

# The Importance of the Historians' Quarrel and the Problem of Continuity for the German History of Sport

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The so called "historians' debate" (*Historikerstreit*) started when the West German government decided to present the city of Berlin with a historical museum on the occasion of its 750th anniversary. The causes of this quarrel go much deeper, as the controversy transcends the general question of the usefulness of history to life and touches on the spiritual roots of the Federal Republic itself. It was feared that the primary purpose of the museum was to promote a new German nationalism and thereby keep open the question of a possible German reunification. It was argued that such an institution would relativize the darkest chapter of German history, the Nazi period and its crimes, and conceal its uniqueness. By dissolving these crimes in the general continuity of history, one would equate them to other modern acts of mass murder. The Nazi past would cease to be a continual reminder of terrible German crimes.

The plans for the museum were mentioned for the first time in an official declaration by chancellor Helmut Kohl on October 12, 1982: "Our republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, was created in the shadow of a catastrophe. By now we have our own history. We will work on creating a record of German history since 1945 in Bonn, dedicated to the history of our country and the divided nation."

While independent experts produced a master plan, a separate commission started to work on the plans for the museum in Berlin. The "House of History" in Bonn will serve the younger generation, who did not take part in the creation of the West German state, and the many foreign and West German visitors to Bonn.

The plans of the federal government to have two historical museums was the starting point of the historians' quarrel, but soon the quarrel involved many historians, social scientists, philosophers, and journalists, and was being fought out in letters to many national newspapers. Soon the discussion left the historical dimension and became centered around the question of West Germany's status in the fifth decade after the war.<sup>1</sup>

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1. *Historiker-Streit. Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen*

This controversy started with an attack by the social philosopher Jürgen Habermas on the historians Michael Stürmer, Ernst Nolte, Klaus Hildebrand, and Andreas Hillgruber, whom he accused of apologetic tendencies in their historiography of modern Germany. These historians, Habermas pointed out, were exponents of a (revisionist) historiography who were careless in dealing with the “brown” German past and who questioned the standard historiography of the Nazi era. Ernst Nolte in particular was attacked for allegedly equating the Gulag Archipelago with Auschwitz. The industrialized Nazi killing machine was thereby relativized and stripped of its singularity and incomparability.<sup>2</sup> Since Habermas linked these four historians to the liberal-conservative coalition government much of the discussion became heated for obvious political reasons. On the other hand, this quarrel was also related to a conflict between two different methodological views, historical social science vs. political historiography. These two methods, which may be termed the intentionalistic and the functionalistic, propose different research questions, designs, and concepts. Hillgruber, an exponent of political history, argued that history in the 19th and 20th century has been mainly determined by major personalities and the formal relationships of states. The strongest motivations for political activities are thus political and economic interests as well as ideological factors. For research the hermeneutic method based on traditional analyses of sources is preferred, using diplomatic archival material in particular to document government decisions. Although links to social and structural history are shown from time to time, the independence of political historiography is stressed. The social historians have attempted to separate historical social science from political historiography, studying social structures by taking political factors into account. For this method, historical “conditions,” supra-individual developments, and processes are more important than individual decisions and historical actors. This point of view stresses the whole historical process in its synchronic as well as its diachronic context.<sup>3</sup> Social history is, however, primarily concerned with the experiences of specific social groups,

Habermas’ attack was primarily directed against Nolte and Hillgruber. Nolte used historical comparison to argue that the Soviet Revolution was an “important precondition” for the rise of Nazism; Hitler’s holocaust was thus a reaction to the annihilation of the Kulaks during the Soviet Revolution. Habermas charged that Nolte’s comparison questioned the singularity of the Nazi crimes.<sup>4</sup>

Analyzing this controversy, one comes to the conclusion that the inten-

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*Jedenverfolgung. München: Piper 1987 (4th ed.).*

2. J. Habermas, “Eine Art Schadensabwicklung,” *Die Zeit* (July 11, 1986), in *Historiker-Streit*, pp. 62-76; M. Stürmer, “Geschichte in einem geschichtslosen Land,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, in *Historiker-Streit*, pp. 36-38; E. Nolte, “Zwischen Geschichtslegende und Revisionismus?” in *Historiker-Streit*, pp. 13-35; idem, “Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will,” *FAZ* June 6, 1986, in *Historiker-Streit*, pp. 39-47; K. Hildebrand, “Das Zeitalter der Tyrannen,” in *Historiker-Streit*, pp. 84-92; A. Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang*, Berlin: Corso 1986.

