

The Olympic Games: From Ceremony to Show¹

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Not much is actually happening: the teams enter, the Games are declared open according to prescribed ceremony. That's about it. And yet it creates a worldwide effect, enthusiasm and emotion. This fascination is hard to explain.

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Support boasts that it can fascinate as can no other cultural spectacle. And, the Olympic Games, considering the fascination of viewers and spectators worldwide, are unmatched among cultural events. The 1988 Seoul Games, for example, were viewed by approximately 800 million people, many of whom had absolutely no developed taste for active sport. It might be conjectured that the reason for this is the superior performances of the competing athletes. But such performances alone cannot be the cause since world championships in various sports reflect similar spectacular results, yet do not approach the level of fascination engendered by the Olympic Games.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, conceiver of the Modern Olympic Games, envisioned them as more than merely an athletic show. Even after the celebration of four Olympiads, the Baron continued to emphasize that carefully chosen ceremonies should distinguish the Olympic Games from so-called world championships. For Coubertin, a proper ceremonial was absolutely necessary in order to create the solemnity he wished for the display of his modern "muscle religion."² The Games of modern times should follow the ritual significance of their ancestors in antiquity.³

When it came to defining the "Olympic idea," Coubertin deliberately formulated general statements which various social groups and systems would be able to identify with and accept.⁴ But, when it came to focussing on the "formal planning" of Olympic Games, Coubertin was more than simply *general* in his pronouncements. In this regard, he was particularly interested in the aesthetic and ritual context of the festival. In deliberate contrast to the intellectualization of words and phrases, he envisioned a complete "work of art." Less important to him was

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the regulation of the actual competitions; he entrusted this responsibility to the various international sports federations. In 1924, when reminiscing on the Antwerp Games of 1920, Coubertin criticized them as merely "sports competitions," because they lacked the splendor of "powerful symbolism."⁵ In the Olympic rules and regulations formulated since, Coubertin's point has been preserved right to the present: opening and closing ceremonies are specified down to the last detail⁶

Public fascination with the Games seems to correlate closely with the ritualism of the festival. In fact, a remarkably high degree of ritualization and myth typify sport spectacles in general, of which the Wimbledon Tennis Tournament is but one example. But, in ritual and mythical context the Olympic Games know no rival.

Since Coubertin's time, sports themselves have changed a great deal, as have the ways in which sporting events are organized. Thus, we pose the question: have mass psychology and the social significance of the Olympic Games changed as well? *Mises en scenes* (the staging of events) can powerfully mould impressions. Indeed, pantomime proves just that. Words are unnecessary. Products of human experience, such as a banquet, a palace, an apartment building, fashion, gesture, or harmony of color and sound, can all convey powerful meaning. However, non-verbal actions function as symbols only in the context of a simultaneous and integral presentation. If sport means more than simply pleasure for the active participant, as the Olympic idea claims that it should, then it is only possible in the context of *mise en scene*. Connecting the motion of the body with aesthetic and mythical patterns can transform a sport spectacle into a meaningful event.

As the psychoanalyst Alfred Lorenzer has clearly demonstrated, presentative symbols never reach the precision and clarity of verbal symbols.⁷ Such presentative symbols do not actually address our verbal consciousness—we assimilate their formation immediately and perceptively in sounds, space perception, or in scenic play. For that reason, elements of our life experience manifest themselves in the form of symbols which remain in the unconscious indefinitely, sometimes forever. The shaping of unconscious aspects of personality in presentative symbols can therefore have a dual effect: on one hand, the utopian articulation of unexpressed needs; on the other hand, gratification of repressed impulses. Often, our dreams, symptoms and symbols are composites of each. Presentative symbols surpass the limits of verbal consciousness, penetrating to the innermost recesses of personality.

