

# Questions of Propriety

## J. Sigfrid Edström, Anti-Semitism, and the 1936 Berlin Olympics

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*The aim of this article is to analyze Sigfrid Edström's view of the so-called 'Jewish question' and the 1936 Berlin Olympics, from several perspectives. It has been noted that Edström was never in any doubt that it was right to arrange the Olympic Games in Berlin. He strove to ensure that the forces counselling a boycott of the Berlin Games were defeated. A question that is considerably more difficult to answer is whether Edström was an anti-semite. His correspondence most definitely demonstrates an anti-semitic side to his character. It can be noted that Edström was not subjected to criticism following World War II for having been compliant vis-à-vis the Nazis. Instead, he was elected to the most prestigious position in the world of sport – tPresident of the International Olympic Committee.*



*As regards the persecution of the Jews in Germany I am not at all in favour of said action, But I fully understand that an alteration had to take place. As it was in Germany, a great part of the German nation was led by the Jews and not by the Germans themselves. Even in the U.S.A. the day may come when you will have to stop the activities of the Jews. They are intelligent and unscrupulous. Many of my friends are Jews, so you must not think that I am against them, but they must be kept within certain limits.<sup>1</sup>*

This quotation is found in a letter written by Swedish IOC member, and later IOC President, J. Sigfrid Edström, to his good friend Avery Brundage, on 4 December 1933. The reason for Edström putting pen to paper was that in Germany persecution of the Jewish population had followed on the heels of the accession to power of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis in 1933. Edström was worried that this could give rise to boycotts of the coming Olympic Games in Germany in 1936 which could prevent the Games from being held.<sup>2</sup>

This quote has been selected and reproduced in a variety of analyses,<sup>3</sup> and has often been presented as proof of Edström's negative attitude towards the Jews. This has been done without any form of deeper analysis of Edström's attitude concerning the matter. What follows will therefore analyze Sigfrid Edström's view of the so-called Jewish question and the 1936 Berlin Olympics,

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from several perspectives. The following questions are addressed in the article: What was Edström's attitude to the Berlin Olympics? What was Edström's view of the attempted boycotts of the Berlin Olympics? What attitude did Edström display towards Jews in general and towards the participation of German Jewish athletes in the Olympic Games, in particular?

Initially, the issue becomes visible in a letter from the year 1933; it is the first item in Edström's voluminous correspondence that is of relevance to the question.<sup>4</sup> Edström's involvement in this issue is of interest for two reasons. First, in the 1930s, Edström was a very senior sports official, both nationally and internationally. He had been, among other things, President of the large and important International Amateur Athletics Federations (IAAF) since its inception in 1913; a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) since 1920; an IOC Vice-President from 1931-46); and, finally, IOC President (1946-1952). Edström also had several important assignments within the Swedish sports movement, including the Swedish Olympic Committee (SOC). He was the SOC's chef-de-mission at several summer Games, including the Berlin Games of 1936. During the 1930s Edström was thus not only Sweden's most important and powerful sports official, he was important internationally, as well.

Strangely enough, international Olympic research has paid remarkably little attention to Edström and his role in the Olympic movement.<sup>5</sup> Edström's mother tongue (Swedish) may have been a handicap; at the same time it should be remembered that he knew several foreign languages; much of his correspondence was in English, some in French and German. Edström was an internationalist, with the whole world as his field of operations. He spent several years abroad in his early working life; he married an American, Ruth Randell, with whom he had four children. Edström was also immersed in Swedish business enterprise and, to a certain extent, representative of the Swedish upper class, at least from an economic perspective. Thus, Edström was not only a leading figure in the realm of sport, but also in industry and the power elite of society.<sup>6</sup> Politically, Edström was an arch conservative; he represented the right-wing party on the town Council of Västerås, where he lived and worked during his time as a business executive before moving to Stockholm in the later years of his life.<sup>7</sup>

