda-materials was not uncommon.¹³ However, the swastika is a controversial symbol, to put it mildly. It represents values that are not in accordance with most people’s comprehension of Olympic and sports virtues. Nevertheless, there is nothing to suggest that there was resistance or at least reservation from the IOC to combine their own precious and supposedly peaceful signal with the swastika. The 1940 poster is a strong reminder that

sports cannot and does not exist in an ‘unpolitical’ vacuum – no matter how much sports leaders hoped and wished it could. It demonstrates how much the IOC was willing to swallow, since the most important thing for them was that ‘the Games must go on’, to use a later Avery Brundage expression from Munich 1972.

In 1939 the eager German organizers impressed the American Brundage, then a rising star in IOC circles. While the Belgian IOC president Henri de Baillet-Latour could be called compliant, Brundage spoke more praise than doubt.¹⁴ Although he never expressed Nazi sympathies, he demonstrated enthusiasm for the results of the Nazi sports policy. His anti-Semitism has been discussed, especially as it was demonstrated in the build-up to the 1936 Games, but he also applauded the way the Nazis approached the task in 1940; how they “graciously decided” to take it upon themselves. In his report to the American Olympic Committee he enthusiastically recited their catchphrase: “In the national-socialist vocabulary the word ‘unmöglich’ [impossible] does not exist”.¹⁵ Brundage also suggested Leni Riefenstahl as the winner of the Olympic diploma for the film ‘Olympia’ as the best sports film and the film that best served the Olympic cause.

According to leading German sports officials like the ‘Reichsportsführer’ Hans von Tschammer und Osten, the decision in London came as a surprise.¹⁶ This obviously was not the whole truth, as the German IOC member Ritter von Halt and the Reichsportsführer had been contacted one month in advance to make sure of the necessary Hitler consent.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the locals rapidly rose to the occasion and came up with declarations symptomatic for the Nazi temptation for grandeur. ‘Der Führer’, when he was informed of the final decision, tuned in on this. Picking up on the mitigating fact that Garmisch-Partenkirchen had the experience and the facilities, it was important, he stated, that the 1940 Winter Games did not merely become “a repetition, but an elevation”. He accordingly promised full support, from “Partei, Staat und Wehrmacht”.¹⁸

The Nazis seemed convinced that they would be capable of hosting the Olympics while at the same time planning and running a full scale war. September 1. 1939, the day WWII started in Europe with the attack on Poland, the Garmisch-Partenkirchen organizing committee received orders from ‘der Führer’ to continue its work. Carl Diem responded that the work did indeed continue, “day and

night”.¹⁹ Karl Ritter von Halt, president of the organizing committee, amongst others, followed up on Hitler’s instructions about an ‘elevation’ and promised new facilities. Reich authorities would grant the necessary means. The organizing committee, assembled by leading Nazi sports officials, followed up on the invented tradition from the Summer Olympics of Berlin 1936 and even planned a torch relay from Chamonix to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, for the first time in Winter Olympic history. They anticipated and trusted the relay would convey messages of peace from the French sportsmen and women.²⁰

The IOC appeared content with the preparatory work, which gave them a chance to keep the Olympic Games alive, and they seemed careful not to rock the boat. Parallel to what the British ski enthusiast Arnold Lunn referred to as “the German success in the IOC” – referring to its expansion with several new pro-German members and Ritter von Halt’s instalment in the Executive Committee, following his replacement of Theodor Lewald – the IOC with their president Baillet-Latour and particularly their vice president Sigfried Edström and the increasingly influential Brundage demonstrated an ever more compliant attitude towards the Third Reich.²¹ This became even more evident as German aggression led to the new political situation of occupied nations. The IOC responded by creating new entities in the sports-political geography. The Nazi aggression in Central Europe gave them some extra troubles to find a solution for Jiri Guth-Jarkovsky who was their member from the former Czechoslovakia. In 1939 he was the only remaining original IOC member from the foundation in 1894, probably making a re-arrangement of his affiliation more urgent. The sports-political entity Bohemia-Moravia emerged, as a direct result of the Nazi occupation of Sudetenland and the remaining Czechoslovakia.