The central problem of human life is to come to terms with love, power and death, as *ritual* and *myth* (the central points of presentative symbol organization) demonstrate clearly. *Ritual and myth* offer a denouement of this meeting place of individual identities, while at the same time imposing collectively valid standards—but not in the form of instruction. Whereas *myth* informs by visual narration, *ritual* touches the participant both physically and mentally. Included in its gestures are complex, enduring intrinsic values that illustrate and explain. Participation in ritual means: "the disciplined rehearsal of 'right attitudes'."⁸

Besides routinely executed rites, every society has its standard ceremonies of traditional ritual and sacred meaning in which individuals usually participate but once in a lifetime, such as baptism, a graduation, or marriage. The remaining members of society act as witnesses to such events of social role change and, in this manner, renew the psychological effects within themselves. These transitional rites simultaneously shape and strengthen both personality structure and collective

identity. Therefore, *ritual and myth* act as socialization authorities which embody complex adjustments within the unconscious.

Baron de Coubertin wanted most to use the Olympic Games to educate. Certain that France was sinking into a maelstrom of moral and social crisis, Coubertin promised salvation by virtue of the stimulation of religious feeling. The Olympic ceremonial had to adopt the cultic forms of antiquity. Thus, the Baron replaced the godheads of the ancient Greek Games with modern idols—in modern Olympic competition the athlete would exalt “his race, his banner and his fatherland.” Right from the start, Coubertin’s Olympic Games embodied a social program translated into images and heightened emotions. A question might now be asked: What significance do Olympic theatrics convey? Do the Games fascinate with their utopian vision of a world without war, or do patterns predominate where social repression is superseded by vicarious satisfaction? What attitudes of individual and collective identity are demonstrated and rehearsed?

The Games of the Eleventh Olympiad — Berlin 1936

The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin have been judged as a gross distortion of Olympic ideals, immersed as they were in a shabby world of politics. In reality, however, they were the result of a chain of mutual agreements between the International Olympic Committee (IOC), German sports administrators, and Adolph Hitler’s regime. Impressed by the superb preparation for the games by the Third Reich, the IOC pushed the undertaking forward in spite of an international boycott movement of serious dimension.⁹

Berlin proved to be a milestone in the history of the Modern Olympic Movement. The number of spectators and participants surpassed all previous records. The ceremonial activities included symbolic innovations which, as it turned out, added splendid proportions to the mythical quality of the Games. For example, the suggestion for mounting a *torch relay*, a highlight of the present-day opening ceremonies, originated in Joseph Goebbels’s Reichs-Propaganda Ministry.

The Hero’s Struggle and the Lamentation of the Dead

To symbolize the myth of a newly awakened national power, under the state’s command the “Reichs-Sports-Feld” grounds were built in only two years, a facility which became perhaps the most important of all symbolic entities showcased during the 1936 Games. The construction plan and topography were axial and focussed: the uniformity of flagpole rows outside the Olympic stadium, the symmetrically-arranged monumental figures to the left and right of the huge structure, and the two towers flanking the entrance portal, all magnetized one’s view on approaching the centrally significant “*Führerturn..*” Here, the Olympic bell hung, inscribed with the words: “I summon the youth of the world.” At the base of the tower stood the Langemarck-Hall, a holy place dedicated to the memory of those German youths in World War I “who had marched to certain death, singing Germany’s anthem.”¹⁰ The Langemarck-Hall was meant to give the Olympic grounds a “deep symbolic content,” as its architect claimed—the Olympic grounds as a venue for hero and “Führer” worship. The spacious arrangements transformed the Sportsstadion into a place of purification, a stage to illustrate the “manly-man”

life of fascist ideal. The axis of the grounds reveals the central stadium view—the Marathon Gate with its resemblance to an altar, the massive stone blocks, the gigantic tripod brazier in which the Olympic flame burned (in antiquity the tripod fire connoted sacrifice).

On the eve of the opening of the Games, before this very backdrop, Carl Diem, Secretary-General of the Berlin Games organizing committee, staged a spellbinding choral performance entitled “Olympic Youth.” The performance was a *mises en scene* of the link between the ideas of “youth” and of “dying for the Fatherland,” ideas which at the same time were embodied in the architecture. Whereas the first three acts offered themes featuring the colorful and playful hustle and bustle of children and youths, the fourth and final act revealed “the true meaning” (Carl Diem) of the Games. It showed the “struggle of heroes” and the “lamentation of death.” A solitary speaker dressed in white, rhapsodized:

Allen Spiels.
 heil'ger Sinn:
 Vaterlandes
 Hochgewinn
 Vaterlandes hochst Gebot
 in der Not:
 Opfertod!