### **Edström, the IOC, and the Attempts to Boycott the Berlin Olympics**

On 30 January 1933 Adolf Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor of Germany. Almost immediately, restrictions were imposed on a variety of dissidents and members of certain ethnic groups. The Jewish population, in particular, was subjected to threats, violence, and discriminatory legislation. The character and actions of the nation's 'new order' attracted the attention and concern of sports

officials and athletes in different parts of the world, just as it did within the IOC in the context of the Olympic Games scheduled to be held in Berlin in 1936.<sup>8</sup>

What, then, was Edström's position on the Berlin Olympics? On a number of occasions, Edström emphasized that it was not possible to move the Olympic Games from Berlin. He pointed out that the decision to arrange the Games in Germany had been taken by the IOC as early as 1931, that is to say, long before the coming to power of the Nazis.<sup>9</sup> It appears that it was in the USA that the first and most intense protests occurred against the discrimination of Jews in Germany and against the participation of the USA in the Berlin Olympic Games. In December 1933, Edström wrote to Avery Brundage – who was not only a personal friend of Edström's but also the President of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) – to inquire about the direction the discussion in the USA on a possible boycott was taking. In his capacity as President of the IAAF, Edström needed to be informed about the situation in the USA, the most prominent country in the world of track and field athletics. A potential boycott of the Berlin Games by America would be a disaster.

In a letter to IOC President Henri Baillet-Latour, Edström also expressed his concern that a boycott might occur in Sweden if German Jews were not allowed to be a part of the German Olympic team. Furthermore, he emphasized that in Swedish newspapers he had already denied rumours referring to the difficult conditions for Jews in Germany.<sup>10</sup> Edström thus dissociated himself from all boycott actions against the Berlin Olympics at an early stage, and even positioned himself as a keen defender of the Games taking place.

With regard to the question of Edström's attitude towards Jews, the correspondence between Edström and Brundage demonstrates clear signs of antisemitism. In November 1933 Edström wrote to Brundage in "confidential" context: "I am not personally fond of Jews and of the jewish influence."<sup>11</sup> Edström noted Brundage's complaints about the one-sided reporting of newspapers in the USA. Brundage opined that American newspapers should be provided with material that proved that the Nazis did not discriminate against the Jews in sport.<sup>12</sup> Edström agreed that the American newspapers exaggerated the persecution of the Jews in Germany. Edström also expressed to Brundage his sympathy for the actions of the Nazis: "The nazist [sic] opposition to the influence of the Jews can only be understood if you live over in Germany. In some of the more important trades the Jews govern the majority and stop all others from coming in ... Many of these Jews are of Polish or Russian origin with minds entirely different from the western mind. An alteration of these conditions is absolutely necessary if Germany should remain a 'white' nation."<sup>13</sup> However, Edström emphasized that he was not an anti-Semite himself and that several of his friends were Jews; he was trying to see things from both sides.<sup>14</sup>

A few months prior to the start of the Berlin summer Olympics, a 'Fair Play' campaign was launched against the Games being held in Germany. The campaign had its headquarters in Paris. Edström was irritated by these developments and was very critical of the campaign: "If it is the American Jews, they have ... sums of money back of them and will use bribery, threats and other unfair means in their methods of working." He was afraid that Sweden would also be drawn into these boycott actions and considered the people behind the movement "very unreliable."<sup>15</sup> Swedes indeed took part in this campaign, among these the Swedish newspaperman Torgny Segerstedt, who Edström referred to as a "great fighter for the Jews."<sup>16</sup>

