

FRANCE, COUBERTIN AND THE NAZI OLYMPICS: THE RESPONSE

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The Olympic Games held at Berlin in 1936 were an unprecedented success: as a sporting spectacle as much as a triumph of propaganda for the National Socialist regime. Such were the general opinions at the time, and much of the work done since then would confirm these views.¹ If the major controversy before the Games took place was whether athletes committed to the notion of Fair Play should compete in a country where such ideas were treated with contempt,² the major controversy at the end of the Games was when the Nazis were accused of using the Olympic festival for their own political ends, and found in the Baron de Coubertin their most illustrious defender. This occurred in France, a country whose commitment to sport has been masked by its more cerebral achievements,³ when two leading organs of press opinion, the triumphant strains of the closing ceremony still ringing in delirious German ears, denounced the Nazi organization of the Games.

L'Auto, the foremost sports journal in France (and arguably Europe), delivered the most resounding blast, when it published a front page editorial by its chief editor, Jacques Goddet, claiming that the Games in Berlin had been "disfigured," (*défigurés*).⁴ In the information press Gaston Bénac denounced the chauvinism he had witnessed and claimed to be appalled at the way the Games had become a gigantic platform for political opinions. Bénac was the leading sports journalist of the day, and it was his contributions to *Paris soir* that had helped make it the best selling mass-circulation daily in France.⁵ For left-wing newspapers like the Communist *Humanité*, the Socialist *Populaire*, and *Sport*, the sporting organ of the recently unified workers' sports federations,⁶ these attacks in the bourgeois press served as a vindication of the warnings they had been issuing for well over a year.

The Nazis, who had been particularly concerned about French opinion prior

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to the Games, dismissed the criticisms of Goddet and Bénac as profoundly distasteful,⁷ and for a while they refused to speak to reporters from either paper. The issue blazed up again when the criticisms of the Berlin Games were taken to the aging Coubertin, living the life of a recluse at Lausanne. The unequivocal response of the founder of the modern Games was that far from having been disfigured, the Berlin Games had lived up to his highest ideals. The Nazis were to be well served by Coubertin,⁸ whom they had been courting assiduously, particularly through Lewald, the president of the German Olympic Committee, with offers of financial assistance, flattery and promises to secure the recognition that his own country had denied him.⁹ When interviewed on the Berlin Olympics, Coubertin went beyond praise of the Nazi organization of the Games to make enigmatic statements about amateurism and the meaning of Olympism that embarrassed his purist disciples as much as they delighted the bourgeois “realists” who had been constant critics of the Olympic oath. For the Left, which could be seen as supporting the most faithful interpretation of Olympism,¹⁰ Coubertin’s implied fascism was compensated by his denunciation of the hypocrisy that surrounded the Games.

THE DISFIGURED GAMES

France sent 215 athletes to Berlin, a number surpassed only by Germany, the USA, the UK and Hungary, and although they performed as poorly as predicted in track and field, there was some consolation in the medals they won in the less glamorous events of cycling, boxing, wrestling and weightlifting. Despite this, the coverage of the Berlin Olympics in the French press was intense, with the opening ceremonies even knocking the last stages of the Tour de France off top billing. Admittedly, the Belgian riders had the race well and truly sewn up by then and there was no hope of a French rider winning, but throughout the first two weeks of August readers of the French press could look forward, alongside atrocity stories and stark pictures of what the Spaniards were doing to each other in their Civil War, to superb photos from Berlin that graced the front page and the sports pages, together with breathless accounts of the deeds of Jessie Owens, Lovelock and the other stars of the Games. There were few French newspapers that did not have some criticism to make of the German organization of the Games; even in the right-wing newspapers French national pride usually proved stronger than political ideology, but it was not until towards the end of the Olympic fortnight, with the attacks by Goddet and Bénac, that the Nazi Olympics were subjected to a full frontal onslaught.

Goddet's attack came in the form of a front page editorial, in *L'Auto* of 17 August, set inside a black outline and headlined: LES JEUX DÉFIGURÉS. With only the scantest regard for formal introductory niceties, where he admitted the popular success of the Games and the great feats of "musculature" they had produced, Goddet launched straight into his conclusion: that never before had the games been so "profoundly disfigured." He had left Berlin shocked and worried, for these Games had been used to serve ends other than sport. He reminded his readers how on leaving Los Angeles four years earlier he had rung the alarm bells about the way the Games had been used as a gigantic publicity stunt for a region whose tourist appeal was merely in its climate, and which could not even match "our incomparable Cote d'Azur." Now an equally prodigious publicity stunt had been perpetrated on the sporting world, but this time in aid of a political regime. In four years time, at Tokyo, Goddet mused sardonically, the world could no doubt look forward to a sustained anthem in praise of the yellow race.

After a sarcastic sally suggesting that the next Games be held on Mars, Goddet came up with a programme of future venues whose simplicity and sporting connections today's revenue-oriented IOC could well learn something from: to bring the Games back to some sort of sanity, he proposed that the 1944 Games should be held in Olympia, (in the shadow of the temple of Zeus), in 1948 in Finland (a simple country) and 1952 in Great Britain (the sole country where there were still to be found sane attitudes in regard to sport). This would give the world 16 years to think about the future of the Games and get them back into the hands of sports administrators, rather than the ministries of Foreign Affairs.

From these well-placed criticisms Goddet returned to one of the favourite themes of his newspaper: the hypocrisy of the Olympic oath, the great "utopian lie." As an unashamed proponent of professionalism and living off the commercial possibilities of sport, *L'Auto* was not entirely disinterested, but the hollowness of the oath was apparent even in 1936, and there was a great deal of truth in Goddet's comment that the idea of amateurism disappeared the day there was a champion who was not a millionaire. Without naming names, although they were there to be filled in, Goddet pointed to athletes who were allowed to compete in the Games despite the fact that they had already given the date when they were going to turn professional. He wanted an "open" Olympics. Professionalism was inevitable, and only its excesses were to be avoided. There would always be a search for superior beings, and this was fine so long as the mass of the people were thus encouraged to follow them as regards health and

fitness. What had to be avoided was raising human beings to perform like prize animals.

Goddet concluded by looking to the situation in France, where the prevailing spirit of frivolity was not suited to strenuous competition. Nevertheless, the situation was not beyond hope: the major sports in France – football, cycling and boxing – were professional, and it was really only in pure athletics that France had performed poorly. In this regard French athletes had been badly served by their administrators, who constantly wrangled with each other and left the athletes to their own devices. What was needed was a complete rethinking; it was not enough to leave everything to the few months before the Games, instead there needed to be a long term plan to encourage in all French people an appreciation of the “virtues that come with physical exercise.” If the government and sporting bodies were to act on this, the whole of France would benefit and at least some good would come from the Games, for this was a matter not merely of sport, but of national interest.