3. J. Kocka, “Sozialgeschichte-Strukturgeschichte-Gesellschaftsgeschichte,” *Archiv f. Sozialgeschichte* 15 (1975), p. 20.

4. Nolte, “Zwischen Geschichtslegende und Revisionismus,” p. 32; Habermas, “Schadensbegrenzung,” p. 71.

tionalistic and functionalistic orientations are constitutive of political history and historical social science, respectively, and produce different characterizations of the Nazi system. This is particularly clear in the evaluation of German expansionism, racial policies, and Hitler's leadership. While the intentionalists emphasize Hitler's aims and decisions and point out that they were of importance for the foreign as well as the racial policies, the functionalists place less emphasis on Hitler and more on social structures and conditions. So expansion is explained in terms of German economic interests, and the radicalism of the racial policies is derived from the destruction of moral and legal principles under the rule of the Nazis. Both methods agree, however, that the Nazi state was not a perfectly organized system, but was characterized by disorganization and instability. While Hildebrand argues that Hitler used disorganization intentionally as a means to govern, and that his actions were performed according to plan and in accordance with an "inner rationality,"<sup>5</sup> he places the full responsibility for the racial and expansionist policies on the German *Führer*. On the other hand, Hans Mommsen, a functionalist, raises questions about Hitler's leadership.<sup>6</sup> Hitler had retreated early from important governmental decisions and reacted speedily to changes in public opinion.<sup>7</sup> Mommsen argues that the massive protests of the Churches kept the Nazi racial policies in check.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, it is clear that an interpretation based on persons and programs cannot fully explain the phenomena of the Third Reich since it does not include the factors which made such radicalism possible. On the other hand, the intentionalists, Hillgruber<sup>9</sup> and Hildebrand,<sup>10</sup> doubt whether foreign policies can be explained by structural history at all, since major decisions like the attack on Poland or the Wannsee conference, which decided upon the destruction of the Jews, lose their importance from a structural point of view.

The historians' debate was further intensified by Andreas Hillgruber's book *Zweierlei Untergang [Two Catastrophies]* which contains a chapter on the German war losses in the East (1944/45) as a problem of German history and on the mass murder of the Jews. Both "catastrophies" are linked, although they have to be regarded differently because of the different historical contexts.<sup>11</sup> The dismantling of the German Empire is explained in terms of the longterm war aims of the allies, and only partially as a result of the allies' plans for Germany, and only partially as a reaction to German war crimes.<sup>12</sup> Habermas criticized this explanation since it makes Hitler alone responsible for the Nazi racial policies and does not take into account the attitude of the German population. Habermas also criticizes Hillgruber for leaving out an interpreta-

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5. K. Hildebrand, "Monokratie oder Polykratie? Hiders Herrschaft und das Dritte Reich." *Der Führerstaat*, G. Hirschfeld, L. Kettenacker, eds. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1981, pp. 73-95; see p. 86.

6. H. Mommsen, "Hitlers Stellung im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem," *ibidem*, pp. 43-72.

7. *Ibidem*, p. 67.

8. *Ibidem*, p. 66.

9. *Ibidem*, p. 17, quoted from W. J. Mommsen's introduction of *Der "Führerstaat"*.

10. *Ibidem*.

11. Hillgruber, "Zweierlei Untergang," p. 9.

12. *Ibidem*.

tion of the conservative power structures in the German East (Prussia, Silesia, etc.), whose preservation was not in the longterm interest of the allies.<sup>13</sup>

This controversy will continue. It has certainly made many people in the Federal Republic acutely aware of the nature of historical research. This was clear in the planning of the German Historical Museum, the foundation of which was laid near the old German Reichstag on October 28, 1987. For several days there was a major parliamentary hearing, including historians and important social organizations, to create a consensus. The notion of national identity, as introduced by Drs. Stürmer and Kocka, and members of the commission, included controversy as one of its elements. Kocka formulated the notion of a 'plural identity.' There was also a new acceptance of diverse interpretations of history, of pluralistic concepts to be presented at various exhibitions. The question about German history will continue, but the museum will attempt to provide some answers.<sup>14</sup>

Chancellor Kohl adopted this new position when he explained in the German parliament on March 18, 1987: "German history will be presented in such a manner that citizens will find themselves in it, will be open to controversial interpretations and many historical theories. In a free society there is no closed system of historical interpretation and no declaration of an official theory of history. Nobody has the right to force his interpretation of history upon anyone else."