However, when explaining to the IOC session in London, June 1939, that their senior member needed a new, and now reduced, geographic affiliation, the IOC were keen to express their thanks to the “Reich authorities” and chose their words carefully. The IOC spoke not a word about military intervention from the former and the coming Olympic organizer. The need for a new affiliation came up “due to recent changes that occurred in Central Europe”. The “changes” just made it necessary “to fix” the affiliation of Guth-Jarkovsky. Baillet-Latour was “happy and grateful to announce that this solution did not cause any difficulties with the German authorities”.²² However, Guth-Jarkovsky

never showed up in London. In the files from the session he is listed among the "absents excusés". The IOC files never mentioned that the German-installed "Reichsprotector" had prohibited Guth-Jarkovsky to leave for London.²³ Nonetheless, even Nazi-Germany had to give up its Olympic plans for Garmisch-Partenkirchen when they became more and more entangled in war. They waited to formally do so however until November 22, 1939, almost three months after the invasion of Poland. Despite having worked for peace, "also in War", the organizing committee at this point felt they were "forced" to return their Olympic mission to the IOC.²⁴ There were no more Olympic Games before 1948.

Un-Politicizing Context and Discourse

"Recent changes in Central Europe..." was the IOC way of describing the Nazi occupation of Austria and Czechoslovakia.²⁵ This deliberate way of 'un-politicizing' context as well as discourse was symptomatic. Most of the international sports organizations preferred to turn the blind eye to the situation and follow the IOC's strategy. The international football federation, FIFA, and the international skiing federation, FIS, are two examples. Their goals were that skis would continue to glide, and footballs continue to roll.

Inside sports, political tensions had risen. Nazi-Germany strived for power, also in the sports organizations. From the late 1930s, German delegates represented the Nazi regime. The organizations tried to adjust to the new situation, often by deciding not to adjust. They sought to go on with their organizations' 'un-political policy', denouncing what they called 'political interests', claiming and hoping that normal sports life should go on 'as normal', untouched by the grim realities outside their offices.²⁶

The FIFA, as most other organizations of their kind, had their administration in neutral Switzerland. FIFA would escape the war with, at least in their own eyes, untarnished reputation. Their president, the French Jules Rimet, was removed from his function of president of the French football federation by the Vichy regime and joined the resistance towards the end of the war.²⁷ The FIFA Council named the World Cup trophy after him as an appreciation of his endeavours in bringing the organization and the game through the war relatively safe and well. The general secretary, Ivo Schricker from

Strasbourg in the contested terrain of Alsace-Lorraine, was recognized for managing the balancing act of running a neutral policy with the main and only goal to keep the football rolling.²⁸ – However, as we shall see, before they reached this more honourable stage of war history, they compromised and adjusted to the “events” as they referred to the war.

The Nazis did not hold the same strong position in FIFA as they did in the IOC. One person in the FIFA Council represented the authorities of the Reich, Peco Bauwens, who held a seat in the executive committee 1932-1942. However, another Axis delegate, the Italian Mauro, was also present. In line with bullish Nazi sports policy at the time they launched the idea of a world championship in Germany in 1942. However, Rimet and Schriker were against the idea, Rimet instead advocating a championship in Argentina, far away from war in the northern hemisphere.²⁹

FIFA’s prime and only goal was to keep the game going – a goal they strived for with a certain success. As Simon Kuper put it: “organized football continued, seemingly cut off from the real world”.³⁰ At the beginning of the war, European powerhouses like Italy and Germany met regularly. Overall, in 1940 FIFA registered 28 international games in Europe. In 1941, when WWII dominated life in Europe, 18 matches were played and 1942 became WWII’s last year of international football, however, Germany did play against neutral Sweden and Switzerland.

