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The Berlin Olympics: Sports, Anti-Semitism, and Propaganda in Nazi Germany

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The Berlin Olympics: Sports, Anti-Semitism, and Propaganda in Nazi Germany

Abstract

The Nazis utilized the Berlin Olympics of 1936 as anti-Semitic propaganda within their racial ideology. When the Nazis took power in 1933 they immediately sought to coordinate all aspects of German life, including sports. The process of coordination was designed to Aryanize sport by excluding non-Aryans and promoting sport as a means to prepare for military training. The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin became the ideal platform for Hitler and the Nazis to display the physical superiority of the Aryan race. However, the exclusion of non-Aryans prompted a boycott debate that threatened Berlin's position as host. A fierce debate in the United States ensued, but the Americans decided to send a team to Berlin. Ultimately, the Berlin Olympics were a massive success for the Nazis, as the Games represented the coordination of sport in Germany and reinforced Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda and policy. The German team particularly thrived in the throwing events of track and field, boxing, and gymnastics, which further validated their processes of coordination.

Keywords

Berlin Olympics, Sports, Nazi, 1936, Germany

Disciplines

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Comments

History Senior Thesis

The Berlin Olympics: Sports, Anti-Semitism, and Propaganda in Nazi Germany

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History 418: Professor Bowman

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Introduction

In the summer of 2016, over 10,000 of the greatest athletes in the world from over 200 countries will gather in Rio de Janeiro to participate in the Games of the XXXI Olympiad. 2016 also marks the eighty-year anniversary of the most controversial games in the modern Olympic era. In 1936, all eyes turned to Berlin, the host city of the Games of the XI Olympiad. Three years prior to the 1936 Olympics, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party had seized power in Germany. The Nazis sought to coordinate society into their system founded upon a perverse racial ideology that claimed the Aryan was superior. Above all, the Nazis viewed the Jews as inferiors and their primary enemy. Anti-Semitic laws were enacted to exclude Jews from all aspects of society, including sports. The Nazi party saw the games as an opportunity to display Aryan superiority on the international stage. However, many people from countries like the United States and Great Britain believed that attending the Games would validate the discriminatory policies of Nazi Germany and pressured for a boycott.

The 1936 Summer Olympics set a number of milestones in the history of the modern Olympic Games, but they were marred by the insidious undertones of anti-Semitism and discrimination that the Nazis attempted to conceal from the international community for a couple of weeks in August of 1936. Unlike any Olympics prior or any Olympics in the eighty years since, the Berlin Olympics blurred the lines between power, politics, and sport. This paper adds to the extensive scholarship on the many aspects of the 1936 Olympics, but takes on a unique perspective, as it argues that the Nazis successfully utilized sport in preparation for and during the Olympic Games as a propaganda tool to proliferate their anti-Semitic ideology and Aryan

ideals. Given that track and field was the premier event of the games, and thus was at the forefront of Nazi attention, it will also be given special consideration as the primary tool of Nazi propaganda during the Olympic Games.

Historiography

Fifty years after the 1936 Olympics, a celebration of the Games was held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, the site of the 1936 Winter Olympics. The anniversary was a commemoration of what many Germans saw, and still see, as one of the positives of Hitler's rule in Germany. This notion corresponds with the idea that the 1936 Olympics offered a brief pause in the horrid persecution of Jews going on in Germany. Instead, the Games were remembered for their innovation, architecture, and record-breaking performances, and it was passionately debated whether or not the Games were exploited by Hitler at all.¹ Willi Knecht, a German journalist, and the information director of the 1986 commemoration event was a proponent of this view. As quoted in a *Los Angeles Times* Knecht stated, "Hitler tried to instill his ideas in the Olympic Games. But that doesn't mean the Games were bad." Knecht further posited that a number of other Olympics since the 1936 Games were utilized by the host country to "show themselves off."² Knecht has even gone as far to argue that it is irresponsible for historians to suggest that there were far-reaching links between Hitler and the Berlin Olympics.³

Along with Knecht, one of the primary defenders of the Games was Avery Brundage, President of the American Olympic Committee during the Berlin Olympics, who would later serve as President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Shortly after the Games,

¹ David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 14.

² William Tuohy, "50th Anniversary of Berlin Olympics: Hitler Is Recalled, but So Too Is Owens," *Los Angeles Times*, August 1, 1986, accessed April 5, 2016.

³ Willi Knecht, "Verwirrender Rückschau über fünf Jahrzehnte," *Olympisches Feuer* 36 (1986): 4, in Large, *Nazi Games*, 14.

Brundage concluded, “It is true that the Hitler regime made every effort to use for its own purposes this great festival of the youth of the world, but it was arranged and controlled entirely and exclusively by non-Nazis for the benefit of non-Nazis.”⁴

Despite the views of Knecht and Brundage, among others, the traditional historiography tends to agree that the Berlin Olympics were utilized extensively by Hitler and the Nazis as propaganda for National Socialism and the new German state. In the eighty years since the Berlin Olympics were held, an immense amount of scholarly work has been produced about what Allen Guttman has labeled “the most controversial games.”⁵ For Guttman, the controversy is not the situation regarding the scholarly debate of the 1936 Olympics, but rather the use of the Games by Hitler as propaganda. The view that the Games were exploited by Hitler as a political mechanism and that sportsmanship and the Olympic ideals were undermined by the ongoing discrimination and persecution in Germany against Jews, amongst other groups, is not a serious question among scholars. Guttman, David Clay Large, Richard Mandell, Duff Hart-Davis, Arnd Krüger, and Christopher Hilton have all written about the exploitation of the 1936 Olympics, and many have derisively labeled the Games as “Hitler’s Olympics” or the “Nazi Games.”⁶ Large’s work from 2007 is the best, most comprehensive analysis of the Berlin Olympics to date.

Historians have been keen on observing the ironies of Hitler’s Olympics. The star of the Games, Jesse Owens, did anything but represent the ideals of Aryan superiority that Hitler was

⁴ “The Olympic Story,” Chapter VIII, quoted in Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 78.

⁵ Allen Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 53.

⁶ David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).; Richard Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987).; Duff Hart-Davis, *Hitler’s Games* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986).; Arnd Krüger and William Murray eds., *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics, and Appeasement in the 1930s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).; Christopher Hilton, *How Hitler Hijacked World Sport: The World Cup, the Olympics, the Heavyweight Championship and the Grand Prix* (Gloucestershire, England: The History Press, 2012).

attempting to instill in Germany. However, despite Judith Steeh's claim that Jesse Owens' superb performance "shattered Hitler's myth of Aryan superiority," the performances on the track ultimately did not unravel the racial ideology and propaganda of Hitler and the Nazis in any way.⁷ While Hitler and the Nazis did place blacks in the class below Aryans in terms of racial superiority, one only has to read *Mein Kampf* to understand that Hitler's hatred for the Jews was the core of his racial ideology.⁸ Thus, this paper does not, in any way, seek to diminish the incredible accomplishments of Owens. Instead, it attempts to locate itself in a unique place in the historiography of the Berlin Olympics by arguing that even with Jesse Owens' superb performance, the Nazis utilized the spectacle of the Olympics, in both athletic performance and organizational execution, to display its anti-Semitic ideology. While Jesse Owens' thrived on the track, so too did the German competitors, who were a strong reflection of Nazism.