Physical education and sports were not originally included in the planning for either museum. Only after the parliamentary hearing, when the German Sport Federation with its more than twenty million members was included among the "important social groups," was sport accepted as a relevant topic.<sup>15</sup> It was obvious that the history of sport, physical education, and the sport sciences was part of general history. German intellectuals, perhaps typically, had left sport out of the original plan. The following three examples include sport-related topics.

(1) *Continuity*: When Fritz Fischer in his book *Bündnis der Eliten [Alliance of the Elite]* speaks of continuity in German history, he does not explicitly mention sports, but continuity is omnipresent. Continuity of ideas and personalities involves not only cooperation in industry, the military, and politics, but also the history of German sports from imperial times to the early period of the Federal Republic.

(2) *Power*: Sport in the Third Reich was a major element of the power structure. It was based on the principles of racial leadership, military skills and geared towards producing the political soldier; in a word, sport was used for political aims.

13. Habermas, "Eine Art," pp. 65-67.

14. "Gebaut wird—aber was? Museum oder Dinosaurier? Experten diskutieren im Wissenschaftszentrum über das Deutsche Historische Museum," *Bonner General-Anzeiger*, December 11, 1986, p. 13.

15. The German Sports Federation nominated Professor Dr. Horst Ueberhorst as member, and Professor Dr. Hajo Bernett as deputy member.

(3) The tradition of *paramilitary* education was continued from imperial Germany (1911 saw the foundation of the paramilitary *Jungdeutschlandbund*) through the Weimar period (*Jungstahlhelm* and *Reichskuratorium für Jugendertüchtigung*) and into the Third Reich. This is an example which shows how such a development can be exhibited in a way appropriate for a museum. Organizations which were used to destroy German democracy can be presented quite vividly. The destruction of German democracy involved sport as one way to manipulate the German population.

The problem of continuity can be illustrated by examining three important personalities in German sport who were successful in Nazi Germany as well as in the post-war Federal Republic: Carl Diem, Guido v. Mengden, and Karl Ritter von Halt.

No critical biography of Diem (1882-1962) has been published to date, although many sport historians presented studies on the occasion of Diem's 100th anniversary in 1982 when there was a colloquium in his honor. Hajo Bernett published a lengthy study in 1987,<sup>16</sup> but Diem can still be considered one of the most disputed figures in the history of modern German sport. Bernett pointed out that Diem's autobiographical essays (began in 1948) only reported the "relative truth" by leaving out what did not fit into the picture he wanted to create of himself.<sup>17</sup> Yet even Bernett is fascinated by the liveliness of Diem's autobiographical story narration, in spite of many omissions pertaining to the Nazi era. Diem attempted in 1933 and again in 1943 to become *Reichssportführer*, the supreme leader of Nazi sport. This shows how close he thought he was to the top of the Nazi movement, and that he had a poor grasp of what was politically possible for him. But in spite of these shortcomings, Diem can be credited with some impressive achievements.

Born in 1882 in Würzburg, then growing up in Berlin, Diem's self-proclaimed goal was to involve as many people as possible in sports, and to convince them that sport was important to their lives and could be practiced well into old age. He was able to achieve this by being elected to responsible positions such as the presidency of the *Deutsche Sportbehörde für Athletik* (1908-13, the predecessor of the German Track and Field Federation), as the full-time paid secretary general of the organizing committee of the 1916 Olympic Games, and as a member of the German Olympic Committee. As the head of the German Sport Federation (1917-33, *Deutscher Reichsausschuß für Leibesübungen—DRA*), he was responsible for many initiatives on behalf of sport during the Weimar Republic. Although the ground had been prepared by others prior to World War I, without Diem the rapid growth of the sports movement would not have taken place in this way. His initiatives included the *Reichsjugendwettkämpfe*, an athletic triathlon (sprinting, jumping, throwing) for all school children; the *Reichssportabzeichen*, a multi-performance badge for everybody specifying differing performances by age and sex; and a

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16. H. Bernett, "Carl Diem und sein Werk als Gegenstand der sportgeschichtlichen Forschung," *SZGS* 1 (1987), pp. 7-44.