As a result of this criticism *L'Auto's* staff were given the cold shoulder in Berlin, prompting star reporter Robert Perrier, himself no enemy of fascism as his future career was to show,” to give his own unrepentant views on the subject the following day. These were directly in line with those of his boss, and for a paper that was usually anxious to preserve its columns from what it regarded as the poisonous odour of politics mixing with sport, this was a measure of the degree to which they had been provoked by the “Reich games.” Perrier admitted that it would be puerile to deny that these Games had made their contribution to sport, but they were little more than a pretext, and served to prove the power of Adolf Hitler over the German people. They had spent a fortune on the Games, but the money thrown around had been well worth it as it had all been with the intention of showing to the world the “resurrection of Germany, of the great Germany.”

Perrier claimed that there had been abuses everywhere at the Games: in the *levée en masse* that had ensured massive attendances; in making athletes instruments of their governments; but above all in the *issue* of amateurism. The *American* college athletes, regular whipping boys of *L'Auto*, highlighted this hypocrisy, as did the German state amateurs, who were kept in much the same manner as the Baron de Rothschild kept his stable of thoroughbreds. The Americans and Germans both used sport for political ends. In Germany, Goebbels did not conceal this, and Hitler could well boast that while German athletes merely made up the numbers in Los Angeles, their success under the Nazis showed that Germany had become Great again. This was the true face of

Nazi sport, the result of four years of scientific preparation. Specifically, Perrier recounted the case of the Magdebourg cavalry school, which had been under orders for four years to train daily on a course that had been constructed as a replica of the Olympic course. And this was amateurism, lamented Perrier!¹²

Gaston Bénac, who had been a consistent critic of the Germans from the day the Games began, now mounted an attack on the Nazi organization and the behaviour of the Germans that was every bit as ferocious as that of Goddet and Perrier. The constant screaming of *Deutschland Über Alles* and hymns to Hitler were bad enough, Bénac complained, but the German crowd, carried away by Germany's victories, trampled underfoot the most elementary of courtesies, and even the press box, which should have been a refuge for neutrality, was invaded and subjected to the "lamentable German delegation" that had no right to be there. He wanted no more of this: "Never again must any nation be allowed to use the Games to fanaticize the public and to attempt to humiliate foreigners." Agreeing with Goddet that the Games had been a "pretext," Bénac predicted that the Japanese in turn would use Tokyo in 1940 for their own non-sporting ends: "This time it will be on an even greater scale, the unfolding of an intensive publicity campaign in favour of . . . nipponese products, sold at such cheap rates that they will be able to compete on all the world's markets for American and European goods. And all this thanks to the Olympic Games." In conclusion he agreed with Goddet that the Berlin Games had been a fraud.¹³

Other newspapers were less forthright in their criticisms. The *Petit Parisien* was no longer the popular success that had made it the best selling paper in Paris in its early days, but it still had a wide readership. There Roger Malher conceded that the Hitler regime had achieved a "spectacular triumph" and given its youth the taste for open air and corporal effort that had won it first place in the sporting world. But he also showed that the money and effort the Nazis had put into the Games had been well spent. Thousands of people from all over the world would now take back to their own countries the message that the Reich under Hitler was "a great country of order and prosperity, where welfare (*bien-être*) and culture were blossoming." Young sports people, being of an impressionable age, were the most easily seduced, and so offered the Nazis a wonderful means of spreading the gospel according to Hitler throughout the world.¹⁴

Right-wing nationalist papers had the particular problem that while they might approve of the methods of the Nazis, they were, unfortunately, Germans. Their patriotism and germanophobia came into conflict in their attitude to the ruling left-wing government that had come into office in France in May 1936: the coalition of Radicals, Socialists and Communists known as the Popular

Front, and whose leader, the Socialist Léon Blum, happened to be Jewish. In the *Echo de Paris*, hatred of Germany was matched only by hatred of the Popular Front, and this was expressed in its political as much as in its sports sections. The sports editor, Jean Routhier, had to admit that Hitler's games had been an unprecedented success, bringing as they did universal admiration from foreigners who would return to their own countries with the good news of their unforgettable fortnight. Hitler showed not only how he was loved and respected by his people, but how he had brought about the triumphal recovery of a regime which had given back to Germany its power and confidence in the future. To this moral profit could be added the material profit of the stadiums and other sporting facilities that had been installed for the joy and health of young Germans, "fit and fanaticised, ready even for the most bloody of sacrifices . . . a stream ready to burst its banks and sweep away all in its path." Nevertheless Routhier had not lost his faith in the youth that had won the battle of the Marne: ¹⁵ their only problem was that they had been let down by their leaders. Unlike Hitler, Blum and his government were held in contempt by their people, and were incapable of bringing about the regeneration of French youth. In France a succession of ministers and under-secretaries had promised a great deal but had achieved nothing. The Popular Front, with all its divisions, would not be able to do any better; M. Léon Blum in France was incapable of doing what Hitler had done in Germany or Mussolini in Italy.¹⁶

Other commentators, from the fulsome hosannahs of *Le Matin* which claimed that Germany had rediscovered Olympia,¹⁷ and Robert Marchand in *Excelsior* among other papers,¹⁸ to specialist journals like *L'Echo des sports* that supported anything *L'Auto* opposed,¹⁹ offered praise that was less tinged with asides. The one area on which all newspapers were agreed was that the Games had shown how urgent it was for France to inaugurate a full scale programme of reform in health and physical education that would offer a new deal to French youth. This included those newspapers that had been consistent in their opposition to any government expenditure other than on the military and whose main concern seemed to be protecting the wealthy from paying any tax. From its critics on the Right the Popular Front government received little praise for its large scale plans for reform, and even the young and enthusiastic Minister for Sport and Leisure, Léo Lagrange, could find himself ridiculed in the political sections of newspapers whose sports reporters were calling for the very reforms he was trying to introduce.²⁰

COUBERTIN'S RESPONSE

The International Olympic Committee, whose paltry attempts to prevent the Nazi takeover of the Games masked their pusillanimity as much as their hypocrisy in regard to what the Nazis were doing and what the Games were supposed to be about,²¹ were silently seething at the Nazi triumph. Its president, Baillet-Latour, criticized the "excessive decorum" at a press conference and claimed that the Olympic Games were the property of everyone – he was referring to small nations and not Jews – and that now that the orgy of festivals and displays were over it was time to get back to the Olympic spirit.²² The president of the French National Olympic Committee, Armand Massard, told another press conference that a new formula would have to be found for the Tokyo Olympics to prevent the Games being once more exploited in favour of a political regime.²³