Historical Background

In order to understand the environment in which the Nazis were preparing for the 1936 Games, it is important to establish a historical context of the Olympic Games and a brief context of the political situation in Germany from 1933 to 1936. The history of the modern Olympic Games began with a dream by the Frenchman Baron de Coubertin. Coubertin held an idealistic view of sport. He believed it had the power to develop a more peaceful world. He wrote, "Firstly it is necessary to preserve the noble and chivalrous character which distinguished athletics in the past, in order that it may continue effectively to play the same admirable part in the education of

⁷ Judith Steeh, *Olympiad 1936: blaze of glory for Hitler's Reich* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), back cover.; In 2016, the film *Race* was released. It is one of numerous films that depicts Owens' triumphant performances at the 1936 Olympics.

⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy (York, South Carolina: Liberty Bell Publications, 2004).

the modern world as the Greek masters assigned to it.”⁹ Coubertin’s dream became a reality in 1896, as the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece. The following Olympics, in 1900, were held in Paris, France, and were the first games in which women competed. Despite initial struggles in getting their feet off the ground, the Games became increasingly successful throughout the early twentieth century.¹⁰

Although Coubertin propagated idealistic notions of the humanitarian importance of sport and the Olympics, he was also motivated by nationalism and class interests. Competitors were required to compete as members of a national team, which ensured that nationalism and international politics would play an important role in the games to come, especially in terms of the precarious position of Germany in the European political landscape. Furthermore, Germany was not initially enthusiastic about participating in the Olympics. As David Clay Large noted, “In the nineteenth century Germany’s preeminent form of sporting activity was not... team sports and traditional track and field events, but *Turnen*, elaborate group gymnastics and synchronized calisthenics designed to foster collective discipline and national brotherhood.”¹¹ Germany participated ambivalently in the Games. Germany missed its first chance to host the Games, as the 1916 Games were canceled due to World War I, and it was subsequently barred from the following two Olympics. Still, under the leadership of Theodor Lewald and Carl Diem, Berlin secured the bid for the 1936 games over Barcelona in 1931 by a vote of forty-three to sixteen.¹²

⁹Pierre de Coubertin, “The Paris Congress: Circular of 15 January 1894,” in *The Olympic Idea. Discourses and Essays* (Stuttgart, Germany: Olympischer Sport-Verlag, 1967), 2-3.

¹⁰ Guttmann, *The Olympics*, 35.; See Table I in the Appendix for a list of all the Games from 1896 to 1936, including number of countries and participating athletes.

¹¹ Large, *Nazi Games*, 18.

¹² Guttmann, *The Olympics*, 53.

However, almost two years after the IOC awarded the Games to Berlin, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party seized power in Germany. After Adolf Hitler and the Nazis came to power in 1933, the Nazis methodically began coordinating society to eliminate opposition and fit their ideology, which focused on the superiority of the Aryan race. On April 1, 1933, the Nazis sponsored a boycott of Jewish businesses and introduced a law banning Jews from teaching in state schools.¹³ On April 7, the Nazis announced the Law for the Restoration of a Professional Civil Service, which forced non-Aryans from civil servant professions. On September 28, the Nazis forbade non-Aryans from governmental employment. All these measures, among others, were a prelude to the Nuremburg Laws on September 15, 1935, which stripped Jews of German citizenship and prohibited marriage and sexual relations between Jews and Aryans.¹⁴ Although not all laws targeted only Jews (other groups targeted included Communists, homosexuals, and “Gypsies”), it was clear that the Jews were the primary target of the Nazis’ discriminatory policy.

The Nazis seizure of power, and subsequent persecution of German Jews as well as other members of society, complicated the decision to hold the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.¹⁵ The initial reaction from the Nazi party to the Olympic ideals in the early 1920s was one of disdain. A Nazi publication, the *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, denounced the Olympics as the antithesis to Nazi racial ideology and *volkisch* collectivism, describing the Olympics as, “artificial and mechanical...without inner necessity and culturally unproductive, [an enterprise] whose chief political consequence is the enhancement of Bolshevism’s war against the white

¹³ Anton Rippon, *Hitler’s Olympics: The Story of the 1936 Nazi Games* (South Yorkshire, Great Britain: Pen and Sword Military, 2006), 7-12.

¹⁴ Rippon, *Hitler’s Olympics*, 7-12.

¹⁵ Large, *Nazi Games*, 62.

race.”¹⁶ However, this view shifted as leaders such as Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler recognized the potential propaganda power that hosting the Olympic Games could bring to the Third Reich. Thus, the anti-Semitic and discriminatory policies of Hitler and the Nazi party quickly encroached on the world of sport and Olympic preparations, to ensure that the Games would be a grand display of a powerful, new Germany.

The Coordination of Sport in Nazi Germany

All areas of German life were brought in line with Nazi ideals, and German sport was no exception. In December of 1933, months after Hitler took office, he outlined the process for the coordination of sport. He proclaimed:

Today I have granted my final approval for the commencement and completion of the structures on the stadium grounds. With this, Germany is being given a sports arena the likes of which are to be found nowhere in the world. The fact that the completion of the planned large-scale construction works is creating many thousands of man-days is something which fills me with particular joy.

However, buildings alone are not sufficient to guarantee that German sports are accorded a position in the international competitions which corresponds to the world prestige of our nation. Much more significant is the unified, committed will of the nation to choose the best competitors out of all Germany's *Gaue* and to train and steel them so that we may pass the forthcoming competition with honors.

A no less important task is the sustained and lasting attention to physical exercise in the entire German *Volk* as one of the most important cultural assets of the National Socialist State. We will make of this a permanent basis for the spirit of the New Germany in the physical strength of its Volk.

The *Reichssportführer* is solely responsible to myself and the competent Reich Minister of the Interior for the successful accomplishment of these two tasks. I ask all organizations, official bodies, etc. to grant him every possible support and encouragement.¹⁷

¹⁶ Georg Haller, "Der Olympische Gedanke," *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, 392, quoted in Large, *Nazi Games*, 61.; The Nazis propagated the belief that Jews were behind the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

¹⁷ Adolf Hitler, *Nationalist Observer*, December 14, 1933, quoted in Max Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations 1932-1935* (Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1990), 400.