Edström's attitude to the Jews was, however, not entirely consistent. He went from making antisemitic statements in his correspondence with Brundage, to expressing concern about the Nazi's persecution of Jews. He also expressed sympathy for the reactions of Jews abroad and even stated in connection with the persecution of the Jews that "Mr Hitler has been very unwise in this action." However, and this is important, it was the approaching Berlin Games that Edström was most concerned about, not the situation of the Jews.<sup>17</sup> He even tried to persuade the Jewish Sports Association in Palestine to abandon its plans for a boycott of the Berlin Games, pointing to the fact that Jewish organizations in Germany were not going to boycott the great international sports festival.<sup>18</sup> Edström was thus never doubtful about staging the Olympic Games in Berlin and he did not countenance any arguments to affect his position on the question, irrespective of the new political order in Germany or the persecution of Jews. In July 1936, on the eve of his departure from Sweden to the Berlin Games, Edström enthusiastically declared: "The Games in Berlin will be the greatest and best ever held."<sup>19</sup> Edström's actions and "mildly anti-Semitic comments," as the sport historian Allen Guttman puts it, must be understood in the light of his dedicated, idealistic relationship to sport and the Olympic movement. Neither political trouble spots nor persecution of dissidents and other such matters, would be permitted to impede the arranging of the Olympic Games. There are also examples of Edström taking a stand regarding the situation of individual Jews, particularly when he was personally or professionally involved in specific cases.<sup>20</sup>

### **Edström and Jewish Membership on the German Olympic Team**

Edström neither understood the concern among American Jews nor their attempts to boycott the Berlin Olympics. It is true that he admitted that persecution of Jews was taking place in Germany, but this did not apply to the athletes. He referred to the fact that the IOC at their Congress in Vienna in 1933 had been promised by the German sports officials that there would not be any problems for "... the Jewish athletes in connection with the Olympic Games. Even

German Jews would be allowed on the German team.” Edström pointed to the fact that the German government had issued precise positions on:

1. excluding Jewish members from athletics clubs
2. barring Jewish clubs from public training facilities
3. prohibiting Jews from competitions.<sup>21</sup>

The IOC was worried as early as 1933, three years before the Olympic Games, about the treatment of Jewish athletes in Germany and the likelihood of their being able to participate in the Games. What came to characterize the continuing debate were the guarantees that the Germans had given at the meeting in Vienna. The IOC, and Edström himself, chose to believe these guarantees and thus there was no turning back. The Vienna meeting is thus central to our understanding of both the IOC’s and Edström’s actions. Despite the German guarantees in Vienna, the IOC pressed to be informed about the plight of German Jewish athletes. In September 1934, Brundage went to Germany to investigate the Jewish athletes’ situation ‘in situ.’ In connection with an IAAF meeting in Sweden directly prior to the Berlin Games, Brundage met in Stockholm with Edström, Karl Ritter von Halt, the German IOC member who had joined the German Nazi party early in 1933<sup>22</sup> and who was a very close personal friend of Edström’s. They were joined by Carl Diem, a member of the IAAF’s executive committee and Secretary-General of the organizing committee for the Berlin Olympic Games. These four men had been close friends for a long time, not least through their work for the IAAF.

Brundage did not discover anything on his tour of Germany to suggest that Jewish athletes were being discriminated against. Edström confirmed the positive picture Brundage had painted of the treatment of the Jews in Germany, to IOC President Baillet-Latour: “He [Brundage] met a number of Jews in Germany both officially and unofficially and got a very good impression of the treatment of the German Jews.”<sup>23</sup>

In various letters written in 1934 and 1935, Edström continued to reassure Brundage and others that the German Jewish athletes would be treated “just as the other German athletes,” but at the same time he tried to obtain more information on the Jewish athletes’ situation in Germany. Karl Ritter von Halt pointed out to Edström that the Germans had a number of “Jewish boys in the preparatory teams.”<sup>24</sup> However, doubts arose in Edström’s mind late in the summer of 1935. He was “very unhappy” due to the resumed persecution of the Jews, which he considered not only affected Jews in general, but also the athletes. He was concerned about the growing opposition among Jews around the world, including Sweden: “I have the Jews after me here in Sweden,” he exclaimed.<sup>25</sup> Edström returned to this theme in his correspondence with Baillet-Latour, namely that the German Nazis made a distinction between their treatment of Jews in general and the German Jewish athletes.<sup>26</sup> Edström’s assessment was based on

the guarantees of the German sports officials, but, unfortunately those guarantees were entirely violated.