The debate brought many newspapers to discuss the original purpose of the Games and this inevitably included the opinion of de Coubertin. On the closure of the Games, Paul Rousseau of *Le Temps* claimed that the Olympic spirit had been sacrificed to the need to win, as if the honour of a nation depended on a goal in hockey or a centimetre in a high jump. As soon as the athletes entered the competition, fired by the need to win instilled in them by their coaches, the friendly spirit of the Olympic village disappeared and friends became enemies. The fine words of Coubertin were preserved in bronze in the stadium and were on everyone's lips, but they were forgotten in the "Modern – alas, too modern! – Games of 1936."²⁴ Malher, in the *Petit Parisien*, also commented on the unhealthy "winner" mentality, declaring that despite the ideals of Coubertin and the romance of the opening ceremony, the Games had become a battle among races and nations trying to crush one another. Above all the host nation had tried to prove that the race of blonde aryan was the most vigorous and fecund in champions, and while he saw much of this as natural, still asked: 'What has become, alas! of the beautiful spring festival of humanity that Pierre de Coubertin dreamed of?'²⁵

Malher was posing a rhetorical question. More enterprising was *Le Journal*, which sent its reporter Andre Lang to put the question directly to the Baron. He was rewarded with an interview that was published on 27 August. Lang confronted Coubertin with Goddet's "J'accuse!," suggested that the Tokyo Games of 1940 might go the same way, and asked the Baron what he thought of the way his creation had developed. He was answered with a forthrightness that

is the stuff of controversy and next day *L'Auto* reprinted his interview in full.²⁶ On the following day it published a letter from Lang in which he added further information that he had had to leave out of the original article.²⁷ As Lang reported it, Coubertin declared that the Berlin Games had lived up to his highest ideals. He had feared that in the hands of the Germans the Games might have become an instrument of propaganda, but his fears had been misplaced. Coubertin warmly congratulated Hitler as one of the great constructive spirits of the time, who had “magnificently served, and by no means disfigured, the Olympic ideal.” In response to other questions Coubertin claimed, rather cryptically, that he had never been a proponent of amateurism, but rather of the “Olympic spirit,” and on the consequences of giving the 1940 Games to Japan, said that the Games could only benefit from being held in Tokyo because of the international competition to which this would give rise.

Coubertin's elastic definition of amateurism could only have pleased *L'Auto*, and even if he had contradicted Goddet's analysis of the Games, what he had to say was news. As a result, Desgrange sent one of *L'Auto*'s own reporters to interview the Baron. Fernand Lornazzi reported his findings over two issues²⁸ and confirmed that Coubertin would not go back on a word of what he had said: the Berlin Games had conformed perfectly to his personal conception of Olympism, and in words that read suspiciously like *an Auto* editorial, denounced the Olympic 'oath, claiming that he had never believed in a stupid English conception of amateurism that was applicable only to a few millionaires. All he was concerned about was the “sporting spirit.”²⁹ For him the Games were more than just athletics; the French had to work harder and include royalists and workers in their plans. Coubertin reserved his final shot for the Vatican which had condemned the Games for their paganism: he declared his delight in this.

The Nazis had reaped some benefit from their courting of Coubertin. They failed to get him the Nobel Peace prize they had promised him, that prize going instead, and rather pointedly, to the imprisoned anti-Nazi journalist Ossietzki. Terminally ill, Ossietzki was left little time to enjoy me freedom that public pressure following his Nobel Prize won for him. Coubertin himself was to die just a year after the Berlin Olympics, but he was not forgotten by the Nazis: the French-German Committee brought its congress at Baden-Baden to a close in July 1938 by inaugurating a monument to him; the *Revue olympique*, based in Berlin between 1938 and 1944, devoted articles to him; and he was virtually beatified by Carl Diem, before the War as an admirer of peace and international understanding, during the War as an enemy of pacifism and apostle of the “warrior spirit.”³⁰

We can only guess what Coubertin might have thought about this adulation from a nation that he had at one time distrusted,³¹ but we can be sure that his attitude was in part based on the treatment that he had received at the hands of his fellow countrymen.

The French were to be Coubertin's despair to the end. It was they who had failed to recognize him in the early days and who continued to act the Cassandras thereafter. From the Congress of Paris at the Sorbonne on 25 November 1892, he complained to Andre Lang that the French had never understood what he had been trying to accomplish, and whether deliberately or otherwise had constantly worked against the success of the Games. After every Olympiad the French had declared that the Games were finished, these were the last, and now that the Olympic idea had reached into Asia, these same French people were the only ones to see in this victory a defeat.³² Coubertin had good reason to feel resentful towards his fellow countrymen. Many French newspapers reminded their readers that it was a Frenchman who was responsible for the great athletic festival that was being organized in Europe that year, and offered a few words of praise, a short article and perhaps a small photograph of the Baron. This could easily be lost, however, in the torrent of words and photojournalism that filled the void of what would have been the otherwise dead period of that wet summer month of August 1936. Coubertin's rebuttal of the principles of "false amateurism" were seized on with delight by the critics of the "hypocritical oath," and the followers of Jules Ladoumègue, the athletic star of the period before 1932 who had been disqualified by the International Olympic Committee for accepting money, and was thus deprived of gold in Los Angeles, added their own gibes. "Julot" was the most popular French athlete of all time and his removal from official competition resulted in the loss of interest in athletics by the French public – like all publics, then and now, prepared to follow almost any sport where it can provide world champions.

On Coubertin's death the workers' sports journal *Sport* paid him a warm tribute.³⁴ It dismissed most of what he had said to Lang as the result of his voluntary isolation and the ingratitude to which this "illustrious old man" had been subjected. His support for the Nazi Games had been an aberration. *Sport* was no doubt also pleased that he had spoken favourably of the workers' sports movement, and although at opposite ends of the political pole, they shared similar ideals. *Sport* also had reason to feel magnanimous, for the response in much of the French press to what happened in Berlin had borne out its constantly repeated criticisms and warnings. It had opposed holding the Games under a regime that might hi-jack them, and was a critic of false amateurism as much as

of commercialism. *Sport* was happy to quote selectively from *L'Auto* and *Paris soir*, newspapers it was more generally given to attacking, but was nonetheless correct in claiming that its critiques before the Games had been justified.

NATIONALISM AND RACISM

Much of the criticism in the French press could be attributed to old fashioned French chauvinism and the not unreasonable suspicions of a neighbour whose unwelcome intrusions onto French territory were within the living memory of most French people. There was also a sense of cultural superiority on the part of the French, a belief that while the Germans might know a thing or two about organization, they knew little about some of the finer aspects of life. Before the Goddet broadside, there had been a few criticisms, more or less carping, concerning the breaches of protocol between the Reich and the Olympic Committee. There had been complaints about the use of German without a French translation, despite French being the language of the Games; of the speeches, such as that of von Tschammer und Osten, that had distracted Cornelius Johnson while he was going for his high jump record; of the uniforms, the flag waving and the perpetual playing of national anthems. Other criticisms of the German organization included the poor press services and the crowding of events. Also criticized was the awarding of equal value to events as far apart in effort or interest as winning a canoe race and the 1500 metres: in this way the Germans had ensured their massive medal tally.