17. *Ibidem*, p. 9.

*Reichsspielplatzgesetz*, a bill to standardize the available space for sport. In addition, he lobbied for a daily gym class, and for the inclusion of physical education into the *Abitur*, the final high school exam. Diem was the main organizer of the *Deutsche Hochschule für Leibesübungen*, the first German College of Physical Education, responsible for the preparation of sports (not gymnastics) teachers, and research into the scientific foundations of sport. In 1922 he created the *Deutsche Kampfspiele*, national Olympic Games for the period Germany was excluded from the International Olympic Games (1920-24).

When the DRA was dissolved in 1933 by the Nazi government, Diem was already the secretary general of the Organizing Committee for the 1936 Olympic Summer Games. He contributed to their great success and thus helped to create international prestige for the Nazis.

Although Diem's role in the Third Reich is still disputed today, there is no doubt that he organized the Olympic Summer Games the way the Nazis wanted them. His drama *Olympische Jugend* ["Olympic Youth"] was staged at the Olympic Stadium on the evening of the opening day, featuring the themes of heroic struggle and death. This play thus endorsed the Nazi idea that sport competition is equivalent to war.<sup>18</sup>

Diem was fully aware of the breach of the Olympic rules implicit in the Nuremberg racial laws which excluded German Jews from the German Olympic team. Diem denied the very existence of an American boycott movement, although he was fully aware that there was only a slim majority in favor of participation. He also maintained that all of his actions were in the best interest of sport and of no political significance. By claiming that sport was outside the political sphere he was able to disclaim responsibility for this chapter of German history. To quote from his *Ein Leben für den Sport: [A Life for Sport]*: "In summary, one may say that sport was able to preserve itself almost completely from the political corruption of the Nazi era. Sport succeeded in this better than other spheres of culture. The rise of sport, particularly the athletic successes of the 1936 Olympic Games, has been the result of the systematic work of the Weimar Republic. Under National Socialism a system which had been already growing developed further."<sup>19</sup> In this *World History of Physical Education and Sport* (1960), he even claims that Hitler allowed the sport movement to function independently.<sup>20</sup>

From 1938-45 Diem was director of the International Olympic Institute, an honorary appointment with little political influence. He was also, however, the director of the foreign affairs section of the *NS Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* [National Socialist Association for Physical Culture] (1939-45), but he was also close to *Reichssportführer* Hans von Tschammer und Osten, and was his frequent traveling companion. V. Tschammer made Diem responsible for the

18. H. Ueberhorst, "Spiele unterm Hakenkreuz," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschehen. Beilage zu DAS PARLAMENT* (1986), Nr. 13/14.

19. Carl Diem, *Ein Leben für den Sport*, Ratingen: Henn 1974, pp. 153ff.

20. Carl Diem, *Weltgeschichte des Sports und der Leibeserziehung*, Stuttgart: Klett 1960, p. 997.

German team to the *Lingiade* in Stockholm (1939) and the preparation of the European sports conference in Munich in 1942. A European sport federation under Italian and German leadership was to be formed with Carl Diem as its secretary general. V. Tschammer also asked Hitler's help in getting a full professorship for Diem at the University of Berlin. This did not materialize due to opposition from the minister of education.

It is amazing how fast Diem made his comeback after 1945 despite considerable opposition from former members of the social workers' sport movement. He joined the boards of the new German National Olympic Committee and the German Sport Federation and from 1949-54 he was made responsible for sport by the Federal German Government. Diem's international reputation also survived the war. He was invited to the London 1948 Olympics as a guest of honor—the only German at the Games—and was very active in founding the International Olympic Academy at Olympia on behalf of the IOC. He also made the organizational and technical preparation for the excavation of the ancient stadium at Olympia.

Diem was the founding rector of the German College of Sport in Cologne, finally receiving the title and position of a full professor. He was honored by many clubs, organizations, federations, and by the Federal German Government, receiving the highest decorations.