Nevertheless, FIFA’s unpolitical policy made it impossible for them not to compromise. Hence, they recognized “the territorial disruptions caused by the Nazis”.³¹ A more blatant sign of their naïveté – in line with the IOC problems of new affiliations – occurred when new Nazi associations in occupied countries applied for membership in the FIFA, something which could be interpreted to be in line with the FIFA goal of keeping the game alive. This was the case for Norway in 1942. Here, the existing sports organizations, both the workers sport and the national, IOC-affiliated sports, including the national Football Association, had decided to act in joint resistance to the Nazi new order in Norwegian sports. This resistance took the form of a boycott of all organized sport, training and competition, regardless of whether athletes were Norwegians, Germans, or other.³² As part of the boycott, the Norwegian Football Association, FIFA member since 1907, did not take part in any international games, much to the annoyance of Norwegian and German Nazi authorities.³³

However, blind to internal Norwegian affairs and seemingly unaware of the times in which they were operating, the FIFA, relatively unprovoked, in 1942, found that two years of Norwegian footballing passivity had to be enough. They took steps to ensure that somebody would take responsibility for running the game when the national football association had put themselves on the side-lines. How to do that? Simply by acknowledging war's new Nazi sports federation as their Norwegian member.³⁴ FIFA in this way broke with their own rules about national football monopolies and the principle of only one federation per country.

After the war, the affair led to heavy criticism from all Nordic countries, who seriously questioned whether to stay in the organization or not. The Norwegian FA immediately had decided that "after this" [the FIFA decision] they could not formally consider themselves as member of FIFA and demanded an explanation. Only then, would the Norwegians decide whether to stay in FIFA or not. The affair was embarrassing for the FIFA who responded by saying that the Norwegian Football Federation now simply could re-install their membership, "without obstacles". This was interpreted as an obvious lack of self-criticism, which only made matters worse. At a Scandinavian football congress in December 1945 also leaders from Sweden and Denmark expressed severe criticism and requests for a "re-construction" of the FIFA.³⁵

The congress agreed upon a sharp protest against the FIFA executive committee's 1942 decision to exclude the Norwegian Football Association and instead acknowledge the new (Nazi) federation. The FIFA registered and accepted the protest. Their attempt of an explanation was that the affair dealt with an "interruption" and not an exclusion. Jules Rimet seems to have been taken by surprise by the harsh denunciations, which he claimed was unreasonable. He tried to emphasize that even though "the Nazi federation" had been recognized by the FIFA, their membership had not been made "permanent". Rimet also pointed to the Italian Council member Mauro as the driving force behind the decision but had to concede that the entire FIFA Council was responsible. In an attempt to curb some of the criticism, he informed the Scandinavian federations that he had been a resistance fighter during the war. This did not leave a vital impression, but the Scandinavian football associations eventually decided to stay in the FIFA.³⁶

Winter sports and skiing was, if not a Scandinavian particularity, then certainly a Scandinavian stronghold. When the war started the president of the Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS) was Nicolai Ramm Østgaard from Norway, who also happened to be the adjutant of the Norwegian Crown Prince Olav. This set the stage for an extra connection between political and sports history as Crown and government of Norway had escaped to England after the German invasion in spring 1940. The loyal aide followed his Prince and Østgaard stayed the next five years in London. The majority of the FIS board members, however, lived in areas that were either neutral or controlled by the Axis Powers. In September 1940, FIS vice president, Carl Hamilton of Sweden, informed Østgaard that he, in order to keep up activity – a familiar wartime argument – would take over leadership for “as long as the president was hindered”.³⁷ Østgaard is said to have accepted reluctantly.³⁸ Hamilton, with the assistance of German soldiers, picked up the FIS archives that had stayed with the general secretary in Norway, and functioned as president for the remaining years of war. The reign of Hamilton attracted harsh criticism from the Norwegians. Even though the Swedes were a favourite whipping boy for Norwegian skiers, the antagonism was rooted in real issues. Especially the staging of a world championship in Cortina, Italy in 1941, and plans for one in Garmisch, Germany in 1942 – where obviously no competitors from the Allied nations could participate – drew heavy condemnation not only from Norwegian skiers. To organize a “world championship” in which, due to the sports boycott, the allegedly best skiing nation of the world was unable to compete was unacceptable. The United States, England, and France also left the organization. FIS, then, was reduced to a biased party.³⁹