Armand Massard, a right-wing activist and one time fencer of distinction, but best known in 1936 as president of the French Olympic Committee, enlarged on the criticisms he had made shortly after the Games in an open letter to a "francophile German doctor" which appeared in *Le Figaro*, a newspaper that had shown a remarkable mixture of insight and nonsense in its coverage of the Olympic Games. In this letter it was the Frenchman rather than the Olympic official who was speaking:

The Olympic flame is extinguished, then. May its flame be relit – at lesser cost – in an atmosphere of warm enthusiasm in which sporting amateurism might once more find its place. Others have drawn up the balance sheet of this gigantic operation, whose enormous success was due to the application of the German method, and whose aim was carried out in the interest of national glorification, with such a display of pomp that the essential goal of healthy sporting competition

inevitably found itself – volens nolens – drowned in the commercialization of the spectacle.

From this acid start, and speaking under the guise of a warm and open friendship begun in Berlin, Massard proceeded to pick out a few faults in the Nazi organization and protocol. These included obvious points like the distance from the Olympic village to the stadiums, sarcastic comments on the wonderful tourist advantages where the tourist mark could buy laundry worth 1 mark 50 for 9 marks, to points closer to Massard's heart in what he saw as the debasement of French culture through disdainful dismissal of the French language. The Germans' failure to use French in official communiqués provoked an official protest from the IOC, but even in the stadiums and at the banquets English was spoken before French. Then, Massard went on, and surely this was not a mistake in view of the otherwise meticulous German preparation, Hitler failed to appear at any of the occasions when the Marseillaise was being played to celebrate a French victory, except when it was finishing. On one occasion when the Führer was not there, the Reichsportführer made sure he disappeared when it was played, leaving the tribunal empty of officials, diminishing in some way the other attempts to achieve a desirable entente.

Once he ensured that his German friend was now a former friend, Massard pointed out that the characters of the French and the Germans were different, the French being too quick while the Germans were slowed down by their “retarded verb,” and continued with his openness to point to the poor dress of the women replacing the divots at the equestrian events. Finally, he admitted that the Germans had much to teach the French so far as their ability to galvanize their youth was concerned, but the German public still had a lot to learn in regard to the way they celebrated their victories.³⁶

Other French reporters had expressed their anger at the way the French language was ignored, and all were equally anguished at the poor restaurant facilities and the Germans' love of sausages, but the main fault of the Germans in the eyes of the French was their patience, which they called subordination. Whether it was in the interminable restaurant queues or disorganization in the stadium, the Germans, unlike the French, were prepared to suffer hours of boredom without as much as a whistle, jeer or resort to throwing something.

Lucien Dubech was a noted literary critic and contributor of articles to various sports journals, most notably to the racist and right-wing *Action française* and *Gringoire* where he gave full vent to his anti-semitism, and *L'Auto*, where his weekly contributions were distinguished by their more respectable elitism and anglophilia. As a nationalist³⁸ he was particularly proud

of the French as a race, and admired their individualism and unwillingness to put up with inconveniences. He believed that the Germans needed order, and that in any case their organization had not always been as wonderful as it was said to be. The closing ceremony he cited as a case in point: thanks to bad organization and the eternal delays, it went more than two hours overtime – and yet 60,000 Germans put up with it without saying a word.³⁹

Nationalism can come in various forms, from a natural love of one's homeland to its most extreme forms in fascism and racism. In France it could be the radicalism of the revolutionary tradition, the Bonapartism of Desgrange, the right-wing authoritarianism of Massard or the anti-Semitism of Dubech. The noted French critic of competitive sport, Jean-Marie Brohm, accuses Dubech of racism in his *Jeux olympiques à Berlin*, but Brohm's definition of racism is so broad that anyone who dared make the slightest comparison between one race and another is branded as a racist: even *Sport*, devoted to internationalism and the elimination of all racial and gender discrimination, comes under his censure for praising the blacks for making Hitler's racist ideas look stupid.⁴⁰

The race issue revealed itself more subtly in France than in most countries. The land of Dreyfus, it hardly needs stressing, had a long and virulent tradition of anti-semitism. But this is a more complicated cultural phenomenon than straight racism in regard to skin colour. As in Germany the absence of a significant number of blacks meant that this form of racism was not a daily issue. Indeed it was the Americans, relying on black heroes to win medals for them in sport while in every day life they treated them like second-class citizens, who drew the sarcasm of the French press where race was concerned. This and the shamateurism of the American college athletes were more frequently aired abuses than the Nazis' treatment of Jews.

The radical daily *L'Oeuvre*, which true to its anti-Nazism gave very little coverage of the Games, had one of its satirical columnists write an 'Epilogue to the Olympic Games' in which he sarcastically expatiated on the "prodigious moral generosity" of the negroes, who, beaten and oppressed for centuries, and even "today bullied, humiliated and lynched under the slightest pretext," revenged themselves by offering to their step-mother Olympic glory at the expense of old Europe.⁴¹ Dubech, as anti-American as he was pro-British, loved to tell the story from the 1912 Stockholm Games of how the negro sprinter Drew was locked in his cabin by the white American sprinters when they realized that they could win gold, silver and bronze without him.⁴² *L'Auto* was more representative of racist attitudes in France, catering as it did to a widespread readership, many of whom were workers, and sports lovers of all

classes. It was bourgeois in outlook, but was not committed to any particular faction: it loved sport and money-making and found this a convenient marriage. Its owner, Desgrange, was a nationalist in the Bonapartist tradition and his love of France was reinforced by his knowledge that French victories in sport, whether it was French riders in his Tour de France or French athletes in the Olympic Games, sold his newspaper.