In 1935, Edström promised Brundage that he would again investigate the situation during a visit to Berlin; he would even demand the names of the Jewish athletes that Germany intended to include on the German Olympic team.<sup>27</sup> Before his departure, Edström wrote to *Reichsportführer* von Tschammer und Osten to express his concern about the Jewish athletes' situation in Germany. He added that he wished to discuss the question personally with Tschammer und Osten over dinner at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin, in order to prevent any racial and religious issues from interfering with the orderly staging of the Olympic Games.<sup>28</sup> Edström, though beginning to doubt the German guarantees, nonetheless chose to procrastinate on the festering problem and continued to believe the promises of his German friends, Diem and Ritter von Halt.

The sport historian Richard Mandell is of the opinion that the true state of affairs differed considerably from what Ritter von Halt and others described to Brundage, Edström and other IOC members. It is Mandell's opinion that the approval of *Reichsportführer* Tschammer und Osten, in conjunction with German racist legislation, served to bar Jews from German sport and thus also from the qualifying trials for the German Olympic team.<sup>29</sup> Edström was thus both deliberately deceived by the German sports officials' and he was also particularly poorly informed about the situation in Germany for German Jews.

A total of two Jewish athletes participated on the German team in the Olympic Games of 1936, one in the Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and one in the Summer Games in Berlin. Neither, however, resided in Germany. No Jew resident in Germany was thus allowed to be a part of the German Olympic team. One of the two German Jewish Olympic participants was Rudi Ball, a ice-hockey player who had moved to France in 1933; the other was the world-class fencer Helene Mayer, who lived in the USA and had previously participated in two Olympic Games as a member of the German team. It can also be noted here that neither of these Jewish participants practiced the Jewish religion, nor were their mothers Jewish. According to Mandell there were at least two other German Jewish athletes who were not selected for the Olympic Games due to the fact that they had not qualified in Germany's Olympic trials.<sup>30</sup> The best known of these was high jumper Gretel Bergmann, a national record holder and a bright gold medal hope. She was not allowed to participate due to the fact that her Jewish club had been expelled from the German Athletics Association.<sup>31</sup>

Edström, indeed the IOC, chose to trust the promises of friend and colleague Ritter von Halt and the other German sports officials that German Jewish athletes would not be discriminated against. In his capacity as President of the IAAF and IOC delegate with a large network of contacts, Edström must have received information that contradicted Ritter von Halt's reports, but he still



*Olympic Stadium, Berlin 1936: Sigfrid Edström with Avery Brundage*

chose to trust him. Edström as well as Brundage and other members of the IOC displayed a large measure of gullability vis-à-vis the German authorities and sports officials. This can partly be explained by the fact that the German sports officials had been friends of Edström and Brundage for a long time. Brundage's conclusion regarding the situation of the Jews must also be seen in the light of his political sympathies and attitude towards Jews. According to Allen Guttman, Brundage was strongly anti-semitic, pro-German and even positive towards Nazism.<sup>32</sup> In Krüger's opinion this represents a somewhat simplified picture. Brundage's personality was complex. Brundage had a number of personal friends who were Jews at the same time as he leased his land to golf clubs that did not allow Jewish members. Ultimately this complexity can be attributed to the fact that he was so deeply rooted in a specific sports culture that he ignored the political consequences of his actions.<sup>33</sup> A similar attitude, though not nearly as extreme, can be noted in Edström, to which I will return.

### **Edström's Relations with German Sports Officials**

It has been argued above that Edström's actions were largely determined by the information he received from German sports officials, mainly Carl Diem and Ritter von Halt. Who then were Edström's supporters in the IOC and the IAAF? Besides Brundage, Karl Ritter von Halt was without doubt the person who was closest to Edström. They had met back in 1912 during the Stockholm Olympic Games and developed a long and warm friendship. Carl Diem had been a mem-

ber of the IAAF's executive committee since 1913, and Diem and Edström had gotten to know each other well. Diem's case is noteworthy for the fact that he managed to keep his position within German sport even after the Second World War, in spite of the fact that he was strongly involved in sport during Nazism.<sup>34</sup>