Part of the annoyance towards Sweden and the FIS stemmed from comments from Swedish ski leaders who went to Cortina in 1941, recognizing the event as a “world championship”. Being there, they praised the *Gemütlichkeit* and the “family” feeling.⁴⁰ The last expression particularly ignited the Norwegians. After the war, at least Hamilton expressed second thoughts and included more German-critical thought in his memories.⁴¹ The Norwegians though, did not forget the affair and demanded both an annulment of the event and a Swedish excuse. They obtained the first and for good measure excluded Swedish cross-country skiers for the first renowned Holmenkollen races after the war, in 1946.

One FIS decision seems to have gone relatively unnoticed. As the FIFA decided to include the Norwegian Nazi sports federation, so did the FIS. Probably, this resolution drowned in the widespread and massive criticism of the Cortina affair. There is only one, unsecure, source to this, which is (vice) president Hamilton's memoirs, written just months after the war.⁴² In retrospect Hamilton stressed that this was a provisional decision. As the information does not alter his position or post-war reputation significantly, there is little reason to doubt this. It is also a rather probable source of information due to the bureaucratic condition that participants in a world championship need a national affiliation. And the Norwegian Randmod Sørensen did participate. He represented the 'other' Norway; the Nazi sports federation.

Reality Comes Closer

By this time war was an inescapable fact. Except for the few countries that were able to remain neutral, the whole of Europe was involved in a form of warfare; invasion, occupation, and resistance. Most occupied nations in Europe acknowledged that sport can be a helpful distraction and hence function in the way the sports organizations hoped for. Yet whether or not to play football became a question of practicalities; were there enough players? Was there a field on which to play?⁴³

Sports were a means to foster physical fitness and martial spirit. They probably also had a therapeutic function in that they alleviated, albeit momentarily, the emotional stresses of war. This seems to have been the case for the major adversaries in the war. On June 22, 1941, the day Nazi Germany began its invasion of the Soviet Union, 90,000 spectators came to see the final of the football league games in Berlin.⁴⁴ Simon Kuper says this reminds him of Frans Kafka's famous diary entry of August 2 1914: "Germany has declared war on Russia. Swimming in the afternoon".⁴⁵

However, as war on the Eastern front progressed, the military needs became more important than sports interests. Late January 1943, Reichssportführer Hans von Tschammer und Osten declared that sport would be incorporated in 'the total war'.⁴⁶ There were to be no more international sport events for the Third Reich. Even though domestic sports were not called off altogether, war was more important. In England, football would boost morale, both at home and among the troops. It survived

air attacks and bomb raids, and even increased in popularity as a spectator sport.⁴⁷ Also in the Soviet Union, which lost 20 million civilian lives, a revised version of organized football was kept alive, immensely popular, as Robert Edelman describes in his book on Spartak Moscow.⁴⁸ In general, distractions like sports became legitimized through a strengthening of associated national symbols.⁴⁹ Hence, sports, coloured and to a certain degree shaped by the war, never seem to have been seriously questioned. To practice sports was not considered a threat, neither to occupiers nor to the will and force of resistance. – Nonetheless, beneath the practise of sport in such grave times loomed a moral, and also political, question: Was spending time on play and games when others were giving their lives for the fatherland the right thing to do?

Sport's Symbolic Ambiguity

The willingness to raise this question had the potential to alter sports, symbolically and politically. Arguments about the value of sports to keep spirits high were made. However, the prevailing moral dilemma rose to the surface immediately after the German invasion of Norway in April 1940: Is it right to play when your house is burning?⁵⁰ The answer was not obvious for everybody, and the following six months saw tendencies of a semi-official sports scene. However, parallel to this, underground debates in smaller circles were going on, airing the ever more urgent “what to do” question.