The holy meaning of all play: triumph of the Fatherland! The Fatherland's highest commandment: self sacrifice and death in times of crisis.

Immediately following this poem, a struggle between two protagonists was acted out. Neither emerged the winner; only death triumphed. The final scene, a mass choral rendition of “Olympic Hymnal,” underlined the dramatic significance of the sacrificial connotation. Bathed in a ring of torchlight and fire around its top, the stadium itself was entirely transformed into a mystical glowing sphere, a dome of light.” Schiller's “Ode to Joy,” set to the music of the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, concluded the proceedings. These scenes praised the willpower to serve the fatherland and to sacrifice one's life to renew the national community as the most exalted fulfillment of human existence.

Added to this complexity of design, ceremonial, festival and media idealization were the sports competitions, themselves developed into “sacrifices of holy youth.” The competitions for the youth of the world turned into an initiation ritual en route to heroic death. Of all athletes, those promoted as heroes already bore harbingers of that condition. For example, Son, the Korean marathoner who represented Japan: “shortly after finishing he lies exhausted, like the dead, among his impenetrably silent teammates. He has won the victor's wreath!”

National Rebirth

In the opening ceremonies, the national and representative function of the athletes is apparent. Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda-film about the Berlin Games, shows this plainly. The entry of nations becomes an “army show”: solid formations of

national units clad in uniforms filed past the reviewing stand of the stadium, where members of the IOC, the German army, and Adolf Hitler were seated, the entire affair accompanied throughout by the forceful rhythms of Prussian march music.

The crowning finale of the entrance proceedings was the appearance of the German team dressed in “sparkling white,” the color of purity. This scene, of course, linked the ritual theme of initiation, the symbolism of death and rebirth, to the actual events. We recall, that in Christian rites the color white symbolizes the birth of a new being, after the old being is metaphorically submerged in the baptismal font. Capitalizing on a global comprehension of this symbolism, the white clad athletes become an immediate symbolic reference to the revival and national rebirth of a new, fascist Germany.

Politically, the “national sacrificial-community” was the antithesis to the sober and rational solidarity of autonomous and egalitarian individuals within the labor movement. In 1933, Hitler announced: “We smashed International Solidarity! Now we shall build a living national solidarity, the German nation! To properly understand this idea of national solidarity, the idea of sacrifice must first be grasped . . .”¹²

The blending of the Olympic idea with National Socialist ideology during the 1936 Games was highly successful. Coubertin himself was delighted. So, too, were the IOC, which in 1939 went so far as to consider Garmisch-Partenkirchen as a substitute host city for the 1940 Winter Olympics,¹³ despite the November pogroms in 1938 and Germany’s military occupation of Prague the following year.¹⁴ Their reasoning was based on an affinity of attitudes. The fascist images of a strong, vital, handsome hero and the basic interpretation of life as a “struggle for existence” serving the fatherland were similar to Coubertin’s vision of what humanity should be. In this vein, one can readily understand Coubertin’s consistent rejection of favoring women’s participation in the Olympic Games.

Solemn or Cheerful?

The transitions from Coubertin’s thoughts towards the militaristic sport ideals of Carl Diem and other physical educators were as smooth as the transitions from social Darwinism to fascist ideology. Diem intensified the “*religio athletae*” of Coubertin¹⁵ into a kind of heroic anthropology. But only in the context of the Third Reich did this ideal achieve its devastating, dynamic force. Diem’s “heroic anthropology” meshed nicely with Coubertin’s vision of the glorification of the physically strong and morally pure, and his condemnation of the incompetent and immoral who lead “unworthy” lives. The hidden drawbacks of this cult of health, competitiveness and beauty were the condemnation of those individuals referred to as “immorals” and “degenerated”—from there it takes only one step to the thought of their annihilation. For the great event of 1936, “disturbing riffraff” were expelled from the showpiece areas of Berlin, removed to a “gypsy camp” in the district of Marzahn. From there, Sinti and Roma were transported to Auschwitz in 1943 and subsequently murdered.