However, Edström and the German *Reichsportführer* Hans von Tschammer und Osten do not appear to have developed a significant personal relationship. Arnd Krüger does not mince his words in his description of von Tschammer: "Hans von Tschammer und Osten, a brutal regional leader in the Brown Shirts, better known as the SA... whose storm troopers had killed several worker sportsmen and children, was made responsible for all sports in the newly created office of Reichsportführer."<sup>35</sup>

To understand Edström's actions with regard to, above all, Ritter von Halt, a brief examination of their relationship after the Second World War is necessary. According to several sources, Ritter von Halt was "an ardent national socialist" and was working for the nazification of European sport, but this did not seem to worry Edström, who normally was opposed to all interference of politics in sport.<sup>36</sup> Edström thus again put friendship and sport before politics. The most important thing for Edström was that Ritter von Halt was an old friend – Nazi or no Nazi, it did not matter. Edström's great faith in his sports friends could also be seen in a letter to Brundage: "I wish that we sportsmen could run the world instead of the politicians."<sup>37</sup>

After the end of the war Edström reported in a letter to Brundage what had happened to the IOC members during the war. Edström had been the person in the IOC who tried to maintain contact between the IOC members. Sweden was neutral and correspondence with other countries functioned fairly reliably during the war. Edström thought that Ritter von Halt was dead and "our friend Clarence [von Rosen], who is very low down in his boots now. I hardly ever see him."<sup>38</sup> The Swedish IOC member Clarence von Rosen had strong Nazi sympathies, which he never hid, even after the war.

When peace came, Edström discovered that Ritter von Halt was alive and interned in a Russian camp near Buchenwald in Germany. Edström tried to get him released using all the means at his disposal. He still seemed reluctant to accept the fact that Ritter von Halt was a Nazi, as he pointed out to Brundage: "As you remember, Karl was a director of the Deutsche Bank, and as such he had to belong to Nazi Party. But in his heart he was not a Nazi at all."<sup>39</sup> Arnd Krüger, on the other hand, is of the opinion that Ritter von Halt not only was a high-ranking Nazi but also a personal friend of Hitler's.<sup>40</sup> Edström also tried to help Ritter von Halt's wife and son after the war. He urged Brundage to send a Christmas parcel with food and clothes to them in order to relieve their distress.<sup>41</sup> Edström himself sent a parcel and pointed out in a letter to Greta Ritter von Halt that the



*Sigfrid Edström and wife Ruth Randell on a sailboat*

IOC unfortunately did not have any member in the Soviet Union, but that he would try to help get Ritter von Halt released from the Russian camp.<sup>42</sup>

Karl Ritter von Halt was eventually released and acquitted in a war crimes trial. For Edström, this was perfectly alright since it meant that von Halt could resume his work for the IOC. Several members of the IOC,<sup>43</sup> and even the press in Sweden, Norway and elsewhere reacted negatively to von Halt's return to the IOC.<sup>44</sup> Edström now used all the power and influence of his position as IOC President to defend his friend von Halt against the charge of Nazi affiliation. According to Edström, the most important thing was that he worked for the Olympic ideal and that he "was an excellent gentlemen in every respect."<sup>45</sup>

### Edström's Reaction after the Berlin Olympics

Edström was enthusiastic after the Olympic Games in Berlin. In a number of letters he emphasized his satisfaction with the way in which the Games had been run, but also with Germany as a nation.<sup>46</sup> In October 1936, he wrote to Theodor Lewald and expressed his enthusiasm at the Olympic Games: "Wir haben immer noch die allerschönsten Erinnerungen von den Olympischen Spielen und sprechen häufig davon. Ganz Schweden ist immer noch interessiert an der wunderbaren Organisation und der guten erfolge der Spiele [sic]."<sup>47</sup> After the Olympic Games both Edström and Clarence von Rosen attended the Nazi party rally in Nuremberg. Both were enthralled by the proceedings there. Wrote Edström:

*It was one of the greatest shows I have ever seen ... He [Hitler] is probably one of the most powerful and strongly supported individuals that the world's history has ever known. 60 million people I am sure are willing to die for him and do whatever he requests.*<sup>48</sup>