This proclamation highlights what was a three-fold approach to the coordination of sport. Furthermore, it highlights the value the Olympics could have in validating the Nazi state, while also aiding the process of coordination. First, the Nazis included sport within the Nazi bureaucracy so that policy and decision-making went through the Nazi party. Secondly, the Nazis systematically removed Jews from sports clubs and isolated Jewish sports organizations. In preparation for the Olympic Games, Jews were denied equal opportunities to train, or were simply prevented from competing. The third aspect of the coordination of sports was the emphasis on athleticism and physical strength as a cornerstone of military excellence that embodied the ideal Nazi. The Nazis connected the physical perfection of the Aryan body with sports. The processes of coordination continued beyond the 1936 Olympics, but many of the maneuvers made by Hitler and the Nazis in the establishment of a sports bureaucracy and the eradication of non-Aryans from the world of sport were made under the looming shadow of the Olympic Games.¹⁸

One of the first steps in coordinating sport in Nazi Germany was bringing it under the bureaucratic control of the Nazi party. The new, leading position, as Hitler mentions in his proclamation, *Reichssportführer*, was given to Hans von Tschammer und Osten, a violent SA leader and a loyal Nazi. Tschammer became the president of the National Olympic Committee, and had considerable influence over the organization of the Olympics.¹⁹ However, Hitler also utilized Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, the Reich Interior Ministry, the Wehrmacht, and the SS to prepare for the Games.²⁰ At the same time, the two men who had been so instrumental in securing the Olympic bid for Berlin, Lewald and Diem, were being forced out of the bureaucratic

¹⁸ George Eisen, "The Voices of Sanity: American Diplomatic Reports from the 1936 Berlin Olympiad," *Journal of Sport History* 11, no. 3 (Winter 1984): 59.

¹⁹ Rippon, *Hitler's Olympics*, 35.

²⁰ Large, *Nazi Games*, 67.

organization of sport. Theodor Lewald, who had Jewish ancestry, and Carl Diem, who was married to a woman who was one-quarter Jewish were allowed to keep their places on the German Olympic Committee, but they saw their influence greatly diminish.

The only reason they were not completely dispelled from the German Committee was due to foreign intervention. In a letter from Jeremiah T. Mahoney, President of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) to Theodor Lewald, Mahoney cited the diplomatic reasoning behind the Nazis keeping Lewald as a member of the German Olympic Committee. Mahoney wrote:

I recall that you were permitted to retain your position as the titular Head of the German Olympic Games Committee only through the intercession of the International Olympic Committee and the force of foreign public opinion and I fear that lacking any real authority you are being used as a screen to conceal your government's flagrant violations of the Olympic Ideal of fair play for all even the weakest if you are not a hostage of your own government.²¹

Nazi publications made clear their opinions on Lewald and Diem, as they were attacked for their Jewish connections. For example, *Der Angriff*, Goebbels's propaganda paper asserted that "Lewald plus Diem equals Ullstein [the Jewish publishing house]." ²² After the Nazi bureaucracy was firmly established in the realm of sport by diminishing the roles of the Olympic leaders of the Weimar era, Lewald and Diem, and appointing Tschammer to the new, bureaucratic role of *Reichssportführer*, Hitler could turn his attention to instituting his ideological obsessions against the Jews as preparations for the Olympics commenced.

By the time the Olympics began in August of 1936, Jews had been virtually removed from German sport. Bruno Malitz, a sports leader of the SA who wrote a treatise that was endorsed by Goebbels, proclaimed, "Jewish sports leaders, like the Jewish plague, pacifists, the 'reconcilers' of people, Pan-Europeans... have absolutely no place in German sport. They are

²¹ Jeremiah T. Mahoney to Dr. Theodor Lewald, October 20, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

²² "Es wird gesprungen: Lewald+Diem=Ullstein," *Der Angriff* (March 4, 1933), quoted in Large, *Nazi Games*, 65.

all worse than rampaging hordes of Kalmucks, worse than a flaming conflagration, famine, floods, drought, locusts, and poison gas—worse than all these horrors.”²³ Malitz’s assertion represented the general attitude of the Nazi party toward Jews participating in sports. Thus, the Nazis immediately went about forbidding Jewish participation in German sport. In April of 1933, the German Boxing Federation barred Jews from fighting in or officiating in German championship bouts. Jews were also unable to be members of youth sports associations. In June of the same year, the Nazis announced that Jewish societies were to be excluded from youth, gymnastics, and welfare societies and would not be allowed to use their facilities. Later, Jews were expelled from the largest sports organization in Germany, the *Deutsche Turnerbund*. The following year, Jews were further isolated, as German athletic associations received notification that they were forbidden from holding any athletic contest with non-Aryans or using any training facility, dressing room, or field with them. Not only were Jewish athletes and organizations excluded from athletic competition and training within Germany, on a number of occasions, Jewish organizations and teams were forbidden from competing in international events.²⁴

At the time of the expulsion of Jews from the German Boxing Federation, Erich Seelig, a twenty-two year old German Jew, was the middleweight and light-heavyweight champion of Germany. The night before Seelig was supposed to defend his title, the Nazis threatened to kill him if he fought. Seelig was stripped of his titles, and he eventually fled to the United States to avoid further persecution.²⁵ Another champion boxer who was unable to escape the Nazi regime was Johann Trollman. Trollman was a Sinti boxer; thus, he was stripped of his titles in 1933 and eventually forced from the sport. However, unlike Seelig, Trollman was unable to flee Germany,

²³ Bruno Malitz, *Die Leibesübungen in der Nationalsozialistischen Idee* (Munich: F. Eher, 1933), 3, quoted in Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, 60.

²⁴ *Preserve the Olympic ideal: a statement of the case against American participation in the Olympic Games at Berlin* (New York: Committee on Fair Play in Sports, 1935), 51-55.

²⁵ Rippon, *Hitler’s Olympics*, 17.

and in February of 1943, he was murdered in the Neuengamme concentration camp.²⁶ Shortly after the German Boxing Association banned Jews from championship competition, Germany's Davis Cup tennis team followed suit by removing Dr. Daniel Prenn, Germany's number one ranked tennis player from 1929-1932, and the number six player in the world.²⁷ As the *Washington Post* observed in April of 1933, "The Davis Cup hopes of Germany were wrecked today by the Hitler government's ban on Jews as the cup committee dropped its leading player and former captain, Daniel Prenn, because of his race."²⁸ These three star athletes were among thousands of other Jewish and gypsy athletes who were excluded from competing in German sport in the months following Hitler's assumption of power in 1933.

In other instances, there were acts of violence committed against Jewish athletes. In September of 1935, Edmond Baumgartner, a Jewish soccer player in Poland was beaten to death by Nazi supporters during a soccer match between Germans and Poles in Ratibor, Silesia. Accounts said that spectators began chanting "down with Jews" and the game was halted by the referee. After the game continued, spectators began to bombard Baumgartner with rocks, and they eventually invaded the field and beat Baumgartner, who died three days later in a hospital. The incident was covered a month later by the *New York Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*, and it prompted Hans Luther, the German Ambassador in Washington, to send a telegram to Berlin regarding the response to the event, and the fear that the event would be used to fuel the boycott movement that was raging in the United States at the time.²⁹ The Nazis response to

²⁶ Rippon, *Hitler's Olympics*, 18-19.

²⁷ Rippon, *Hitler's Olympics*, 19-20.

²⁸ "Prenn Draws Net Ban in Germany," *Washington Post*, April 12, 1933, accessed April 4, 2016, *Historical Newspapers*.