It can truly be said that no other person in this century has provided German sport with as many fruitful ideas as Carl Diem. Given that he was able to pursue his aims under any political system, without doing much damage to his reputation, one may ask about the principles underlying his activities. H. J. Teichler has shown that Diem had a strong affinity for Nazi ideas, although he was not an anti-Semite.<sup>21</sup> As a *homo politicus* he favored its national authoritarian conservatism, anti-democratic spirit, and strong preference for military values. The equating of the soldier and the sportsman is one of the distinguishing features of his thought. It becomes visible in such quotes as "For us the measure of sport is to what extent it makes a man able to fight as a soldier (*wehrtüchtig*) and a woman able to bear children (*gebährtüchtig*)."<sup>22</sup> During the war, in particular, he emphasized the military spirit of the Olympic Games.

Apart from his public pronouncement of propagandistic value there are also critical remarks in his travel diaries which call for a discriminating assessment. He summarizes the year 1938 as follows: "For Germany: the incorporation of the *Ostmark* (the Nazi term for Austria) and the *Sudetenland*. What an historic hour. But then the shame of the persecution of the Jews and the burning of the synagogues, the smashing of windows, the looting of shops—all in the name of Germany."<sup>23</sup>

His criticism of the German occupation policy and German rule in the East is unsparing as early as 1940: "The fate of the fatherland is a very sad one. In spite

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21. H. J. Teichler, "Der Weg Carl Diems vom DRA-Generalsekretär zum kommissarischen Führer des Gaues Ausland im NSRL," *SZGS* 1 (1987), pp. 42-91.

22. Found by H. J. Teichler in *Bundesarchiv* Koblenz, BA R 58/188.

23. Teichler, "Der Weg," p. 80.

of the grandeur of the German people and the strength of its soldiers' spirit, I cannot imagine a future without the security of a legal system, freedom of thought, decency and human dignity. I do not believe in the 'New Order' which enslaves the Slavic people, or in a happiness based on the unhappiness of the Jews and others."<sup>24</sup>

Although he perceives many of the weaknesses of Nazi rule, he draws no conclusions, his criticism is never fundamental, he never criticizes the hegemonic war aims on behalf of a greater Germany, Hitler's excesses, his utter lack of scruples. His Prussian ideals of law and order, his peculiar mixture of patriotism, ambition, and vanity, made him the servant of an unlawful system.

On April 28, 1984, at a seminar on Olympism the editor-in chief of the Second German National Television (ZDF) Reinhard Appel made the following remarks:

Please permit me a personal word of introduction. When Willi Daume asked me to come here and speak it would have been normal to ask one of my sport colleagues to stand in since they have far more experience with this topic than I have. My field is politics, and I would have been better prepared to discuss sport and politics. But I had a very personal reason to accept the invitation and address the representatives of the sporting and Olympic bodies.

I cannot forget what a great man of the Olympic movement said to us 18 year olds at the beginning of March 1945 here in Berlin next to the Olympic Stadium. We were in the so called Hitler division *Großdeutschland* under Arthur Axmann. In a flaming speech during which much was said about Sparta and the spirit of sacrifice, he asked us to go into the victorious final battle against Germany's enemies. We did go into battle, but nothing could be victorious for us in March 1945.

Having been fortunate enough to have survived the war, I read from time to time about Carl Diem, and I never forgot his stirring appeal to fight on in 1945.

I have never made use of this story as a journalist until Willi Daume asked me to contribute to this discussion of the Olympic idea. I could not resist the opportunity to free myself from the burden and make this story public. Not in an accusing spirit, but rather keeping in mind how careful we have to be, inadequate we human beings are, and about ideals, and the responsibility we older ones have toward the younger generation which is so willing to fight for a good cause.<sup>25</sup>

Guido von Mengden was another German who stayed on at the top level of German sport without changing his political identity. Born in Düren (*Rhineland*) in 1896, he received a classical secondary education at the local high school, volunteered for the army at the outbreak of World War I, was severely wounded at Verdun in 1916, and could no longer be called back into military service. He studied geology at the University of Bonn, and after taking his degree he worked for some time as a landscaper in a surveyor's office. He became a successful lawn hockey player, then a full-time sports journalist in 1924, then general secretary of the *Westdeutscher Spielverband* (the Western

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24. *Ibidem*, p. 81.

25. *Ibidem*, "Dokumentation," p. 105.