In the autumn of 1940 this led the “bourgeois” and workers sports organizations to unite in their urge for resistance, both willing to use their cherished sport for a larger purpose. But how could sports contribute to resistance? The answer looks familiar to what other non-military forms of resistance have taken; by non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and by simply boycotting what they were expected to do. They refused to be exploited as propaganda tools. Norwegian sports leaders began to question the extreme political situation that the occupation presented and considered how to deal with it. The organized sport movement in Denmark, a nation in the same situation and a natural comparative

subject, chose collaboration. They found good arguments for sports cooperation with the occupiers. It would benefit both Danish sports and the population at large.⁵¹

National sports organizations did administer contrasting policies, but not because they were morally unlike. Countries experienced different forms of occupant rule. Norway and the Netherlands were the only German-occupied countries with a regime based upon a Reichskommissariat. In addition, Norway was the only country where this German power structure was supplied by a politically and ideologically driven collaboration government.⁵² It is reasonable to assume that this contributed to the distinctive character of the Norwegian resistance, based upon civil and popular mobilization.

There is a practical and a symbolic side to sport. The tendency that rising political tension leads sport to direct much of its energies towards pointing at its utility, has been noted by several scholars.⁵³

Sports adherents would claim that practicing and participating in sports would provide training that was vital for the nation. This somewhat changed the shape of sport as well as the discourse around it, shifting the emphasis from entertainment to popular health, or from diversion to duty.⁵⁴

Sport has been depicted as a creator of understanding, sisterhood and brotherhood. Its function as a peace-building physical language was fundamental in Pierre de Coubertin's attempts to launch and sustain the modern Olympic Games.⁵⁵ On the other hand there is the conception nailed in George Orwell's well-known phrase of sport as "war minus the shooting"⁵⁶ – of sport as a substitute for war. Both conceptions lived through the war. The IOC as well as the FIFA and the FIS embraced a non-political agenda, hoping that if only one acted as if things were normal, things would stay normal. It did turn out that such a non-political policy in this grave situation had political effects. It is perhaps illustrating of the sports organizations' intended neutrality that most delegates or board members who had represented the Axis powers, whether in the IOC or in the other organizations, survived the war as sports officials. Their political backdrop had changed, but the delegates did not shift geographical affiliations. Hence, they (e.g., Karl Ritter von Halt, Giovanni Mauro, Carl Diem and others) could again pick up the tools for their allegedly neutral sports organization.

To sum up: Sport's symbolic ambiguity as it related to peace and war was reflected in the different ways in which sportspeople and organizations reacted to WWII. Sport embraced contrasting actions,

boycott and participation, watching and resisting, and still came out seemingly unstained. This enabled the idea of sport as a mainly un-political phenomenon to live. This can be traced in present day sport policies. But the context is still there to be dealt with.

FIGURES/IMAGES:

Image 1: Poster for the V. Olympic Winter Games, Garmisch-Partenkirchen. (Source: The Avery Brundage Collection. LA84 Foundation, permission granted)

NOTES

¹ Matti Goksøy, How can you play when your House is on Fire? The Norwegian Sports Strike during the Second World War, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, (2018) 43:4, 433-456, DOI: 10.1080/03468755.2018.1464275 (accessed 1.2.2019). Matti Goksøy and Finn Olstad. *Skjebnekamp. Norsk idrett under okkupasjonen 1940-1945*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2017. Hans Bonde. *Football with the Foe: Danish Sport under the Swastika*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2008. Nils Havemann. *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz. Der DFB zwischen Sport, Politik und Kommerz*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005. Hans Bonde (2009) Revolt: Danish Resistance to Sports Collaboration with Nazi Germany, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26:10, 1481-1503, DOI: 10.1080/09523360903057500 (accessed 1.2.2019). Christian Tolstrup Jensen (2016) Football with Friends? How the German Sporting Press Covered the German–Danish Sports Collaboration, 1939–1944, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 33:10, 1079-1098, DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2016.1257613 (accessed 1.2.2019). Michael John: "Mit deutschem Gruss". Fussballsport und Nationalsosialismus, in David Forster, Jakob Rosenberg, Georg Spitaler: *Fussball unterm Hakenkreuz in der "Ostmark"*. Göttingen: Verlag Die Werkstatt, 2014, 172-186. Michael John: The Function of Sport during National Socialist Rule in Austria: Platform for Politics and Propaganda, Breathing Room or Subversive Activity. Paper for the 17th ISHPES Congress, Alexandria, 2017. Matthias Marschik, 'Between Manipulation and Resistance. Viennese Football in the Nazi era', *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 2 (April 1999): 215–29. Hans Joachim Teichler. *Internationale Sportpolitik im Dritten Reich*. Schorndorf: Hofmann, 1991.