²⁹ Hans Luther to Berlin, October 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

the beating was to claim that it was a fictional tale conjured up by the Jews to strengthen the boycott movement.³⁰

Other Jewish and non-Aryan athletes, however, still trained in Germany under the new Nazi policies. While some German Jews were invited to train for the Olympic Games, they were severely handicapped because they were not permitted to utilize the Aryan facilities. For example, the experience of Margaret Lambert (formerly known as Gretl Bergmann), a star high jumper, demonstrates the manner in which German Jewish athletes were systematically excluded. In the spring of 1933, Lambert was notified by her sports club that she was no longer welcome. Later that year, her family moved to England to avoid the persecution. While in Britain, Lambert received a notification that she had to return to Germany to try out for the Olympic team. Lambert returned because she was threatened that there would be action taken against her family and other Jewish sports organizations if she did not. Because Lambert was not a member of the German Track and Field Association, which did not allow Jewish members, she could not compete in the same meets or use the same facilities as her counterparts. In an interview, Lambert stated that the facilities Jews had to train were “poor, mostly pretty poor, the Germans would not give you anything good. They let you have the garbage places that nobody else wanted most likely.” She continued, “It was really hard to achieve something spectacular because it was a poor condition and no coaching.”³¹ Despite all the challenges Lambert faced in her training, she still equaled the German record for the high jump in June of 1936. Still Lambert

³⁰ Theodor Lewald to Commodore Ernest Lee Jahncke, December 13, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

³¹ Margaret Lambert, interview by Randy Goldman, video recording, 20 May 1996, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

received a letter saying that her performances did not merit a spot on the German team, and she was offered complimentary tickets to the track and field events, which she turned down.³²



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Lambert is in black.

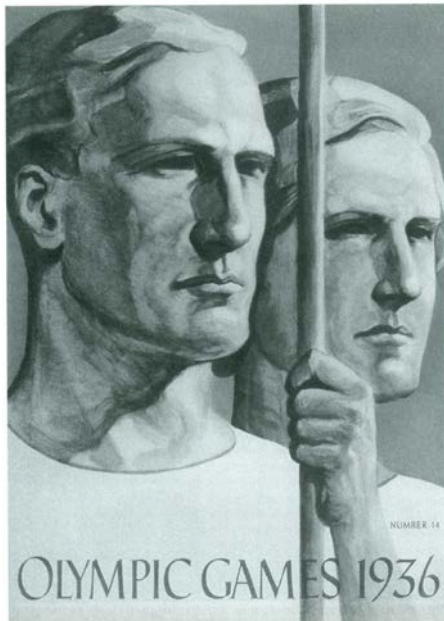
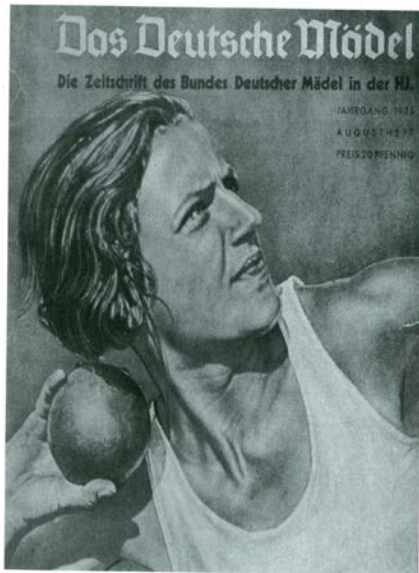
While Jews were systematically excluded from sport in Germany, the Nazis were also propagating the third aspect of the coordination of sport, which was presenting sport as a link to physical strength and to Aryan ideals of racial superiority and military excellence. As Goebbels argued, “German sport has only one task: to strengthen the character of the German people, imbuing it with the fighting spirit and steadfast camaraderie necessary in the struggle for its existence.”³³ For the Nazis, sport presented another means by which to indoctrinate the German people to the Nazi ideals of military preparedness and Aryan physical superiority. For this reason, athletes were presented as being the ideal representations of the Aryan race, with physical strength, blonde-hair, and blue-eyes.

For example, the images below come from a number of Nazi literary sources. The images connect race with athleticism and strength and feature an athlete in the Olympic track and field

³² Margaret Lambert, “A Jewish Athlete and the Nazi Olympics of ’36,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1980, accessed March 7, 2016. *Historical Newspapers*.; “The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Online Exhibition*, accessed March 13, 2016.; The image shows Margaret Lambert (foreground, in black shirt) and other athletes from her Jewish sports club working to convert a potato field into a handball field.

³³ Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, April 23, 1933. “Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Accessed March 14, 2016. <https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-kits/traveling-exhibitions/nazi-olympics/historical-quotes>.

event of pole vault. On the left, is an image taken from an August 1935 issue of the magazine, *The German Girl*, and is an idealization of the Aryan female as an athlete in the Olympic track and field event of shot put. The center image was part of a magazine series, intended for an English speaking audience, published by the Publicity Commission for the XIth Olympic Games. Again, the image perpetuates Aryan racial stereotypes of a physically heroic people. The image on the left comes from the September 1936 issue of the Nazi anthropological and genetics journal *Volk und Rasse* (People and Race). The image links the physical strength of the Aryan race with Olympic competition.³⁴



These three images were drawn from Susan D. Bachrach's work, *The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936*.

A primary focus was placed on sports as a part of youth education in order to prepare the German youth for war. The Nazis chose to emphasize sports, such as cross country running,

³⁴ Susan D. Bachrach, *The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936* (Boston: Little. Brown and Company, 2000), 29-30, 84.

boxing, and strength training in their physical education curriculum because the Nazis alleged that these sports best prepared youth for war through physical development and a spirit of attack in schools as well as in the Hitler Youth.³⁵

Furthermore, the ideal men and women, as seen in the previous images, were portrayed as being athletic, physically strong beings. For this reason, the Nazi organization of sport became closely associated with the SS, an organization that was meant to represent the best of the Aryan race. As Berno Bahro noted, “Since the end of 1934, the SS leadership aimed at being a role model in the field as well as proving the elite SS identity and racially determined *Leistungsadel* [an Aryan aristocracy of performance] through emerging to the national and international forefront of sports.”³⁶ After the 1936 Olympic Games, the SS was to become increasingly involved in the development of competitors for future Olympics and planned to supply at least fifty percent of the German National Team.³⁷ This goal was undermined by the outbreak of war in September of 1939.

After the Nazis took power, Adolf Hitler set about coordinating sport by bringing sports into the Nazi bureaucracy, eliminating Jews from sports clubs and competitions, and utilizing sport as a means to strengthen the myth of the superiority of the Aryan race, while also preparing the German youth for the physical nature of war. All of this was done under the shadow of the looming Olympic Games, whereas Hitler and the Nazis had the opportunity to display Aryan physical superiority to the world. Still, Hitler could not hide the persecution of Jewish athletes from the world, and the policies of coordination threatened the incredible propaganda opportunity for his Aryan nation of hosting the Olympic Games.

³⁵ Bachrach, *The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936*, 29.