German Athletics and Games Federation), and the editor-in chief of its journal *Fußball und Leichtathletik* (Soccer and Track). After joining the NSDAP on June 1, 1933, he was called to Berlin to become the press secretary of the new soccer federation, until von Tschammer made him press secretary of the *Deutsche Reichsbund für Leibesübungen*, the main Nazi sports organization, on account of von Mengden's skillful Nazi journalism. Only one year later he was the head of the office of the *Reichssportführer* and as such the secretary-general of Nazi sport. He became a member of the national Olympic Committee and was an active propagandist in Germany and abroad for the 1936 Olympic Games. He succeeded in converting the sports movement into an official organization "looked after" by the NSDAP under the name of the *NS Reichsbund für Leibesübungen*. He was appointed as *SA-Sturmbannführer* to lead the new movement for the SA. During the war von Mengden was the editor-in-chief of *NS-Sport*, the official organ of the *Reichssportführer* which was sent to all the soldiers in the field. At the end of the war he was fighting in a *Volkssturmbataillon*, and by the end of the war he was its commander.

After being assigned to rubble-clearing in the devastated city of Berlin, he returned to the Rhineland in 1948, publishing cautiously some sport articles under the pseudonym Till van Ryn. He was named secretary-general of the German Olympic Association (DOG) in 1951, secretary-general of the German Olympic Committee in 1961, and secretary-general of the German Sports Federation (1954-63) as well as a member of its scientific advisory committee.

Von Mengden gained his first high position after the war thanks in part to Carl Diem, who also wrote the affidavits for his denazification procedures. Here Diem states that, "although von Mengden had been an ardent Nazi at first, he had soon seen through its hollowness and duplicity."<sup>26</sup> A few years later he reversed his judgment and wrote that von Mengden "had passionately thrown himself into the arms of Nazism."<sup>27</sup> Which activities in the area of propaganda and political indoctrination made Bennett speak of von Mengden as the "grey eminence of the German sport" and the "chief of staff" of Nazi sport?<sup>28</sup> Von Mengden equated the spirit of sport and that of the SA and declared that the fighting spirit of the NSDAP storm troopers was the model for a sports team. This plain contradicts the democratic tradition of the German *Turner* and sports movement. In 1935 he wrote: "we gladly acknowledge that the nationalsocialist SA-spirit of self-sacrifice, submission to a shared goal, loyalty among men, and self-discipline has helped to raise the level of German sport."<sup>29</sup> In the official history of the DRL which von Mengden wrote in 1937 on behalf of the *Reichssportführer*, the "Coordination" (*Gleichschaltung*) of 1933 is said to have ended a period of political chaos in sport: "The mish-mash of patriotic club councils, honorary presidents, bourgeois simpletons, class-struggling red

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26. H. Bennett, *Guido von Mengden, "Generalstabschef" des deutschen Sports (Turn- und Sportführer im Dritten Reich vol. 5)*, Berlin: Bartels & Wernitz 1976, pp. 100-101.

27. *Ibidem*, p. 105.

28. Bennett refers to this as a case study for political education regarding political conflicts.

29. G. v. Mengden, "Militärischer Fußball—nun aber ernst! *Deutscher Fußball—Sport* (1935), 3, p. 51.

sports leaders, honest Christian priests, pacifistic muddle-heads, fanatical *Turners*, and equally fanatical sportsmen,”<sup>30</sup> in a word, the “misery” of bourgeois, denominational, and socialist sport. Von Mengden does make the point that, in the last analysis, the SA spirit leads to the self-sacrifice of the German people.<sup>31</sup> He was thus an ideal editor-in-chief of the weekly *NS-Sport*, an instrument of German war propaganda.

After his second career, von Mengden, too, received many high honors. Carl Diem even refers to him as one of the most important European sport leaders.<sup>32</sup> But we have to ask whether it is tolerable that a person who had been involved to such a degree in leading Germany into catastrophe should become a representative of a democratic West German sports organization?

The dramatic political career of Karl Ritter von Halt, Ph.D., began when he became a member of the IOC in 1929 at the age of 38. At that time the former successful decathlon champion (five times German champion between 1911 and 1921) had already been elected president of the German Track and Field Federation. He was a friend of two future presidents of the IOC: Siegfried Edström (Sweden) and Avery Brundage (USA). He was made a member of the Bavarian Max-Joseph-Order for bravery in World War I, hence his title of nobility. His military accomplishments in the World War went down in the annals of Bavarian military history. Together with Diem and Lewald he was responsible for acquiring the Olympic Games of 1936 for Germany. When the Winter Games of the same year were granted to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, he was made president of the organizing committee. The games were a successful test for Berlin.