In the controversy provoked by the Goddet article, Desgrange openly admitted that he was little troubled by the political propaganda⁴³ or the fact that the Germans and the Americans had been preparing their athletes over the previous four years: what he did refuse to accept was the sham of the Olympic oath. He was untroubled by blacks winning medals for the United States; indeed he was prepared to take a leaf out of their book. Just as he looked for changes and improvements each year in the Tour de France, now he sought to do something practical about France's poor medal tally in 1936. And so it was that under the banner of national pride he established a project, in conjunction with the French Amateur Athletic Association, to scour the French colonies for indigenous athletic talent: the matching of the natural skills of the Senegalese and the Madagascans with French trainers would help make up for the medal deficit at the next Games.⁴⁴ Dubech found the whole thing rather distasteful. He claimed that he would willingly travel many miles to see black athletes perform, but saw nothing to be proud of in having other races win medals for France.⁴⁵

The fine line that distinguishes sympathy and respect from racism was one that was shared by most professional journalists in the 1930s.⁴⁶ In this regard *L'Auto's* Robert Perrier, the paper's most travelled journalist, often charged with missions abroad, is a classic example. Shortly after the opening of the Games he wrote a special article describing a visit he made to the Olympic village to meet the athletes representing the United States. Alex Thompson, the hockey player who took Perrier on his guided tour, did little to hide his racism, but Perrier saw nothing to criticize in Thompson's comments. Certainly Perrier's main point was to show up the hypocrisy as he saw it of the American college athletes, where the holders of primary school certificates were given a university education and illiterates could go through university to become athletic coaches, but he was obviously amused by his friend's depiction of the blacks as barely civilized: at the table they helped themselves from other people's plates as soon as they had finished their own; as well as being savages they were thieves, although Thompson sportingly refused to reveal the names of the two blacks who had been sent home for stealing. It was easy to see, then, why segregation was

necessary, Thompson pointed out, whether it was at the Olympic village or back home in America. Perrier did not disagree.

The tour seems to have been conducted like a visit to the zoo: “Tarzan” Brown, found trying to read a comic upside down, was depicted as a moron, and Woodruff, in reply to the question whether he spoke German, replied: “Boss! I don’t even talk a very good English yet.” Only LuValle, and to a lesser degree Jesse Owens, were said to have some capacity to be educated, but it was admitted that Cornelius Johnson had some social graces. To conclude, Perrier gave his account of the Stoller/Glickman controversy, which he saw entirely as a race issue. Anti-Semitism was not even mentioned. Perrier claimed that in order to calm the anger of the whites at Owens and Metcalfe being included in the 4 x 100 relay, Archie Williams and LuValle were dropped from the 4 x 400 relay. The result was a triumph for the blacks, the United States winning where blacks were included and losing where they were left out. The protests on the one side and the other were so violent that it was a miracle they did not degenerate into a riot.⁴⁷

Much has been made of the race issue at the Berlin Olympics, particularly in the legends that came to surround the supposed refusal of Hitler to shake Jesse Owens’ hand.⁴⁸ There can be no doubt that Owens was the star of press and public at the Games, and commentators were right to point to the embarrassment of black victories and Nazi racial theories, even if these could easily be dismissed by relating athletic success to pure animal values. What was almost entirely overlooked was the Jewish issue. It was they who were the most obvious victims of Nazi racial theory, and it was Jews, not blacks, who had either been banned from the Games (such as Gretel Bergmann) or refused to come (such as the Austrian swimmer, Judith Deutsch). Jewish performances in the Games, as in fencing, were not highlighted, any more than the participation, however unsuccessful, of Jewish athletes like the French swimmer, Nakache.⁴⁹ It could be said that these few Jews performing at the Games helped the IOC’s claim that the Nazis did not discriminate, and so justified allowing the Games to go ahead in Germany. Such, of course, is to gloss over the more obvious examples of Nazi discrimination, which the press was in a position to highlight in the course of the Games. The French press, more critical than any other national press, failed, except in its left-wing publications, to raise this issue, an accomplice with the rest of the world in the great circle of silence that could have been broken in the coverage of the Nazi Olympics.⁵⁰

France only entered the world of mass spectator sports in the 1930s, and the 1936 Olympic Games were the first time that the press gave saturation coverage

to an event other than the Tour de France. Just 10 years previously sport had not been taken seriously, now the totalitarian powers, especially Italy, Germany and Japan (the Soviet Union was still an unknown quantity) had shown a new pride in nation through their sporting prowess. The Right in France constantly drew attention to the need for more authoritarian government, but a suspicion, even hatred, of the neighbour that had twice invaded and devastated French territory in the previous six decades, cooled enthusiasm for holding them up as an example. Unfortunately that same Right had an even greater hatred and suspicion of the Left in France, so that even where sports writers were united in the need for a radical reorganization of sport and physical education in the French education system, they were bitterly divided on how to achieve this.

In a nation confronted by the strikes of May and June of 1936, and the crisis of how to act in regard to the Spanish Civil War that broke out the following month, the matter of a sporting competition in Germany was hardly of great significance. But the very triviality of sport could have allowed it to make a statement of some significance. At no time was this more obvious than when the Germans invaded the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland in March 1936, and a fiery article by Claude Farrère urging a boycott of the Berlin Games raised great interest. Retaliation through sport was quickly ruled out.⁵¹ Sport was part of the political agenda in the 1930s, but only in the totalitarian countries was it used openly as an arm of foreign policy.⁵² The French might well have criticized the Germans' love (or need) of order, but they could have benefited from a better notion of the common good: divided on the nature of potential friends and enemies abroad, they were even more divided by the enemy within. The Popular Front government had a carefully worked out programme to give the youth of France a New Deal within French traditions of freedom and democracy. But on an issue on which all sports writers were in agreement, political wrangling killed it before it got off the ground.

The disarray in French sport was a reflection of French society, exposed in full view when the Paris international Exhibition opened, late, in 1937. The only completed pavilions were those of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, towering above the chaos all around them. A year before this Lucien Dubech had compared the Olympic Games to show piece events like international exhibitions. Writing at the end of the first week of the Berlin Games, he claimed:

The vast festival to which Germany has invited us reminds us more of an international exhibition than of the early days of the Olympics and their chimerical purity. So be it. But it has to be

said that sport and the outside world are there, the one acting on the other. Sport, seen as the touchstone of a race's educational level, has become one of the first necessities of people everywhere, one of the prime instruments of the State. Those who do not understand the time in which they live are marked for death.³³

The French government and its most vocal opponents had already shown, in their attitude to the Spanish Civil War and as they would in regard to the expansionist ambitions of Germany, that they had no understanding of their time.

The French were given their opportunity to show how they could stage a major international sporting event when the 1938 World Cup in football was held in France. The four British associations still held aloof from the world body then, and France itself was a long way behind Austria, Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the best of the South American countries in football, but already the World Cup had some of the prestige that would later see it surpass the Olympic Games. When it was held in June, it was fast becoming an irrelevance. The German team that came to Paris in 1938 was strengthened by the Austrian stars as a result of the recent *anschluss*. The Spanish team was absent because of the Civil War. Shortly before the World Cup opened England played Germany in Berlin and gave a dazzling exhibition in a 6-3 victory. It was a victory that was tarnished, however, by the Nazi salute that the players had been instructed to give before the start of the game. The appeasement so obvious at Berlin in August 1936 was no less in evidence two years later when none but the wilfully blind could fail to see the nature of the future so soon to descend on the world.