³⁶ Berno Bahro, “Can Sport Form a National-Socialist Elite? The Example of SS Sports,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 12 (2014): 1465.

³⁷ Bahro, “Can Sport Form a National-Socialist Elite?,” 1462.

The Boycott Movement

The discriminatory policies and persecution in Germany did not go unnoticed by the international community. Despite the country's own discriminatory practices against African-Americans, the United States led a boycott movement gained traction and threatened Germany's position as host of the 1936 Games.³⁸ Hitler and the Nazis were ultimately able to avoid a boycott through deft political maneuvering while still upholding their own racially discriminatory policies.

The argument at the heart of the boycott movement was that discriminatory policies in the realm of sports in Germany undermined the Olympic ideals of fair play and sportsmanship professed by Coubertin. Mahoney, in his open letter to Lewald summarized the argument for boycotting the Berlin Games:

...under its [Germany's] present leadership your country not only is not observing but cannot observe the principles of democracy and of equality upon which the Olympic Games are based. The Olympic Code which recognizes in the realm of sports the absolute equality of all races and of all faiths is the direct antithesis of Nazi ideology which has as its cornerstone the dogma of racial inequality. Until the Nazi regime has ended, the American people will have no reason to believe that the true spirit of sportsmanship to which the Olympic Games are devoted can find expression in Germany.³⁹

Mahoney further posited all the ways in which Germany was violating the Olympic rules, and challenged the notion that there were no Jews of Olympic caliber in Germany.⁴⁰

Mahoney had an ally in Ernest Lee Jahncke, an American member of the IOC. However, their opinion was countered by Avery Brundage, who was the President of the American

³⁸ Large, *Nazi Olympics*, 69.

³⁹ Jeremiah Mahoney to Theodor Lewald, October 20, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

⁴⁰ Jeremiah Mahoney to Theodor Lewald, October 20, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

Olympic Committee, and Henri Baillet-Latour, who was President of the IOC. These men were both of the opinion that politics had no place in sport.⁴¹ Still, international outcry demanded that Germany provided assurances that German Jewish athletes would not be excluded from the German team. In 1933, at a meeting of the IOC in Vienna and on numerous occasions thereafter, Germany's top officials affirmed that no Jewish athlete would be excluded from the German team.⁴²

Despite these assurances, Mahoney and the AAU clashed with Brundage and the American Olympic Committee. The pressure of the AAU compelled Brundage to visit Germany in 1934, where Tschammer assured him that no Jewish athlete would be excluded, citing that twenty-one German Jews had been nominated for Olympic training.⁴³ Furthermore, the following year, General Charles H. Sherrill, American member of the IOC, also traveled to Germany to investigate the situation regarding the participation of Jewish athletes in Olympic tryouts. Sherrill declared:

The American stand and that of the Olympic charter insist on a spirit of absolutely open competition and my German visit was to discover if the Germans would maintain this spirit not only in respect to Jews from other countries but to Jews in Germany. In my talks with Hitler and with the German sports leader, Captain H. von Tschammer und Osten, I received assurances but nothing tangible. Today my mail brought a letter from Captain von Tschammer in which were enclosed copies of letters requesting the participation of two German Jews in the Games... I consider the sending of these letters an acid test. Even if the athletes should not accept, they prove that Germany is fully respecting Olympic Game requirements that race, creed or color should not affect selection.⁴⁴

The two German Jews who received letters requesting participation from Tschammer were Helene Mayer, a fencer, and Margaret Lambert.

⁴¹ Large, *Nazi Olympics*, 71.

⁴² Guttmann, *The Games Must Go On*, 66.

⁴³ Hart-Davis, *Hitler's Games*, 65.

⁴⁴ "Reich Inviting Jewish Athletes to Olympics, Sherrill," *New York Herald*, June 27, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

Helene Mayer was born in 1911 to a Christian mother and a Jewish father. At the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, she won gold, and was the world foil champion in both 1929 and 1931. After the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, in which Mayer was ill and finished fifth, Mayer remained in Los Angeles and studied law and languages at the University of Southern California. Shortly after the Nazis took power, the Offenbach Sports Club expelled Mayer.⁴⁵ After Mayer received the letter from Tschammer that Sherrill mentioned, she returned to Germany and was ultimately chosen to compete in the Games, a minor concession to the international pressure.⁴⁶

The decision to choose Mayer to compete in the Games and not Lambert was quite simple. Mayer was only a half Jew, as she had an Aryan mother, whereas Lambert was a full Jew. Mayer still reportedly spoke positively about Germany and expressed her desire to compete in the Games. She also firmly established that she did not associate herself with the Jewish faith or consider herself Jewish in anyway.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Helene Mayer was “the very model of an Aryan brood mare. She was upright, statuesque, and weighed about 150 pounds. She had green eyes, a rather beefy face with a strong jaw, and ropes of blond hair...”⁴⁸ Also, Lambert participated in track and field, the focal event of the modern Olympics. Mayer, a fencer, participated in a sport that received less publicity. With this one minor concession, the Germans were able to avoid allowing any other Jews to compete on the German team.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, 64.

⁴⁶ Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, 71.

⁴⁷ Large, *Nazi Games*, 86.

⁴⁸ Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, 63.; Helene Mayer went on to capture the silver medal.

⁴⁹ “No Olympics in Berlin,” *New York Post*, September 8, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amtes-Olympic Games 1936.; The article used Lambert’s exclusion from the games as a primary example of the exclusion of Jews from the German team and a reason why the United States should boycott the Games.



Photo of Helene Mayer courtesy of the
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.



Photo of Margaret Lambert courtesy of the
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Despite the assurances from Sherrill, Brundage, and the Nazis that Germany would uphold the Olympic principles of fair play and sportsmanship by not excluding Jews from training for the Olympics, the Committee on the Fair Play in Sports published a scathing pamphlet in 1935, aimed at bolstering the boycott movement. To Sherrill's self-proclaimed victory in Germany's concession of inviting Mayer to participate in the Games, the Committee responded, "Their [the Nazis] invitation of Miss Mayer...can not excuse or obliterate the fact that in violation of their pledge the Nazis have denied German Jewish athletes as a group the opportunity to train and compete on the German team." The pamphlet also echoed the view held by supporters of a boycott that sending an American team to the Games equaled validation and

approval of the Nazi regime.⁵⁰ A number of reputable organizations joined Mahoney and Jahncke in their support of boycotting the Olympics. Specifically, the American Federation of Labor, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American Jewish Congress, and the American Civil Liberties Union all supported a boycott. A number of these groups sponsored a massive anti-Nazi rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City, which took place on March 7, 1934.⁵¹ Sherrill responded to these challenges by writing to Tschammer requesting a copy of the letter written to Mayer. For Sherrill, the invitation to Mayer was proof enough that the Nazis were not excluding Jews, and that the boycott movement had no merit.⁵²

These challenges were not enough to compel the American Olympic Committee into boycotting the games. On September 26, 1934, the day after Brundage returned from his inspection tour of Germany, the American Olympic Committee voted unanimously to send the United States Olympic team to Berlin. Over a year later, Brundage won out over Mahoney and, in a narrow decision, the AAU, with a vote of 58.25 to 55.75, decided that it would participate in the Games.⁵³ This decision was a vital one because the AAU was the organization that certified track and field athletes for the Olympics.⁵⁴ Conspicuously missing from the many groups that publicly supported a boycott was the United States Maccabi Association, which claimed to represent “the Jewish sporting youth of this country [the United States].” In a letter to Hans Luther, the German ambassador in Washington, the Association expressed its concern over the

⁵⁰ *Preserve the Olympic ideal: a statement of the case against American participation in the Olympic Games at Berlin* (New York: Committee on Fair Play in Sports, 1935), 22, 29.