Edström's enthusiasm over the Nazi display and the 'Führer's wonderful power' was also evident in a letter to von Tschammer und Osten. Edström also asked von Tschammer und Osten to pass on his many thanks. He emphasized that the meeting with Hitler was a very great pleasure and that he had gained a friend.<sup>49</sup> Edström also wrote direct to Himmler and in enthusiastic terms expressed his great thanks for his stay during the party rally in Nuremberg.<sup>50</sup> In other letters Edström also expressed his fascination with Hitler's leadership qualities and power as well as the German people's support of Hitler. However, Edström does not mention anything either positive or negative about his view of Nazism. Edström's position in sport and society must be understood here. According to a number of sources he was a charismatic leader type, to use Weber's terminology, a person who was used to deciding and getting people to obey, and it is against this background that his fascination for Hitler as a leader must be understood. This must not be confused with Hitler as a politician.

## **Concluding Remarks**

It has been noted that Edström was never in any doubt that it was right to host the Olympic Games in Berlin. He opposed in every way possible the forces that attempted to initiate boycotts. Edström's attitude was in no way unique. On the contrary, his attitude reflected the prevailing attitude among sports officials both in Sweden and within the IOC. A possible boycott of Berlin was never discussed in Sweden's Olympic Committee. This in spite of the fact that both the IOC and Edström were aware early on of the persecution of Jews and other dissidents in Germany. This became particularly clear subsequent to the Nazi regime's decision to introduce the Nuremberg laws less than one year before the Olympic Games.

In retrospect it can be noted that in spite of intense discussions in several countries about boycotting the Berlin Olympics, there were only four countries that did not take part, and for different reasons. A total of 49 countries participated, then a record for the summer Games.<sup>51</sup> Sweden sent a relatively large squad to Germany, 150 competitors (143 men and 7 women). It should also be added that Swedish gymnastic troupes, approximately 1,500 people, gave displays during the Berlin Olympic Games and that approximately 16,000 Swedes saw the Games live in Berlin.<sup>52</sup> And, according to one source, it was just "a few dozen" Swedish athletes who refused to participate in the Berlin Olympics.<sup>53</sup> There was thus wide-spread support within the Swedish sports movement for participating in the Olympics in Berlin. The Swedish royal family was similarly enthusiastic, and, as an expression of their appreciation of the Berlin Olympics, bestowed high-ranking honours+ on German sports officials. Theodor Lewald, the Nazi-tolerated puppet head of the Berlin Olympic Games Organizing Committee, received the highest honour: Grand Commander of the Order of the Polar Star. Tschammer und Osten were appointed Commander of the Order of Vasa, first class, Carl Diem and Karl Ritter von Halt, Commanders of the Order of Vasa, second class.<sup>54</sup>

Edström also chose to believe his good friends among the German sports officials when they said that Jewish athletes would not be discriminated against. The discrimination of Jewish athletes in Germany was a considerably more important question for Edström than the persecution of Jews in general. However, Edström became less and less interested in bringing the question to a head. In the end it was more or less struck off the agenda, a circumstance certainly connected to Edström's realization that the threat of a boycott had largely dissipated. Edström, like others within the IOC, harboured an ideological attitude to sport that ultimately influenced their ostensibly naive actions in respect of the guarantees given by German sports officials before the Berlin Olympic Games. In Edström's case, it was a matter of guarantees having been given by people who not only were sports officials but also his long-time personal friends. And in

Ritter von Halt's case, Edström chose to fight for his rehabilitation and reinstatement in the IOC, in spite of the fact that von Halt was severely burdened by his Nazi background.