The 1936 Olympic Games stood at the crossroads of reaction and modernity. On one hand they created a festive atmosphere with their collectively compelling rituals; on the other they pointed towards the Olympic Games of the future with their breathtakingly choreographed spectacles for the audience and mass media. For

the first time in history, the communications media contributed greatly to the sensory heightening of the Olympic event, that is, *a priori-produced* to be transmitted by the mass media. The result was a blend of fiction and reality that became more vivid than the events themselves. For instance, a mass audience was entranced by a dramatic world radio broadcast description of the lighting of the Olympic flame. Today, modern communications technology, particularly satellite TV, is responsible for the existence of a “global village,” that can be likened to a worldwide theater. In 1936 a partnership between sport and the media was formed, and the development of the “teleconomical” Olympic Games of the future ensured.

The Seoul Games of 1988

The IOC ignored the lessons of history when it chose South Korea to stage the 1988 Olympic Games. Indeed, it placed them in the custodianship of a military regime that had demonstrated a consistent determination to violently suppress any democratic opposition. Even the obvious political intentions of the South Korean government to use the Olympics for the enhancement of its international and domestic political position did not deter the dignitaries of the IOC from awarding the Games to Seoul.

For the Seoul Games, too, drastic changes were implemented in the conditions for participation eligibility. The definition of amateur status had been a recurring problem since the days of Coubertin himself. At Seoul, however, restrictions on who might compete were relaxed—athletes of varying professional status could compete. Some of the world’s most highly paid professionals, such as the celebrated tennis player, Steffi Graf, could now receive Olympic consecration.

Regulations for the ceremonial aspects of the great Olympic festival have remained nearly unchanged from 1936 to the present. Following the rules, as in Berlin in 1936, the entry of the teams should be as follows: name signs, flagbearers, and then the uniformed teams marching as national units. Each delegation positions itself in good order facing the rostrum. Although the general mood of the Olympic Games has changed from a solemn to a cheerful atmosphere since the Munich festival in 1972, the ceremony is still one that underscores the submission of individual interests and expression—the athlete takes part, not as an individual, but as a disciplined member of a nation.

At Seoul, however, something quite different occurred. Many participants in the “march of national teams” violated established Olympic rules of decorum for this occasion. Large numbers of athletes carried cameras, making use of them without the slightest embarrassment.¹⁶ After the procession finally reached the infield, many athletes and officials no longer remained with their formation, but moved about taking more and more pictures for their photo albums. This jostling for photographic position reached a climax when at last the Olympic torch arrived. The final torchbearer was compelled to fight her way through the now widely dispersed crowds. Athletes and officials behaved as private persons, not as disciplined representatives of their country. Insofar as they openly displayed their individualism, at the same time they dissolved the very message of the ritual. Thus, the ceremony’s serious character was drastically reduced. Indeed, it became as shallow as the performance of an amateur acting group that attempts to “reach” a well-read and sophisticated audience with exotic nonsense.

This transformation permeated other symbolic acts as well. For instance, in Korea, the opportunity to be an Olympic torchbearer was sold to anyone in the world who could negotiate a 1200 meters relay segment and afford the sum asked by the organizers for the privilege of participating. The spectacle of softer, unconditioned, middle-aged “athletes” carrying the “holy flame” made a nonsensical contrast to the official IOC posts, showing erect, youthful, powerfully-fit torchbearers.

As the opening ceremonies of the Seoul Games clearly indicated, profanation of the ceremonial occurred with the approval of the IOC President. The Olympic statutes bundle presentative symbols, actions and formulated texts together into one liturgy. Every single word spoken is prescribed. The IOC President has a time limit of three minutes for the delivery of his personal remarks. This radical restriction of verbal expression does not diminish the significance of the speech. On the contrary, it emphasizes it to the point of it becoming a “sacred formula.” But, Juan Antonio Samaranch delivered his speech from atop a revolving pedestal, a prop reminiscent of the era of Hollywood Revues. The platform spun slowly, like a miniature carousel—some feared that at any moment the President might lose his balance and topple, an object of utter ridicule. Obviously, tools and techniques used by the entertainment industry have penetrated into the very essence of the Olympic ceremonial.