⁵¹ Large, *Nazi Games*, 77.

⁵² Charles Sherrill to Hans von Tschammer und Osten, September, 15, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

⁵³ Large, *Nazi Games*, 99.; After the vote to end the boycott threat in the AAU, Brundage was elected to assume Mahoney’s position as the President of the AAU, and shortly after, he would earn a seat in the IOC.

⁵⁴ Large, *Nazi Games*, 74.

treatment of Jews in Germany, but would not make a statement until Germany made assurances that no German Jews would be excluded from the Olympics.⁵⁵

The United States was not the only country to contemplate the idea of boycotting the Olympics. Great Britain and France were two other major western democracies that seriously contemplated boycotting the Games.⁵⁶ However, like the United States, these countries ultimately elected to go to the Games, and the boycott movements had very little impact on the situation in Germany. While the United States, Great Britain, and France had significant boycott movements, other countries had closer relations to Germany and thus no significant movements took place. For example, in Sweden, there were some efforts to boycott the Games; however, the sports leaders in Sweden, like IOC member J. Sigfrid Edström, maintained close relationships with the German committee members, and Germany launched a propaganda campaign in Sweden claiming that the Games were a tool to spread peace. Denmark developed even closer links with Nazi sports (in part because of geographic proximity) and was the object of a substantial German propaganda campaign.⁵⁷

While no countries decided to boycott the Games, a number of athletes made the personal decision to boycott Berlin. Among the Jewish athletes to boycott the Games were Austrian swimmers, Judith Deutsch, Ruth Langer, and Lucie Goldner, French bobsledder (Winter Olympics) Philippe de Rothschild, and Canadian boxers Yisrael Luftspring and Norman Yack.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Nat Jo Ely to Hans Luther, August 28, 1935. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Selected records from the Politische Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts-Olympic Games 1936.

⁵⁶ Arnd Krüger and William Murray eds., *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics, and Appeasement in the 1930s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

⁵⁷ Lars-Olof Welander, "Sweden: Business as Usual," in *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics, and Appeasement in the 1930s*, eds. Arnd Krüger and William Murray (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 163, 168.; Hans Bonde, "Danish Sport and the Nazi Seizure of Power: Indoctrination, Propaganda, and Confrontation," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 10 (2009), 1458.

⁵⁸ Bachrach, *The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936*, 68-70.

As the boycott debates raged on around the world, Germany prepared to host the Games. Recognizing the propaganda value of hosting a major sporting event under the watch of millions of foreign and domestic spectators, Hitler spared no expense constructing a venue that would upstage any games before it. Hitler gave full financial support to Lewald and Diem, promising twenty-million Reichsmarks.⁵⁹ The Olympic Stadium, where the opening ceremony, track and field, and the closing ceremony were held, the Olympic Village, where most of the athletes were housed, and the swimming stadium were three of the most important newly constructed buildings for the Games. The twenty-million marks initially pledged for the construction of new venues was a woefully short estimate. While not everything was funded by the Nazi government itself, it is estimated that the total cost of hosting the games was around 100 million marks.⁶⁰

Before these facilities hosted the greatest athletes in the world, the Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen served as a dress rehearsal for the Nazis. If there were still any doubts as to whether or not the Summer Olympics should be held in Berlin, the Winter Olympics were an opportunity to dispel these misgivings. One Bavarian official explained the importance of a good organizational showing at the Winter Olympics. He wrote, “The whole world will assess the prospects for a successful Olympic year according to our preparations for the winter event. The German government and the entire German people have a stake in the successful management of the Winter Games.”⁶¹ As would be the case in the Summer Games, the Winter Games hosted more countries and participants than its predecessors. Thus, it was an important prelude to the reception of foreigners during the Summer Olympics.

⁵⁹ Guttmann, *The Olympics*, 55.

⁶⁰ Large, *Nazi Games*, 156.

⁶¹ Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Unterricht und Kultus to Reichs- und Preussisches Ministerium des Innern, August 29, 1935, quoted in Large, *Nazi Games*, 113.

The implementation of Nazi policy was evident. Hitler was forced to make minor concessions in order to appease Henri de Baillet-Latour, who was the President of the IOC, and operate in a more clandestine manner, so as to not reignite boycott threats. For example, Baillet-Latour complained to Hitler on a number of occasions regarding anti-Semitic signs that were displayed in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Furthermore, the presence of military troops was evident in Garmisch. The Nazis would attempt to tone down anti-Semitic expressions and military involvement during the Summer Olympics.⁶² These occurrences were only small blips in what was a rather smooth prelude.

Long before the Winter Olympics commenced, Hitler and his military entourage were in the midst of planning a major operation that would challenge the international decrees against Germany in the Treaty of Versailles and Locarno. Two weeks following the Winter Games, Hitler decided to remilitarize the Rhineland.⁶³ On March 7, 1936, with the Summer Olympics less than five months away, German troops moved into the Rhineland, an act that reinvigorated the boycott debate in France, but ultimately amounted to nothing. Hitler's calculated risk would not put a stop to the Olympic Games.

Despite these protests, and the threats of boycott by a number of countries, the 1936 Olympics had more countries and athletes participating than any previous Olympics with forty-nine countries and over 4,000 athletes.⁶⁴ In this sense, before the Games officially began, Germany won a great victory. As Large noted, "By deciding to show up in Berlin despite reservations about Hitler's policies, the world's democracies missed a valuable opportunity to

⁶² Bachrach, *The Nazi Olympics*, 77.

⁶³ Large, *Nazi Games*, 149.

⁶⁴ See Table I in Appendix.

undermine the regime's stature not only in the eyes of the world, but also—and ultimately more important—in the eyes of the Germans themselves.”⁶⁵

The Games of the XI Olympiad

The preparations had been made, and the threats of boycott had dissipated; on August 1, 1936, the Games of the XI Olympiad officially commenced. David Clay Large summarized the magnitude of this event, as he stated, “Opening day of the 1936 Summer Olympic Games constituted the grandest party Germany's young capital had ever seen—grander even than the celebration in June 1871 marking Germany's inauguration as a new empire.”⁶⁶ The Opening Ceremony combined symbolism connecting Berlin to the ancient Games of Olympia, cultural symbolism, and displays of military ritual.⁶⁷ Two weeks later, on August 16, the Nazis could boast significant victories in front of massive crowds in the Olympic Stadium and beyond.