A question that it is considerably more difficult to answer unequivocally, is whether Edström was an anti-semite. In his correspondence with Brundage, he clearly demonstrates an openly anti-semitic posture. He makes broad generalizations about Jews' great influence over social life in both Germany and the USA, arguing how this would serve to explain the Nazis' aversion to Jews, in particular in Germany. He does this at the same time when, on a number of occasions, he takes a stand for individual Jews who have been subjected to injustices of various kinds. This was particularly true of people working abroad for his company, ASEA, or of people to whom he had a personal connection. Furthermore, it can be noted that he never expressed an opinion about Swedish conditions or about Jewish athletes in negative terms. He tried to get Jewish organizations to refrain from boycotting the Berlin Olympic Games and to get German Jewish athletes into the Olympic squad. The absolutely most important thing for Edström was that the Games in Berlin should not be threatened in any way. It can also be noted that Edström, unlike other Swedish sports officials, was not subjected to any criticism, either in Sweden or abroad, after the Second World War, for having been too compliant towards the Nazis. Instead, in 1946, he was elected to the most prestigious position in the world of sport: President of the IOC. A question that should be considered in this connection is how much the rest of the world knew about Edström's anti-semitic sentiments. As far as we can judge, Edström did not make any public anti-semitic statements, but chose to communicate these to a narrow circle of people, primarily to Brundage, who himself had been accused of anti-semitism. Furthermore, it has been noted that Edström was fascinated by Hitler's leadership qualities and the Nazi display during the party rally in Nuremberg.

What is clear is that Edström's attitude towards the Berlin Olympics and life in general can be divided into four spheres: work, politics, private life, and sport. It is true that in the private sphere, his wife, Ruth Randell, played an important role, yet there is a great deal to suggest that his private life was not really private, but integrated into the other spheres – Edström the private person hardly existed. He consistently busied himself in public life, as a representative of industry. But it was the sporting sphere that stood above everything else. For Edström, there was something almost religious about it.

## Endnotes

- 1 Edström to Brundage, 4 December 1933, Riksarkivet (The National Archives of Sweden, hereafter NAS). The article is also based on letters to be found in the Edström files located in the IOC archives (hereafter IOCA) in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- 2 In the source material and in the comprehensive literature the focus is on the Berlin Olympics. The winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen have been of secondary importance, a fact reflected in the argument made in this article.
- 3 See for example *Göteborgs Posten*, 24 January 1999; Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York, Arno Press, 1984), 69; Lars-Olof Welander, "Sweden: Business as Usual," in *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics, and Appeasement in the 1930s*, Arnd Krüger and William Murray, eds. (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2003), 165.
- 4 Letters to and from Edström constitute the primary source material for this study, the focus being mainly on the correspondence between Edström and Avery Brundage. Edström was a particularly precocious letter writer. The letters were dictated to his secretary at the large Swedish company ASEA (currently ASEA Brown Boveri), which is in the industrial town of Västerås, 80 km west of Stockholm. Edström was the company's Chief Executive Officer. Two critical comments should be made regarding Edström's correspondence: first, it is primarily copies of Edström's letters that we have at our disposal. Letters from the people that Edström corresponded with are seldom preserved. Second, it appears that the correspondence was 'cleansed' before Edström donated his personal books and papers to the National Archives in the mid-1950s. It is of course difficult to throw any light on the scope and the contents of the correspondence that may well have been excluded in the collection, but it is clear that there are considerable gaps, which gives rise to a certain amount of uncertainty regarding the reliability of the material.
- 5 It should be noted that the comprehensive research in German into the Berlin Olympics has not been addressed here for language reasons.
- 6 Tomas Matti, *Professionella partriarker: Svenska storföretagsledares ideal, praktik och professionaliseringsprocess, 1910-1945* (Stockholm, 2006), esp. chapter 4.
- 7 Therese Nordlund, *Att leda storföretag: En studie av social kompetens och entreprenörskap i näringslivet med fokus på Axel Johnson och J. Sigfrid Edström, 1900-1950* (Nacka, 2005), 280ff.
- 8 Per Olof Holmäng, *Idrott och kunrikespolitik: Den svenska idrottsrörelsens internationella förbindelser, 1919-1945* (Kungälv, 1945), 119.
- 9 See for example Edström to Thomas W. Cahill, 2 May 1936, NAS.
- 10 Edström to Baillet-Latour, 23 January 1934, NAS.