Neither observers nor officials seem to have been bothered by these developments. These were not accidents or aberrations; this image reflected a structural change in the politics of the IOC. Under Avery Brundage, the IOC continued to be the same type of authoritarian-led, ideologically-charged honorary club. Mr. Samaranch, however, did away entirely with that antiquated structure. Rather, the present-day IOC leadership resembles a large modern business oriented towards growth-management. Media politics and marketing strategies are no longer restricted by the handicap of ideology; carefully calculated regulations of participation are wrought in modern methods of industrial management. Thus, the IOC has moved towards operating from a base characterized by pragmatic and functional politics. The change from ritual to entertainment lies within the logic of this “de-ideologization.”

Liturgy acts directly to hold together the immediate symbolic significance of a rite. If one disassembles the framework of the liturgy, the symbolic significance also falls apart. The fragments of significance no longer complement and account for each other; instead, they de-symbolize each other. Left behind are the ruins of perception consisting of loosely connected, detached segments. In Seoul, the ritual character of the Olympic ceremonial was destroyed from within. Opening and closing ceremonies were turned into spectacles, an accumulation of performances with ritual traces that increasingly took on the character of entertainment.

In Seoul, emblems of Western influence were exhibited right beside the manifestations of modern technology. Flavors of the preceding Olympic festival, the Hollywood-Show in Los Angeles, were imitated and linked with folkloric references to Korean cultural traditions: Dragon drums stood beside jet planes, which, as in 1984, traced Olympic rings in the sky; folkdances followed parachutists, who, like the “Rocket-Man” in L.A., floated down into the stadium; religious music was superimposed against the American pop hit “Hand in Hand.”¹⁷

The disintegration of the Olympic ceremonial makes its presentative elements accessible to a new meaning. We witnessed in Seoul, for instance, the entrance into the stadium of a torch relay runner, the celebrated Kee chung Sohn, winner of the Olympic marathon in 1936. In Berlin he had represented the hated Japanese occupation regime, which had forced on him the name of Ki Tai Son. Now, in 1988, he represented a belated national triumph. In a fatherly manner, the seventy-six year old Sohn passed the torch to a young female runner, a symbol of the legitimacy of a social order in which age willingly hands over power to youth, those who show themselves worthy.

With the secularization of its ceremonial, the Games have dwindled into a series of unrelated stagings which no longer draw their fascination from an overall cohesive pattern, but rather from singular, unrelated events. The outstanding individual event in Seoul, the finals of the men's 100 meter dash, indicated clearly on which mechanism the fascination rests: Ben Johnson and Carl Lewis face each other; the remaining sprinters in the field are merely background props having nothing to do with the outcome. The 100 meter final was the staging of a typical presentative narrative pattern: the "showdown."

Heroic sagas are limited by their narrative stereotypes. Knights' legends, detective stories and Hollywood's western epics are colorful modifications of a few model adventures. All in all, the staging of Olympic competition restricts itself to two of these stereotypes: the "final duel," and the "giant versus the mob." The movie, *Sixteen Days in Los Angeles*, describes the 1984 Games almost entirely in this way. A series of self-contained episodes emerge: "unbeaten in 100 races, Edwin Moses faces his pursuers"; Michael Gross, the "albatross," versus the world recordholder Pablo Morales. Each hero possesses powers that overshadow the talents of the average people: noble ancestry, ingenuity, courage, physical strength, and personal authority. When the consumer of heroic sagas identifies with the protagonist, he imaginatively enriches himself with the other's outstanding qualities,¹⁸ and thus shares the afflictions and victories of the hero, an identification that not only compensates for the sensation of helplessness in real life situations, but also temporarily obliterates the insecurity of self-awareness. In increasingly geometric manner, the effects of the real world of Western industrial society have eroded a reliable self-awareness; narcissistic irritations have gained a significant magnification.