Notes

1. For recent works on the 1936 Olympics, see the footnotes in my forthcoming article in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, "1936 And All That: Some Reflections on Recent Works on the Berlin Olympics." For a comprehensive discussion of work on recent German history, see Arnd Krüger, 'Puzzle Solving: German Sport Historiography Of The Eighties,' *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1990, pp. 261-77. This was a special issue on "German sport history."

2. The ferociously fought boycott campaign in the USA has been covered in several works. There were boycott movements in most democratic countries, particularly in France, the only country other than the USA that might have upset the Nazis' plans—there being no serious boycott movement in Great Britain. For a survey of these works, see my article referred to above. See in addition the

discussion of the problem of German-Americans in regard to the Berlin Olympics: Wendy Gray and Robert Knight Barney, "Devotion to Whom?: German-American Loyalty on the Issue Of Participation in the 1936 Olympic Games," *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1990, pp. 214-31. Although the 1936 Games, like all Olympics, were supposed to be under the control of the International Olympic Committee, this body, willingly or otherwise, was virtually powerless against the Nazi organization of the Games: my references throughout to "Nazis," therefore, is quite deliberate.

3. France has an unjustified reputation for not taking sport as seriously as many other countries: W.J. Murray, "Sport and politics in France in the 1930s: the Workers' Sports Federation on the eve of the Popular Front," in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Sport, Nationalism and Internationalism*, ASSH Studies in Sports History: No. 2, Adelaide, September 1987, pp.32-34. French academics have finally caught up with sports history, founding the journal *Sport histoire: revue internationale des sports et des jeux* in 1988. For an analysis of recent work in French history see: Richard Holt, "Ideology and Sociability, A review of new French research into the history of sport under the early Third Republic, 1870-1914," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 1989, vol. 6, no.3, pp. 368-77. Since then, unfortunately, *Sport histoire* has folded.

4. *L'Auto*, 17 August 1936. All translations in this article are my own.

5. The sports press in France has still to find its historian. In the meantime the only general history, written by a working sports journalist, is E. Seidler, *Le sport et la presse*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1964. Bénac was notorious for inventing stories, a denial of basic professional ethics that does not seem to have troubled his journalistic career in any way. For information on the French sports press of the 1930s the best book I have read is that written by Gaston Meyer, then a contributor to various newspapers, later editor of *L'Equipe*, and a highly esteemed writer on athletics: G. Meyer, *Les tribulations d'un journaliste sportif*, Jean-Claude Simoen, Paris, 1978.

6. W.J. Murray, "The French Workers' Sports Federation and the Victory of the Popular Front in France," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, No.2, September 1987, pp. 203-30.

7. German dignitaries went out of their way to greet the French athletes and officials when they arrived early in the morning of 30 July on the train from Paris, and the rapturous reception given by the German spectators to the French contingent in the opening ceremony was surpassed only by that given the Austrians and the home nation. For the Nazi reaction to Goddet's and Bénac's criticisms, see *Die Olympiade Berlin, 1936, im Spiegel der ausländischen Presse*, section "Gesamt-Stimmungsbild der französischen Presse über die Olympiade 1936 in Berlin," where Perrier (*L'Auto*) and Bénac, along with Georg Bernhard of the *Pariser Tageszeitung*, a German emigre paper coming out in Paris, are dismissed for their meanness (*Gemeinheiten*) and misrepresentation

(*Entstellungen*) (p.1). I would like to thank Walter Borgers of the Carl–Diem–Institut, Köln, Joachim K. Rühl of the Institute for European Sports Studies of the Deutsche Sporthochschule, Köln, and Renate Breitenstein–Röder of the Zentralbibliothek für Sportwissenschaften, for access to and help with, their superb Olympic records. Arn Krüger was of immense help to me, particularly with German coverage of the foreign press. The Nazis studied this press with intense interest: part of this is reproduced in Jürgen Bellers (ed.), *Die Olympiade 1936 im Spiegel der ausländischen Presse*, LIT, Münster, 1986.

8. The two major biographers of Coubertin, Marie–Thérèse Eyquem (*Pierre de Coubertin: l'épopée olympique*, Calmann–Lévy, Paris, 1966), and Y. P. Boulongne (*La vie et l'oeuvre pédagogique de Pierre de Coubertin*, Lémeac, Ottawa, 1979), try to pass over this embarrassing episode in the life of their hero: Eyquem must have had availability to sources deprived mere mortals, as she has Coubertin passing comments on Riefenstahl's *Olympia* which came out well after he had died (p. 280); she refers somewhat coyly to the “false notes” of Berlin in the “Olympic harmony,” noting that nothing is perfect (pp. 281–2). Boulongne is less willing to ignore the overwhelming evidence against Coubertin and his respect for the Nazis, but dismisses this as the influence of Diem, as well as the Nazis' support for the digs at Olympia, their encouragement of fitness in their youth, and because it was in Berlin and not France that the *Revue olympique* appeared (pp. 29, 192). Coubertin has come under repeated attack by Jean-Marie Brohm as a proto-fascist, but then he believes the Games themselves are a fascist festival: see in particular *Le mythe olympique*, Christian Bourgois, Paris, 1981; (with Michel Caillat) *Les dessous de l'olympisme*, La Découverte, Paris, 1984; and for his criticisms of Eyquem and Boulongne, *Jeux olympiques à Berlin*, Complexe, Bruxelles, 1983, pp.13–14. Brohm quotes extensively from the Goddet/Coubertin controversy in *ibid.*, pp. 160–165. A recent biography of Coubertin, Louis Callebat, *Pierre de Coubertin*, Fayard, Paris, 1988, pp. 213–214, explains Coubertin's succumbing to the Nazis by his ill health, his financial and domestic problems, and being “forgotten” by France while the Nazis promised and carried out some of his dearest wishes, such as playing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as part of the Games ceremony. Most biographies or works on Coubertin dwell more on the early days; the best of these, the multi-disciplined biography by John MacAloon, being concerned with the origins of the modern Olympics, barely gets out of the nineteenth century: *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981.

9. See, in particular, the Lewald to Coubertin correspondence in the collection held at the Carl–Diem–Institut: in this time Lewald, despite his Jewish ancestry, sounds at times like a German Avery Brundage in his attempts to enlist Coubertin in the fight against the American boycott movement (see, for example, the letter dated 22 October 1935); he also asked him to speak out against the Claude Farrèr article that raised so much controversy in France (letter of 31 March 1936); and was disappointed at Coubertin failing to point out in his address on the torch relay that this was a German innovation (30 June

1936). The most detailed account of Coubertin's dealings with the Nazis is Hans Joachim Teichler's article giving the background to a previously unpublished letter from Coubertin to Hitler, 17 March 1937 in which he expresses his deep personal thanks to Hitler and Germany for the way they had associated themselves with his jubilee year at Lausanne the previous January: "Coubertin und das Dritte Reich," *Sportwissenschaft*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1982, pp. 18-55.