Of the nineteen different sports in the 1936 Games, track and field was undoubtedly the centerpiece that garnered the most foreign and domestic attention. It was for this reason that the Nazis focused on track and field as a primary propaganda tool to disseminate the ideology of anti-Semitism and Aryan superiority. From August 2 through August 9, the greatest track athletes in the world took center stage in the massive, state-of-the-art, 110,000 person stadium. In fact, the largest audience in Olympic history witnessed day one of the track and field competition.⁶⁸ The numbers in terms of attendance and media coverage indicate why the track and field events are the centerpiece of the modern Olympics, and thus, why the Nazis emphasized track and field in its Aryan and anti-Semitic propaganda. In the eight days of track

⁶⁵ Large, *Nazi Games*, 109.

⁶⁶ Large, *Nazi Games*, 191.

⁶⁷ Large, *Nazi Games*, 191.

⁶⁸ Large, *Nazi Olympics*, 228.

and field competition, the stadium filled to capacity nearly every day.⁶⁹ Track and field had far more honorary guests, press and media coverage, participants and active competitors, seats sold, and total number of spectators than any other event. Furthermore, the gross receipts amounted to 1,716,190.60 marks, while the next closest event was soccer with 1,479,190.60 marks. For this reason, in preparing for the Olympics, the German Olympic Committee provided more facilities and more hours were spent training for track and field than any other sport.⁷⁰

The track and field program consisted of twenty-three events on the men's side and six events on the women's side. While the United States' team, as had been the case in previous Olympics, garnered the majority of the medals, and the African-American members of the men's team took home a total of thirteen metals, the German team dominated in the events that most aligned with the Nazi ideology of sport in connection with military strength and preparedness.⁷¹ The host nation dominated the throwing events, which require physical strength, form, and attacking prowess. The first day of the competition was a historic one for the Germans, as Tilly Fleischer won the first medal of the 1936 Summer Olympics in the women's javelin, with an Olympic record, and she also became the first German woman to ever win a gold medal at the Summer Olympics.⁷² Later on the same day, more history was made, this time on the men's side. With Hitler on hand, Hans Wöllke, a member of the SS, won Germany's second gold medal with an Olympic-record throw in the shot-put, and became the first German male to win a track and field gold medal. According to accounts, Hitler was thrilled by the German victories on day one.⁷³ Along with Wöllke's victory in the shot-put, the German Gerhard Stöck placed third in the shot-put. Stöck, a member of the SA, would later go on to win the javelin. When Stöck's victory

⁶⁹ Steeh, *Olympiad 1936*, 78.; See Appendix: Table II for full report on attendance.

⁷⁰ *The XIth Olympic Games Berlin, 1936: Official Report Volume I*, 190, 499.

⁷¹ Large, *Nazi Games*, 229.

⁷² Large, *Nazi Games*, 229.; See Table III in Appendix for a full list of winners in track and field.

⁷³ Large, *Nazi Games*, 230.

was announced over the loud speaker in the Olympic Stadium, he broke into a Nazi salute in the middle of the field.⁷⁴

In other throwing events, Karl Hein of Germany won the gold with an Olympic-record throw in the hammer, while Erwin Blask took the silver medal. These performances in the hammer throw took place with Hitler in the audience. The German team also took home three more medals in the throwing events on the women's side, with Gisela Mauermayer winning the discus, Paula Mollenhauer placing third in the same event, and Luise Krüger finishing second in the javelin. Mauermayer was the most popular female athlete at the 1936 Olympics; she exemplified the Aryan appearance with blond hair worn in the style of the League of German Girls, and she was also a member of the Nazi party.⁷⁵ While both the men and women had strong performances in track and field, it was the German women who carried the team, collecting a total of seven medals, only two less than the men despite the fact that the men competed in twenty-three disciplines, while the women competed in only six. In fact, the German track and field women took home more medals than any other women's team. The German competitors in the throwing events were strong representatives of the Aryan race, and the competitors' connections with the SS and SA demonstrated the ties between race, sport, and Nazi ideology.

Although it is undeniable that Jesse Owens and the African-American contingent delivered stunning performances, Nazi propaganda was ultimately able to downplay these performances while still highlighting the German victories. In total, Jesse Owens won four gold medals, and the African-American track and field members on the United States team won thirteen medals. Still, the Nazis controlled the press in Germany, and they often described the African-American successes within their pseudoscientific racial ideology. Top Nazi officials,

⁷⁴ Large, *Nazi Games*, 230.

⁷⁵ Large, *Nazi Games*, 235.

such as Hitler, Goebbels and Himmler attributed the strong African-American performances to their “jungle inheritance” and “primitive physicality.” Some of these pseudoscientific explanations were expressed in the United States as well by professors and doctors.⁷⁶

No Jewish athletes captured a medal in the track and field events. Furthermore, in a rather ironic twist, it was the American team that created controversy regarding its two Jewish athletes, Sam Stoller and Marty Glickman. Stoller and Glickman, who were both set to run on the American 400 meter relay team, were pulled before the race in favor of Owens and Ralph Metcalfe. The American coaches said that the reason for the switch was that the Germans were hiding their best sprinters, which was, as Glickman stated, “a preposterous story.”⁷⁷ While Glickman believes that anti-Semitism played a role in the decision, there are no official reports that can corroborate the claim.

Although track and field was the centerpiece of the Games, and thus became a grand stage for the Nazis to propagate the German state and Aryan ideals, Germany also scored victories in events such as the modern pentathlon, boxing, and gymnastics. Like the track and field throwing events, which exemplified the Nazi vision of militarizing sport and improving physical strength, boxing, gymnastics, and the skills of the modern pentathlon were emphasized in the process of coordination. The modern pentathlon consists of a 5,000-meter cross-country horse ride, épée fencing, pistol shooting, a 300-meter swim, and 4,000-meter cross country run. The nature of the events makes the modern pentathlon an event that combines stamina, strength, and precision with weaponry. As Sandra Heck explained, “Modern pentathlon requires mainly military skills and historically attracted the attention of officers only. Appropriately, the country

⁷⁶ Large, *Nazi Games*, 244, 331.

⁷⁷ Marty Glickman and Stan Isaacs, *The Fastest Kid on the Block: The Marty Glickman Story* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 19, 27.

that provided the best modern pentathletes simultaneously demonstrated its military strength.”⁷⁸

The emphasis on militaristic skills made it an important event for the Nazis, who were in the process of militarizing sport in the country. Finishing first place in the event was Gotthardt Handrick of Germany. Handrick, like many of the other German athletes was the ideal Aryan, with blonde hair, bluish eyes, and a strong physique. He was also a fighter pilot, who would go on to serve in the war. While the modern pentathlon is one of the least-known sports of the Olympic Games, Handrick’s victory, captivated the German press and caused intense national pride.⁷⁹

In gymnastics and boxing, the German team also enjoyed great success. Because of the *Turnen* tradition, which emphasized gymnastics, the Germans took great pride in the gymnastics competition.⁸⁰ The German team won the team competition and took home an array of individual medals. The German team also finished first on the women’s side. The boxing competition, consistent with the trend of the Berlin Games, was the largest Olympic tournament to date, with over two-hundred athletes from thirty-four countries competing in Deutschland Halle, the biggest indoor sports arena in Europe.⁸¹ The Germans captured five medals in the competition, more medals than any other country.