² *Sportsmanden* April 22, 1940.

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⁵ IOC Archive, Olympic Study Center, Lausanne: C-J05-1940-001-SD: Letter from Norwegian Olympic Committee May 20, 1937.

⁶ Halvor Kleppen, *De kalde lekene*. Oslo: Akilles forlag, 2014; Kleppen: Skisporten ut av OL?', (Ma. Diss. Høgskolen i Telemark, Bø i Telemark 2007).

⁷ IOC Archive, Olympic Study Center, Lausanne: CIO: Session 1939: Londres. Procés verbal fre. 6.June 1939.

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- ⁸ IOC Archive, Olympic Study Center, Lausanne. C-J05-1940-001-SD1. TF Letter to IOC 12. August 1938.
- ⁹ IOC Archive, Olympic Study Center, Lausanne: CIO: Session 1939: Londres. Procés verbal fre. 7. June 1939.
- ¹⁰ Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Krüger and Murray 2003.
- ¹¹ Hajo Bernett, 'Das Scheitern der Olympischer Spiele von 1940', *Stadion*, 6, 1980, 273: ("Dieser einstimmig gefasste Beschluss ist ein trauriges Zeichen für die politisch-moralische Indifferenz des IOC").
- ¹² The poster is presented as 'Werbeplakat für die V. Olympischen Winterspiele von Edwin Henel, Garmisch-Partenkirchen', in: Vorbereitungen zu der V. Olympischer Winterspiele, Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1940. IOC Archives. Olympic Study Centre.
- ¹³ Cf. the poster for the VI. Olympic Winter Games in Oslo 1952.
- ¹⁴ Avery Brundage collection, American Olympic Committee: Organisationskomitees für die V. Olympischen Winterspiele 1940 Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Box). LA84 Foundation, Los Angeles, California, USA. On Baillet-Latour's slightly diverging attitudes, see Hans Joachim Teichler: An Unknown letter by the IOC President to Hitler from the year 1941. *Journal of Olympic History* 16 (2008), no.3.
- ¹⁵ Report of the American Olympic Committee 1940, 16-17. Avery Brundage collection, LA84 Foundation.
- ¹⁶ Hans von Tschammer and Osten claims: "so überraschend diese Nachricht für uns war (Olympische Spiele wieder in Garmisch!)" in the first publication from the Games' Press service (Pressedienst), which was up and running in eight languages; German, Italian, French, English, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish. ('Winter Olympia', no.1, 25. July 1939, Box: JO 1960 W, File: JO 1960 W – Garmi cojo, Correspondance du COJO 1938-39. Olympic Study Centre, Lausanne).
- ¹⁷ Karl Lennartz, *The presidency of Henri de Baillet-Latour. 1894-1994 The International Olympic Committee. Vol. I*, IOC Study Centre, Lausanne 1994, in Kleppen 2007, 82, note 217, 218.
- ¹⁸ Vorbereitungen zu der V. Olympischer Winterspiele, Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1940. IOC Archives. Olympic Study Centre.
- ¹⁹ Letter from Carl Diem, 5. September 1939 on the effects of 'des actions guerrieres contre la Pologne' and the assurance that work would continue 'jour et nuit'. File: JO 1960 W – Garmi cojo, Correspondance du COJO 1938-39. Olympic Study Centre, IOC Archives.
- ²⁰ Ritter von Halt promises 'ein weiterer ausbau der olympischen Kampfstätten' as well as plans for a torch relay with peace messages from 'der französischen sportsleute'. In: 'Winter Olympia' (Presse Dienst), no.1, 25. July 1939. Box: JO 1960 W, File: JO 1960 W – Garmi cojo, Correspondance du COJO 1938-39. Olympic Study Centre, Lausanne).
- ²¹ Arnold Lunn (ed.): *British Ski Year Book 1939 of the Ski Club of Great Britain and The Alpine Ski Club*. London: Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd. Also: Teichler 2008, 32.
- ²² CIO: Session 1939: Londres. IOC Archive, Olympic Study Center, Lausanne.
- ²³ Teichler 1991 has more on this. Also Teichler 2008, 32.
- ²⁴ Letter from von Tschammer and von Halt to Baillet-Latour, IOC, in Vorbereitungen zu der V. Olympischer Winterspiele, 8. The organizing committee "sehen sich...gezwungen". The blame was put on England and France who would not accept the German proposal for "induction of world peace" ("Herbeiführung eines Weltfriedens").
- ²⁵ Henri de Baillet-Latour announcing that Jiri Guth-Jarkovsky, would now represent the new IOC unity Bohemia and Moravia. CIO Sessions London 1939.
- ²⁶ Christiane Eisenberg, Pierre Lanfranchi, Tony Mason, Alfred Wahl: *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004)
- ²⁷ "... j'ai lutté contre la collaboration avec l'occupant". Letter of Jules Rimet, Paris, to the Norges Fotballforbund, Svenska Fotbollförbundet, Finlands Bollförbund, Dansk Boldspil Union, aux seins de Dansk Boldspil Union, Kopenhagen, 21. February 1946. In: FIFA Archives Zurich, Correspondence Schrickler-Rimet 1946 Jan-Dec. (Thanks to Christiane Eisenberg).