Because von Halt was considered close to the NSDAP, he was asked by the IOC to contact Hitler and ask him about the position of the NSDAP regarding the Olympic Games. This was considered necessary as the Nazi press had violently attacked the cosmopolitan Olympic Games, and called for the exclusion of Jews and Negroes. He reported back that Hitler regarded the staging of the Olympic Games in Germany with great interest.<sup>33</sup> At the IOC meeting in Vienna the German authorities guaranteed that the Games would be staged in accordance with IOC rules, which explicitly included the possible participation of German Jews on the German team. This promise was repeated a year later at the next IOC session in Athens (May 15–19, 1934). These promises were not kept.<sup>34</sup> Von Halt realized that the campaign against the Jews was so virulent in Southern Bavaria that the safety of any visitor or participant who even looked Jewish could not be guaranteed. He therefore asked the authorities to have all of the billboards proclaiming “Jews not wanted here” or “Jews keep out” removed

30. Idem, “Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen,” *Sport und Staat*, A. Breitmeyer, P. G. Hoffmann, eds., vol. 2, Berlin: Reichssportblatt 1937, p. 118.

31. *Führer durch das Deutsche Turn- und Sportfest in Breslau*, ed. on behalf of the Reichssportführer von der Oberleitung des Turn- und Sportfestes, Breslau: n.p. 1938, p. 59.

32. Quoted by Bernet, v. Mengden, p. 104.

33. A. Krüger, “The 1936 Olympic Games—Berlin,” *The Modern Olympics*, P. J. Graham, H. Ueberhorst, eds. West Point, New York: Leisure Press 1976, pp. 173–186.

34. Idem, *Olympische Spiele*, pp. 88ff.

from the site of the Games and from along the road leading from Munich to Garmisch. In spite of the passage of the Nürnberg racial laws which prohibited Jews from representing Germany in any capacity, the American team (among many others) participated in the Berlin Games. The final vote of the AAU was successfully manipulated by Avery Brundage, von Halt's close personal friend.<sup>35</sup> Soon after, Brundage was made an IOC member, and the only American who had favored a boycott, Ernest Lee Jahncke, was excluded from the IOC.

German journalists who had dared to collaborate with foreign colleagues without receiving official permission first, were imprisoned during the Games on the advice of von Halt to the Secret Police.<sup>36</sup> When von Halt became a member of the executive board of the IOC in 1937, this coincided with his rapid rise within the SA from *Sturmführer* to *Sturmbannführer* within a year. In 1938 he was promoted to *Standartenführer*, and by 1942 he was made an *SA-Oberführer* on the personal order of Hitler, equal to the military rank of a general. In the same year he was elected president of the European Commission of the International Amateur Athletic Federation.

It is lesser known that von Halt was a member of Himmler's personal circle. He provided the supreme leader of the SS with 75,000 marks annually from the funds of the *Deutsche Bank*, where he became a director because of his good connections to high government officials. On September 18, 1944, von Halt was made the last *Reichssportführer*. In May 1945 he led a group of war veterans against the Soviet invasion of Berlin, was caught alive and kept in the former German concentration camp of Buchenwald by the Soviets until 1950. Avery Brundage provided von Halt with an affidavit stating that his German friend was "unpolitical and never a National Socialist."<sup>37</sup> This contradicted the judgment of the Nuremberg tribunal which named von Halt a "war criminal."<sup>38</sup> His rapid career inside the SA and the bank was due to his ardent Nazism. On all official occasions he spoke out enthusiastically for the spirit of the new Germany using strong militaristic language.<sup>39</sup>

After the war the release of von Halt from Buchenwald was part of the price the Soviet sports movement had to pay to be admitted to the Olympic family. Edström and Brundage negotiated with the Soviets on behalf of their friend, and in February 1950 they were finally successful. One year later von Halt was elected president of the newly founded National Olympic Committee. He became again a member of the executive board of the IOC (1957–63) before he died in 1963.

