

Sport and Political Culture in Hanover (Germany) during the Weimar Republic (1919–1933)

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This paper investigates the connection between politics and sport in a German city in the years before Hitler's assumption of power. As with most aspects of German culture, participation in a certain sport club reflected political beliefs as well as recreational interests; free trade union-organized workers belonged to clubs of the Workers' Gymnastics and Sport Federation, members of the bourgeoisie patronized the nationalistic *Turnvereine*, while clubs specializing in sports such as football, swimming, and track and field may have had a mixture of unorganized workers, artisans, and Burger as members. While much has been written about Weimar sport in German, the topic has not been addressed by historians in English-speaking countries to the same degree, and there are hardly any published English-language local studies of Weimar sport at all.

Thus, this paper, which will form part of a Ph.D. dissertation in German history, attempts to contribute to the literature by examining Weimar sport in a local context. Based on club records, newspapers and contemporary periodicals, city directories, city council and subcommittee minutes, and records of the city office for sport, this paper traces the interaction of political forces and a working-class sport club, ATV Linden, in Hanover. While oral history research yields answers along the line of "We were just sportsmen" when questions about such interaction are asked, this was hardly the case with the working-class sport movement (in which most clubs met in the same taverns as the neighborhood Social Democratic Party organizations) or the right-wing nationalist Turner, whose club newsletters praised the orderliness in fascist Italy and urged Germans to instill such discipline in their own country. The paper focuses on the politics and ideology of club life, cooperation with other clubs in the working-class movement, and the relationship between the club and city government. ATV Linden, despite expressions of "party-political" neutrality, played an important role as an agent of political culture during the tumultuous Weimar Republic.