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- ²⁸ Eisenberg et.al, 2004, 278.
- ²⁹ Mauro held his position as executive committee member 1931-1946, 1948-1952.
- ³⁰ Simon Kuper: *Ajax, the Dutch, the War: Football in Europe during the Second World War*. (London: Orion, 2003).
- ³¹ Eisenberg et.al, 2004, 278.
- ³² Goksøy, "How can you play when your house is on fire?", 433-456.
- ³³ Goksøy and Olstad: *Skjebnekamp*.
- ³⁴ Officially confirmed in FIFA-cirkular 20.4.1942. Correspondence between Georg Xandry (Deutscher Fussball-Bund) and Ivo Schricker (FIFA-generalsecretary) between 10.1. and 29.8.1942, FIFA-Archiv Zürich, Correspondence «National Associations: Germany 1938–50». Also: Nils Havemann: *Fussball unterm Hakenkreuz. Der DFB zwischen Sport, Politik und Kommerz*. Frankfurt/M: Campus 2005, 244–254. Thanks to Christiane Eisenberg.
- ³⁵ Norwegian Football Federation. Board protocol 10.10.1945. NFF archive, Oslo.
- ³⁶ Letter from Jules Rimet, Paris, to Norges Fotballforbund, Svenska Fotbollförbundet, Finlands Bollförbund, Dansk Boldspil Union, «aux seins de Dansk Boldspil Union», Copenhagen 21.2.1946, in FIFA-Archiv Zürich, correspondence Schricker-Rimet January–December 1946. Thanks to Christiane Eisenberg. Board protocol 10.10.1945, Norges Fotballforbund archive. Letter from Schricker: 23.11.1945 (Svenska Fotbollförbundets archive). Nordic congress 1.–2.12.1945 (Danish version: DBU minutes in Svenska Fotbollförbundets archive). Letter from Eric v. Frenchell 19.3.1951 (in Finlands idrottsarkiv). Matti Goksøy and Finn Olstad: *Fotball! Norges Fotballforbund 100 år*. Oslo: NFF 2002, 309–311.
- ³⁷ Per Olof Holmäng: *Idrott och utrikespolitik. Den svenska idrottsrörelsens internationella förbindelser 1919–1945*. (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet, 1988. 234.)
- ³⁸ Holmäng, 234, note 138; Leif Yttergren: *I och ur spår. Konflikter och hjälstar i svensk skidsports historia under 1900-talet*. (Lund: KFS, 2006). Kleppen gives a somewhat different version, claiming that Østgaard 'authorized' Hamilton to take over. Kleppen 2007, 85.
- ³⁹ På Skidor (Journal of the Swedish Ski Association) 1942. See also Yttergren 2006.
- ⁴⁰ «Här levde alla som en stor skidfamilj», Sigge Bergmann, *På Skidor* 1942, 178. Quoted in Yttergren 2006, 100.
- ⁴¹ C.G.D.Hamilton, "Internationella Skidförbundet under kriget". *På Skidor* 1946, 202-208, (written and signed 15.July 1945). Here (204) he amongst others reports that "the German presence" and the enormous staff of the "Reichsportführer [...] hardly raised the popularity of the Germans".
- ⁴² Hamilton 1946, 205.
- ⁴³ Les Cahiers de l'Equipe, XXXIII, 1968. In John Ross Schleppe: *A History of Professional Association Football in England during the Second World War*. (PhD diss., Ohio State University 1972, 14.)
- ⁴⁴ Simon Kuper: *Ajax, the Dutch, the War: Football in Europe during the Second World War*. (London: Orion 2003, 13, 158–159.) See also Havemann 2005.
- ⁴⁵ Kuper 2003, 13.
- ⁴⁶ Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, communications, 27 January and 23 February 1943. In: Holmäng 1988, 212 (notes); Arnd Krüger, 'Germany and sport in World War II', *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport*. Bd. 24, (1993) no. 1, 52–62.
- ⁴⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 14 June 1940. In Ross Schleppe, 99, 138, 424. Jack Rollin: *Soccer at War, 1939–45*. London: Headline 1985, vii.
- ⁴⁸ Robert Edelman, *Spartak Moscow. The People's Team in the Workers' State*. (Ithaka and London: Cornell University Press, 2009.)
- ⁴⁹ Steven R. Bullock: *Playing for their Nation: Baseball and the American Military during World War II*. University of Nebraska 2004; G. Bazer, «Baseball during World War II: The reaction and encouragement of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and others», *NINE. A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*. Bd. 10, (2001) no. 1.