10. That is to say, so long as sexism and elitism, both denounced by the extreme Left, are not part of the Olympic ideals. For a critic like Brohm, of course, they are, along with imperialism, and it has to be said that so far as the carriers of the Olympic ideal in the IOC were concerned, Brohm was correct. As we will see below, however, if the IOC were Coubertin's true disciple, it could be disowned by the Creator.

11. During the German occupation of France, having failed to take over *L'Auto*, he became editor with Georges Suarez of the deeply Collaborationist newspaper, *Aujourd'hui*.

12. *L'Auto*, 18 August 1936.

13. *Paris soir*, 20 August 1936. The information press usually had a special page for sport. Unless otherwise indicated, material referred to is on the front page or the sports page. For the sports press, reference is to the rubric 'athletics' or 'Olympic Games', unless otherwise indicated.

14. *Le Petit Parisien*, 17 August 1936.

15. *L'Echo de Paris*, 18 August 1936.

16. *L'Echo de Paris*, 25 August 1936.

17. *Le Matin*, 18 August 1936.

18. Marchand also contributed to *Paris soir*, where his praise was more muted, but for praise as fulsome as that which he gave in *Excelsior*, see *Le Miroir du monde*, 8 August 1936. It was a common practice for journalists to write for more than one paper at this time: Henri Desgrange, for instance, a notably tight-fisted editor, excused his poor payment to his writers by telling them that they could make up their income by writing elsewhere (Mayer, p. 80). Desgrange even followed his own advice and contributed articles to *Miroir des sports* (Seidler, p. 65).

19. The "rose" (*L'Echo des sports* came out in pink pages) was a constant enemy of its rival on the other side of the street, the "jaune" (*L'Auto* came out in yellow pages), which steadfastly refused to recognize its existence. This continued even during the humiliation of the Occupation, when *L'Echo des sports* finally provoked its much better selling rival to reply with a libel action following particularly rancorous attacks in the early months of 1941.

20. On Léo Lagrange, see Jean-Louis Chappat, *Les chemins de l'espoir, ou Combats de Léo Lagrange*, Fédération Léo Lagrange, Lieven, 1983. On the plans for reform of the Workers' Sports Federation, which were those of the Popular Front, see my two articles listed above. For the politics of the Popular Front in their cultural context, see Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934–38*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

21. Baillet-Latour's success in forcing the Nazis to remove the insulting anti-Semitic signs at the site of the Garmisch-Partenkirchen Winter Games, and telling Hitler to shake hands with all winners or none at all in Berlin, are usually trumpeted as indications of the strength of the IOC. These gestures cost Hitler nothing, and the signs around Garmisch-Partenkirchen should have met with sterner rebuke than an order to conceal them. The IOC did force the Nazis, against their will, to reinstate Lewald when he was dismissed because of his Jewish ancestry, thus creating one more alibi Jew to ensure that the Games went ahead. Once Hitler had decided that Germany was going to host the 1936 Olympics it was essential for his plans that the world turned up to see them.

22. *L'Auto*, 19 August 1936.

23. *L'Auto*, 22 August 1936.

24. *Le Temps*, 18 August 1936.

25. *Le Petit parisien*, 6 August 1936.

26. *L'Auto*, 28 August 1936.

27. *L'Auto*, 29 August 1936.

28. *L'Auto*, 4 and 5 September 1936.

29. Eyquem, p.273 fn, reproduces the oath which Coubertin was "pleased and proud" to call his own: "We swear that we come to the Olympic Games as loyal rivals, respecting the rules that bind them, and wishing to participate in them in a noble spirit, for the honour of our country and the glory of sport." Coubertin was right to say there was no mention of amateurism.

30. The extent to which Diem courted Coubertin out of belief or Nazi pressure is difficult to determine. Both shared a fanatic commitment to athletics and Olympism. In a speech which was presented with variations in different countries before the 1936 Games, the Paris version praised Coubertin and Hitler in equally fulsome terms (This speech is in box D/MS 7.11.35/Be 22.11.35 at the Carl-Dien-Institut). Diem's *L'Idée Olympique dans la nouvelle Europe*, Institut Terreman, Berlin, 1943, has a front-piece photograph of the bust of Coubertin "erected in 1938 in the park of Baden-Baden, on the occasion of the

meeting of the France–German Committee, inaugurated by speeches from the Marquis de Polignac and Herr Dr C. Diem.” Part of this brochure tells how Coubertin “abhorred pacifism and all nebulous peace utopias” (p. 13) and praised the Olympics as much for creating a virile youth with “un esprit guerrier” as for keeping at bay the contamination of professionalism. It is a pity Coubertin was not around to give his own views, or a journalist like Andre Lang with the freedom to go and ask him. See also Jean–Toussaint Fieschi, *Histoire du sport français de 1870 à nos jours*, PAC, Paris, 1983, p. 90.

31. The defeat of France by Prussia in the war of 1870-71 was one of the prime factors in turning Coubertin to ways of invigorating French youth to avoid a similar catastrophe in the future. Although he was not a *revanchard*, seeking revenge for the defeat and humiliation of 1871, he had friends who were. Nevertheless the controversy over German participation in the first modern Olympics was as much because of German parochialism on the part of the *turners* as French unwillingness to compete alongside the hated enemy. MacAloon insists that Coubertin was an anti-*revanchiste*, who made a clear distinction between patriotism, which was love of one’s own country and which he favoured, and nationalism, which was hatred of other countries and which he opposed. A virulent nationalist like Charles Maurras, who liked the Olympic Games because they inspired national hatreds, in contrast to Coubertin who believed they had the opposite effect, saw no difference between nationalism and patriotism: MacAloon, pp.5, 107, 169, 258.

32. *L’Auto*, 29 August 1936.

33. When he died in 1973 a large crowd turned out for his funeral: Gaston Meyer, *Le grand livre de l’athlétisme français*, Calmann–Lévy, Paris, 1975, p. 62. Meyer claims that he was more popular than even Bouin before him or Jazy after him. His disqualification made him a martyr to the sports public, and thereafter a willingness to promote himself in various enterprises vaguely associated with running, and a manner that won him friends from all sides of the political spectrum, kept his name before the public. On news of Coubertin’s comments on amateurism and the Olympics *Match*, the sporting weekly associated with *L’Intransigeant*, welcomed what it thought was the end of the hypocrisy of the Olympic oath. It published a satirical piece by Gautier–Chaumet congratulating the French journalists for eclipsing the athletes they wrote about, and included a poem directed at the International Olympic Committee:

Grace au baron de Coubertin

On nous informe ce matin

Que serment olympique

Peut rimer avec “fric”

Et qu’amateurisme

Thanks to the baron de
Coubertin

We are this morning informed

That the Olympic oath

Can rhyme with “cash”

And that amateurism

N'est qu'un barbarisme

Is only a barbarism

MORALITE

MORAL LESSON

Ladoumègue dès qu'il a su

As soon as Ladoumègue found out

A commence par rigoler

He began by laughing

Puis il s'est écrié d'un

Then he cried out in

accent désolé:

sorrowful tones

"O Pontifes français n'êtes

"Oh French pontiffs are

-vous pas deçus"

you not disappointed'

34. *Sport*, 8 September 1937. In contrast to a typically sour notice from Desgrange (*L'Auto*, 6 September 1937), it praised his contributions to sport and refused, "unlike other papers," to dwell on his praise for the Nazi Olympics. Nevertheless it reproduced a large extract from *Match* in which Andre Lang recalled his great scoop of the previous year.