- 11 Edström to Brundage, 3 November 1933, NAS.
- 12 Brundage to Edström, 28 December 1933, NAS.
- 13 Edström to Brundage, 8 February 1934, NAS.
- 14 Edström to Brundage, 8 February 1934, NAS.
- 15 Edström to Baillet-Latour, 6 May 1936, NAS; Edström to Ekelund, 23 July 1936, NAS; Edström to M. de Polignac, 27 April 1936, NAS.
- 16 Edström to Baillet-Latour, 25 April 1936, NAS.
- 17 Edström to Brundage, 28 April 1934, NAS.
- 18 Edström to Joseph Yekutieli, 7 January 1935, NAS.
- 19 Edström to (probably) Brundage, 24 July 1936, NAS.
- 20 Wolfgang Lehr to Edström, 24 November 1941, NAS; Edström to Lehr 26 November 1941, NAS. In Lehr's case, work was arranged for him, but Edström was unable to help Lehr's parents.
- 21 Edström to Brundage, 4 December 1933, NAS; See also Thomas Kaptain, *Avery Brundage rolle i debatten om de Olympiske lefwe 1936: Specialeafhandling pa Idraet* (Syddansk Universitet – Odense, 2001), 27ff.
- 22 *The International Olympic Committee – One Hundred Years: The Idea, The Presidents, The Achievements. Vol. 1.* (Lausanne, IOC, 1994), 259.
- 23 Edström to Baillet-Latour, 18 September 1934, NAS; brackets added.
- 24 Edström to Brundage, 12 September 1935, NAS.
- 25 Edström to Conrad M. Pineus, 8 August 1935, NAS, Pineus to Edström, 9 August 1935, NAS.
- 26 Edström to Baillet-Latour, 11 August 1935, NAS.
- 27 Edström to Brundage, 11 August 1935, NAS.
- 28 Edström to von Tschammer und Osten, 11 August 1935, IOCA.
- 29 Richard Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Urbana and Chicago: 1987), 58ff., 71.
- 30 Mandell, 76ff. See also *International Olympic Committee. Vol.1*, 264.
- 31 Mandell, 80; Arnd Krüger, "Germany: The Propaganda Machine," in Krüger and Murray, eds., *Nazi Olympics*, 30f; Krüger, "Epilogue," in *ibid.*, 230f.
- 32 Guttmann, *The Games Must Go On*, 90ff.
- 33 Krüger, "Germany: The Propaganda Machine," 55.
- 34 Kaptain, *Avery Brundage*, 35.
- 35 Krüger, "Germany: The Propaganda Machine," 20.
- 36 Holmäng, *Idrott och kunrikespolitik*, 134.
- 37 Edström to Brundage, 9 November 1940, NAS.
- 38 Edström to Brundage, 15 May 1945, IOCA; brackets added.
- 39 Edström to Brundage, 23 November 1946, IOCA.

- 40 Krüger, "The Propaganda Machine," 19.
- 41 See e.g., Edström to Brundage, 15 November 1947, NAS.
- 42 Edström to Greta Ritter von Halt, 30 November 1946, IOCA.
- 43 See, e.g., unknown letter writer (probably Otto Mayer) to Edström 2 April 1951, NAS.
- 44 Unknown to Edström, 19 March 1951, NAS.
- 45 Edström to Mr. Otto Mayer, 5 April 1951, NAS.
- 46 Edström to Walter Bernays, 31 August 1936, NAS.
- 47 Edström to Lewald, 12 October 1936, NAS.
- 48 Edström to Brundage, 23 September 1936, NAS; brackets added.
- 49 Edström to von Tschammer und Osten, 21 September 1936, NAS.
- 50 Edström to Himmler, 21 September 1936, NAS.
- 51 Krüger, "Epilogue," 229.
- 52 *Sverige och OS* (Boras, 1987), 111, 400.
- 53 Holmäng, *Idrott och kunrikespolitik*, 148.
- 54 Edström to Ernst Krogius, 23 November 1936, NAS.

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