⁵⁰ The Norwegian sports periodical *Sportsmanden* (22 April 1940) raised this question: was it right “å leke i et hjem som står i brann”.

⁵¹ Bonde, *Football with the Foe*. 53-81.

⁵² Odd-Bjørn Fure, «Exploring the context, position and significance of civilian resistance in Western Europe 1940–1945. A theoretical discourse». (Unpublished manuscript, Oslo 2015).

⁵³ J.M. Winter, "Military Fitness and Civilian Health in Britain During the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15, 1980, 211-244. Finn Olstad and Stein Tønnesson, *Norsk idrettshistorie, vol 1-2*. (Oslo 1985/1986). Wijk, Johnny. 2005. *Idrott, krig och nationell gemenskap. Om riksmarsjer, fältsport och Gunder Hägg-feber*. Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion.

⁵⁴ Donald Mrozek, "Sport and the American Military : Diversion and Duty", *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*. Centennial Issue, 1985.

⁵⁵ Pierre de Coubertin 1863-1937, *Olympism. Selected writings*. (ed. N. Müller). (Lausanne 2000) 45f. John MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games*. (Urbana and Chicago 1981). Peter J. Beck, "Confronting George Orwell: Philip Noel-Baker on International Sport, Particularly the Olympic Movement, as Peacemaker". In: J. A. Mangan (ed.) : *Militarism, Sport, Europe. War without Weapons*. The European Sports History Review. 5 (London 2003). On IOC and the Nobel Peace Prize: M. Goksøyr, "Norway. Neighbourly Neutrality". In : A. Krüger and W. Murray (eds.) : *The Nazi-Olympics. Sport, Politics and Appeasement in the 1930s*. (Urbana and Chicago 2003).

⁵⁶ George Orwell, The Sporting Spirit. The Tribune, 14 December 1945. In: *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, vol.IV: In Front of your Nose 1945-1950*. Eds.: Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. New York 1968, 42.