35. *Sport*, 26 August 1936.

36. *Le Figaro*, 27 August 1936.

37. He always referred to the French Prime Minister as "the Jew Blum" in these publications.

38. That is to say of the Action Française type; among his many publications is one entitled: *Why I am a Royalist*.

39. *L'Auto*, 8 September 1936.

40. Brohm, *Jeux olympiques à Berlin*, p. 169.

41. *L'Oeuvre*, 10 August 1936, p2.

42. This story is formally refuted in Robert Parienté, *La fabuleuse histoire de l'athlétisme*, ODIL, Paris, 1978, pp. 91-2. Noting that the story had achieved some credibility, Parienté points out that Drew actually started in the final but withdrew because of a pulled muscle. Among his variations of this story Dubech claimed that the Americans false started 17 times to upset their opponents. There were in fact several false starts – Parienté says the German runner Rau false started eight times in the qualifying heat won by Craig – run before penalties for such offences were introduced. Dubech first told the story in his lively analysis of sport in the early 1930s: *Où va le sport?*, *La Revue française*, Paris, 1932, p. 61. Dubech saw the disqualification of Owens for not taking part in the "competitions across Europe to fill the coffers [of the American Olympic Committee]" as an update on the Drew case, the Americans needing to keep blacks in their place. (*Action française*, 16 September 1936).

43. Indeed he was soon back on good terms with the Nazis, and his paper of 23 March 1937 proudly announced that the German Sportführer, von Tschammer und Osten, had praised *L'Auto* as speaking with authority: for its part *L'Auto* was proud to 'build bridges between France and Germany.' Desgrange, good Bonapartist that he was, hated the Germans. For his public expression of such feelings, see the editorial he wrote on the outbreak of the first World War, reproduced in Seidler, pp. 58-9. For an English version, see Richard Holt, *Sport and Politics in Modern France*, McMillan, London, 1981, p. 195. Desgrange died in 1940, but not before he saw his paper taken over by the Nazis.

44. The issue was first raised in a Desgrange editorial of 1 September when he suggested that "muscular values" be sought "in our great African empire." Two days later it was again pointed out that in preparation for 1940 "our blacks in Africa must not be overlooked." This was followed through until eventually it was reported in *L'Auto* of 19 November 1937 that the steamer "De Foucauld" would be leaving on 3 December on its "mission FFA/*L'Auto*." The notion had been floated in other papers. *Le Quotidien*, in its issue of 10 August 1936, in an article entitled "Racism," referred to the "piquant victories of the blacks in the country of the pure arians," ridiculed the Americans for the indignity of winning at the cost of their prejudices, and then went on to indulge in a bit of racism of its own, explaining the physical prowess of the blacks as being in some way related to their lack of intelligence. It concluded, however, by raising the question of the "inexhaustible reservoir of future champions" that France held in its colonies, and while admitting that they would be harder to "acclimatize" – some American blacks, it conceded, were actually civilized and lived more or less like other Americans – the prospects for the future were excellent. On that same day, *Le Journal* dismissed the proposition that future Games be restricted to whites as a "practical, but rather simplistic way of eliminating dangerous rivals": apart from anything else it could upset the Japanese, as well as the Americans, who might discard their "coloured man" and "woman" in daily life, but were proud of their coloured champions in Berlin. It then took up the idea of seeking out blacks in Africa who performed athletic miracles in their daily life as a way of taking advantage of "our colonial products," an opportunity denied the Germans, Swedes and Finns. (*Le Journal*, 10 August 1936)

45. *L'Auto*, 8 September 1936.

46. For a revealing article on this sort of racism see Paul Gallico's "Eightball" in *Farewell to Sport*, Holzman Press, Evanston, 1937, pp. 299-309, where Gallico concludes what he no doubt thought was a sympathetic article on black sportsmen in America with an expression of faith, shaken by the black performances in Berlin, in the white man's ability to keep the scales balanced in his own favour, as he always had done in the past. (p. 309)

47. *L'Auto*, 10 August 1936. Gaston Meyer criticizes the "racist strains" of this report which he could still recall forty years later, citing the story of Woodruff

reading a comic upside down only to point out that the illiterate ridiculed went on to become a bomber pilot in the second World War. (*Les Tribulations* . . . p. 95). LuValle, Williams and Pollard all went on to successful professional careers; Metcalfe, Albritton and Woodruff also completed their tertiary studies and went on to successful careers.

48. On the creation of these legends see the splendid biography of Owens by William J. Baker: *Jesse Owens: An American Life*, The Free Press, New York, 1986, pp. 89-108. See also pp. 102-106 for his account of the Glickman/Stoller affair. Many French newspapers were happy enough to highlight the discrepancy between Nazi racial theory and black successes – one newspaper even described Hitler's embarrassment when he shook hands with Owens after a medal win! – but none invented the “snub.” They were also happy enough to point to racism in the Glickman/Stoller affair, but not anti-Semitism.

49. During the occupation, French swimmers refused to take part in an official FFN championship because Nakache was barred as a Jew. (*Sport libre*, September and October 1943: this was an underground publication put out on mimeographed paper). He was later arrested, but survived the War.

50. Even the left-wing press failed to point out that Son was Korean. One of the few references to this is in the right-wing *Matin* where it praised the Nazis for winning track and field events without recourse to coloureds or Koreans (no names mentioned) (*Le Matin*, 18 August 1936).

51. *L'Intransigeant*, 12 March 1936. Farrère's article worried the Germans, and roused great debate in more newspapers than *L'Intransigeant*. The French ambassador later claimed that if France had pulled out of the Olympics then, the Germans would have understood, but to pull out later would have been petty.

52. Mussolini refused to allow Italian riders to compete in the 1936 Tour de France and in April 1937 refused to allow the Italian football team to play against France. Salazar had refused to allow Portugal to play France in November 1936. The French and British governments, of course, had been known to interfere in sporting events involving Communists and insensitive issues of race, but much less frequently and with more discretion.

53. *L'Auto*, 8 August 1936.