Dramaturgy Instead of Content

During the Olympic Games, public interest concentrates most on competitions in which "showdowns" are taking place. While the perfect artistry of rhythmic gymnastics is enacted almost entirely without spectators, the outcome of the 100 meter dash marks the highlight of the Games. The magnificence of the athletic hero is reduced to his physical ability. Compared with the fictional hero, his priceless advantage is that his adventures are completely real. This advantage is fully exploited by live television broadcasting. The spectator shares the heroic deed that is achieved, shares it immediately and "for real!" This experience survives, even, as in Ben Johnson's case, when officials correct the final result.

The symbolism of the Olympic Games is in a state of process, or, put another way, in a state of structural change. With the disappearance of ritual elements, the

long-term, identity-forming effectiveness of the Games' symbolism has been given up. The Berlin Games of 1936 were characterized by their ritual function, as we learn from the biographies of participants. Today, "modernization" and "de-ideologization" by IOC authorities have led directly to a fascination derived from profane heroism. No longer does the struggling hero bind together the national, ideologically-standardized, sacrificial community. Instead, he invites those to identify with him whose self-awareness no longer has sufficient support in everyday life. His nationality becomes increasingly unimportant. Social irritations, resulting from experiences of helplessness, can be temporarily suppressed in the Olympic dream world; only a distant echo of the depressing reality of everyday life is heard. The feeling of togetherness that achieves a common pleasure in stereotypes (for example, the wave of patriotism in the USA during the 1984 Olympics) is fleeting and illusory. It is based on group fantasies of grandeur. The social significance of the Games changes with their mass psychological effects. It depends more than ever on the consumption of adventure-stereotypes, sold to the consumer like any other merchandise. Nobody has demonstrated as well as Ronald Reagan that the staging of stereotypes can outweigh the experience of social conflicts. Reagan's success was based less on his capacity to solve political problems than on his clever packaging by experienced marketing specialists. "The spectator sees only the image and represses the text."

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article appeared in the German periodical *Psychologie Heute* (Mai 1989). Grateful appreciation is extended to the editors of *Psychologie Heute* for permission to publish an English translation and extended version of the original work. Translated from the original German by August Weber. Edited by Robert K. Barney and Allen Guttman.
2. Pierre de Coubertin, "Ein modernes Olympia (1910)," in *Pierre de Coubertin: Der olympische Gedanke, Reden und Aufsätze*, Edited by the Carl-Diem Institute, Cologne, p. 40.
3. Pierre de Coubertin, "Olympia: Rede in Paris (1929)," in *Pierre de Coubertin: Der olympische Gedanke, Reden und Aufsätze*, Edited by the Carl-Diem Institute, Cologne, p. 125. See also, "Pierre de Coubertin: Die philosophischen Grundlagen des modernen Olympismus (1935)," in *Pierre de Coubertin: Der olympische Gedanke, Reden und Aufsätze*, Edited by the Carl-Diem Institute, Cologne, p. 153.
4. Pierre de Coubertin, "Briefe zur olympischen Idee IV (22 November 1918)," in *Pierre de Coubertin: Der olympische Gedanke, Reden und Aufsätze*, Edited by the Carl-Diem Institute, Cologne, p. 65.
5. Pierre de Coubertin, "Mens fervida in corpore lacertoso (1924)," in *Pierre de Coubertin: Der olympische Gedanke, Reden und Aufsätze*, Edited by the Carl-Diem Institute, Cologne, p. 106.
6. See IOC Statutes, *Olympic Charter 1989*, Lausanne.
7. Alfred Lorenzer, *Das Konzil der Biichhalter*, Die Zerstörung der Sinnlichkeit, Frankfurt am Main. 1981.

8. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Act* (3rd edition), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957, p. 153.

9. Editors' note. The most serious boycott movements originated in the United States. See, for instance, Richard D. Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (2nd Edition), Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987, pp. 68-82; Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 62-81; Stephen R. Wenn, "A Tale of Two Diplomats: George S. Messersmith and Charles H. Sherrill on Proposed American Participation in the Berlin Olympics," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 1989; and Wendy Gray and Robert Knight Barney, "Devotion to Whom?: German-American Loyalty on the Issue of Participation in the 1936 Olympic Games," *JSH*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Summer 1990.