35. A. Krüger, "Fair Play for American Athletes: A study in Anti-Semitism." *Can. J. His. Sp. & PE* 9 (1978). 1, pp. 42–57; S. P. Wenn, "Commodore Hotel revisited: An Analysis of the 1935 A. A. U. Convention," *6th Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education*. D. Morrow, ed., London, Ont. 1989, pp. 188–201.

36. A. Krüger, *Olympische Spiele*, p. 89; O. Mayer, *A travers les anneaux olympiques*. Genf: Cailler 1960, p. 150.

37. Quoted by H. Bernett, *Leichtathletik im geschichtlichen Wandel*, Schorndorf: Hoffmann 1987, pp. 275ff.

38. Office of Military Government for Germany, U.S. Finance Division (ed.), *Ermittlungen gegen die Deutsche Bank*. Nördlingen: Greno 1985, pp. 57–9.

39. A. Krüger, "Deutschland und die olympische Bewegung. 1945–1980," *Geschichte der Leibesübungen*, vol. 3/2, Berlin: Bartels & Wernitz 1982, p. 1050.

This account is not an attack on three men who were very influential during three periods of German sport history. One might have expected that men who perverted the democratic sports movement into an authoritarian and racially exclusive one in 1933-34 would have been less eager to seek leadership positions again after 1945. Of the destruction and reconstruction after 1945 Willi Daume once said: "The worst, however, was the complete destruction of the moral substance of sports. National Socialism had perverted it to such an extent that the leading German intellectuals did not even want to hear about sports."<sup>40</sup>

One can concur with Hajo Bernett that for "political, historical, and moral reasons the new history could not be written by politically compromised people."<sup>41</sup> Sport had been praised as the "workshop of victory," and the "total" mobilization of German youth under its banner was no illusion.

The historians' debate has raised the question of the degrees and types of guilt which these three leading sports officials incurred even as they continued their sports careers after the war. Critical studies of Nazi sport were already appearing in the mid-1960s, and these issues have been discussed on a regular basis ever since.

Hans Mommsen has shown that "Hitler's program of racial annihilation met no serious resistance" and that "the military was a willing accomplice in the policy of extermination."<sup>42</sup> National Socialism cannot, therefore, be reduced to mere antibolshevism, since anti-Semitic thought was also embraced by traditional elites like the bureaucracy and the army. The historiography of sport has much more work to do in this area. One case study in this respect is that of Walter von Reichenau, who as military commander of the 6th Army admonished his soldiers to go even further than a military solution in the complete destruction of the Jewish-Bolshevik system and the annihilation (*Ausrottung*) of the Asian influence in European culture. He demanded that one have "complete understanding for the just revenge carried out on the Jewish subhumans (*Untermenschentum*)." He thereby justified the action of Einsatzgruppe C, which in the course of a few days had killed 80,000 Jews in Kiev.<sup>43</sup>

V. Reichenau, a track athlete, was a friend of Diem of long standing. In 1913 he accompanied Diem on his fact-finding tour of the US as a representative of the military. In 1933 he proposed Diem as the new *Reichssportführer*. In 1934 he was directly involved in the liquidation of the SA-leadership by the SS. In 1937 he succeeded Lewald as the third German member of the IOC. When he died on the Eastern front in 1942, Diem wrote an emotional obituary.

40. H. Mommsen, "Neues Geschichtsbewußtsein und Relativierung des Nationalismus." *Historikerstreit*, pp. 174-188, quote p. 184.

41. B. Faulenbach, "Der Streit um die Gegenwartsdeutung der NS-Vergangenheit. Ein Literaturbericht," *Archiv f. Sozialges.* 28 (1988).

42. A. Krüger, "Sieg Heil to the most glorious era of German Sports" *Int. J. Hist. Sport* 4 (1987), 1, pp. 5-20.

43. N. Müller (ed.), *Okkupation. Raub, Vernichtung. Dokumente zur Besatzungspolitik der faschistischen Wehrmacht auf sowjetischem Territorium 1941 bis 1945*, Berlin 1971; and H. Ant, *Mörder in Uniform, die zu Vollstreckern nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen wurden*. München 1979.

Sport was not a monolithic subculture during the Nazi period. On the contrary, it was riddled with conflicts and complications. This is quite natural given the diversity of German thought and traditions. The historians' quarrel has thus contributed to giving the historiography of sport a new significance for understanding the German past.