10. The Battle of Langemarck incident, which became so significant in the ritual patterns of the 1936 Olympic Games, commenced in the Ypres salient on October 21, 1914. After having failed initially to fulfill the "Schlieffen Plan" in September 1914, which intended to outflank the Allied armies by executing an enormous right-wing attack, the German military headquarters tried to salvage the plan and gain victory by inserting new troops to lengthen the right-wing. In haste, 120,000 soldiers were recruited—mostly reservists and older "landsturm" men, along with a number of young volunteers. Poorly trained, insufficiently equipped, and led by officers who were either inexperienced or out of service for years, they were sent to the front in North Belgium. These unfortunate troops were massacred repeatedly while launching badly prepared attacks against experienced British, French and Belgian forces moved to Flanders to prevent a feared envelopment. The "myth of Langemarck" begins with a German army report of November 14, 1914, stating that "west from Langemarck, *young* (underscore ours) regiments, singing 'Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles,' attacked the first front lines of enemy positions and overtook them." In point of fact, the majority of these regiments consisted of reservists and older people. A minority, but still substantial number, were young people, students and others. As careful historical research has shown, it is extremely unlikely that German soldiers sang the anthem while attacking. Despite this, the army report initiated the dissemination of a mythical story: the heroic self-sacrifice of pure German youth. The reality, veiled completely by the official German military report, was a catastrophic massacre of German troops, a massacre traced to the incompetence and carelessness of German military leadership. But the reality remained hidden. The myth prevailed. The legend of Langemarck, a web of lies, a mythical story of war's bloody reality, became one of the most powerful group-fantasies of 20th century German intellectual history. For more on this, see: Karl Unruh, *Langemarck: Legende und Wirklichkeit*, Koblenz, 1987; Helmut Kopetzky, "In den Tod - Hurra! Deutsche Jugendregimenter im Ersten Weltkrieg," *Ein historischer Tatsachenbericht über Langemarck*, Cologne, 1981.

11. Editors' note. The use of this technique, a blending of light, darkness and high music drama, was a well-tested phenomenon, having been consistently implemented and sophisticated over time at Nazi Party rallies during a period well before the Olympic Games of 1936 unfolded.

12. *Führerreden: Zum Winterhilfswerk, 1933-1936*, Munich/Berlin, 1937, p. 4.

13. Editors' note. The Winter Olympic Games of 1940 were originally awarded to Japan (Sapporo) at IOC meetings held in Warsaw on June 9, 1937 (see *Minutes of International Olympic Committee-Warsaw 1937*, compiled and annotated by Wolf Lyberg, former Secretary-General of the Swedish National Olympic Committee, Lausanne: IOC Archives). After Japan announced that it could no longer consider hosting the Games, the IOC deliberated on alternatives. At the 39th Session of the IOC convened in London in 1939, discussion focussed on the possibility of

Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Montreal or Lake Placid as “substitute hosts (see *Minutes of International Olympic Committee-London 1939*, Lyberg, as cited above). Ironically, at the same meeting the IOC awarded its prestigious Olympic Diploma of Merit to Leni Riefenstahl for her “Official film of the 1936 Games in Berlin.”

14. Editors’ note. The November 1938 pogroms, including the infamous *Kristallnacht*, were particularly vicious smear-campaign incidents in the history of German persecution of Jews.

15. See Pierre de Coubertin, “Die philosophischen Grundlagen des modernen olympismus (1935),” in *Pierre de Coubertin: Der olympische Gedanke, Reden und Aufsätze*, Edited by the Carl-Diem Institute, Cologne, p. 50. For further on this, see Arnd Krüger’s note in this volume.

16. Editors’ note. At the Seoul Games Canadian team-members hurled frisbees into the crowd as they marched around the stadium track in the opening parade. This act soon developed into a spontaneous competition to determine which athlete could reach the upper deck with his/her frisbee. When one frisbee finally did soar into the upper deck the feat was greeted by an ovation from the assembled crowd.

17. Editors’ note. One is left with the impression that Koreans, as recognized masters of copying Western ideas and technology, applied the same approach to the Olympic Games ceremonial as they have with respect to electronic devices, automobiles, wearing apparel and other goods.

18. Sigmund Freud, *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*, p. 106.

19. *Spiegel*, No. 41, 1988, p. 214.