At the conclusion of the 1936 Olympics on August 16, 1936, the German team could claim an overwhelming victory winning more gold medals and overall medals than any other country. While nine Jewish athletes had won medals from various countries, the fact that they

⁷⁸ Sandra Heck, “‘A Blond, Broad-shouldered with Bright Grey-blue Eyes’: German Propaganda and Gotthardt Handrick’s victory in Modern Pentathlon at the Nazis’ Olympics in 1936,” *Journal of Sport History* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 255.

⁷⁹ Heck, “‘A Blond, Broad-shouldered with Bright Grey-blue Eyes,’” 256.

⁸⁰ Large, *Nazi Games*, 264.

⁸¹ Large, *Nazi Games*, 268.

were Jewish was not mentioned by the well-censored German press.⁸² The 1936 Olympics offered incredible athletic competition across the board, but the success of the host nation on the track, and elsewhere, constituted a major propaganda boost for Hitler's racial ideology.

Conclusion

As William Shirer noted in his correspondence, "I'm afraid the Nazis have succeeded with their propaganda. First, the Nazis have run the games on a lavish scale never before experienced, and this has appealed, to the athletes. Second, the Nazis have put up a very good front for the general visitors, especially the big businessmen."⁸³ The 1936 Olympics were a major success in athletic competition, technological advances, and organizational production. Hitler and Germany not only unveiled and introduced new traditions like the torch run and incredible technological and architectural designs such as the introduction of television coverage and the immaculate and unmatched Olympic Stadium.⁸⁴ Along with the propagation of Nazi ideology through superb athletic performances from the Germans, Hitler also succeeded in creating a façade of an amiable country. They fabricated a smokescreen of hospitality in which it appeared that Jewish persecution was greatly overstated.⁸⁵ On the final day of the Games, the *New York Times* published an article that aimed to summarize the impression the Games left on foreign visitors. It declared:

American readers must be getting tired of the constant iteration that they are the biggest athletic games ever held, the most largely attended, the best organized, the most picturesque and the most productive of new and startling records. However,

⁸² Large, *Nazi Games*, 249.; See Table IV in Appendix for final medal count and point tabulation; see Table V in Appendix for list of Jewish medalists.

⁸³ William Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 65.

⁸⁴ Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, 122-158.

⁸⁵ Arnd Krüger, "'Once the Olympics are through, we'll beat up the Jew.' German Jewish Sport 1898-1938 and the Anti-Semitic Discourse," *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 353-375.

that is not only all true, but it is the picture constantly impressed on one's mind as one moves from one glowing score to another, always amid a good-humored, happy crowd, always under a forest of bright-colored flags, never lost or jostled, with plentiful space around and courteous guides at hand.

Foreigners who know Germany only from what they have seen during this pleasant fortnight can carry home only one impression. It is that this is a nation happy and prosperous almost beyond belief; that Hitler is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, political leaders in the world today, and that Germans themselves are a much maligned, hospitable, wholly peaceful people who deserve the best the world can give them.⁸⁶

The flamboyant description makes the article seem as though it was fabricated through Goebbels and the propaganda office.

Under this façade of cordiality the Nazis quietly continued their agenda of persecuting the Jews. While the world focused its attention on the Olympic Games, there were at least nine operational concentration camps across Germany.⁸⁷ A *New York Times* article foresaw what the Olympic Games would do to the persecution of Jews in Germany. The article's byline read, "For the Olympics, the war against the Jews is to be waged with less publicity."⁸⁸ Thus, the Olympic Games did not result in a happy period of good will; the result was that overt anti-Semitism became covert anti-Semitism for a brief period, while the world watched. The SA slogan became, "Once the Games are through, we'll beat up the Jew."⁸⁹ The Nazi party held true to its word.

The grandeur of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany, was successfully exploited by Hitler to propagate Nazi anti-Semitic racial ideology and the new Nazi state. While Germany had great success in sports like boxing and gymnastics, which were fully indoctrinated into the coordination of sport as fomenting militaristic attitudes, track and field, the centerpiece

⁸⁶ Frederick T. Birchall, "Olympics Leave Glow of Pride in the Reich," *New York Times*, August 16, 1936, accessed April 5, 2016, *Historical Newspapers*.

⁸⁷ See Image XI in the Appendix.

⁸⁸ Otto D. Tolischus, "Nazi Cloak Antisemitism," *New York Times*, January 12, 1936, accessed March 21, 2016, *Historical Newspapers*.

⁸⁹ Krüger, "Once the Olympics are through, we'll beat up the Jew," 362.

of the Modern Olympics became an important battleground of Nazi racial ideology. In track and field, the Nazis were successful in excluding German Jews, while also expressing the notion of Aryan superiority. The successes of the African-American contingent, although certainly a great humiliation to the notion of Aryan superiority in theory, was an afterthought in Hitler's battle against the Jews. When the Nazis took power, they immediately set about excluding Jews from German sport, while also utilizing sport as a form of military training, and they continued this trend during and after the Olympics. The Nazis successfully navigated the boycott movement, only making a minor concession, and the Games went on flawlessly. If Hitler's grand vision had been carried out, "In 1940, the Olympic Games will take place in Tokyo. But thereafter they will take place in Germany for all time to come, in this stadium."⁹⁰ The German defeat in World War II ended this vision, but the Nazi political imprint on the 1936 Olympic Games cannot be forgotten. The value of the Games to Hitler and the Nazis went well beyond the stadium and arenas. Their use as a tool for propaganda both within Germany and beyond helped solidify Nazi power in Europe for the next half-decade.

Appendix

⁹⁰ Adolf Hitler in a conversation with Albert Speer, Spring 1937, accessed March 15, 2016. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Table I: Olympics 1896-1936

<u>Games</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Nations participating</u>	<u>Athletes</u>
I	1896	Athens	Greece	14	245
II	1900	Paris	France	26	1,216
III	1904	St Louis	United States	13	687
IV	1908	London	United Kingdom	22	2,035
V	1912	Stockholm	Sweden	28	2,547
VI	1916	World War I: canceled			
VII	1920	Antwerp	Belgium	29	2,669
VIII	1924	Paris	France	44	3,092
IX	1928	Amsterdam	The Netherlands	46	3,014
X	1932	Los Angeles	United States	37	1,408
XI	1936	Berlin	Germany	49	4,066

The table demonstrates the growth of the games from the Games of the I Olympiad, in 1896 to the Nazi Games in 1936 (“The Games at the Millennium”).⁹¹

Table II: Number of Visitors

⁹¹Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, “The Games at the Millennium,” in *The Olympics at the Millennium: Power, Politics, and the Games*, ed. Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 4.

Number of Visitors

The varying number of visitors in the Olympic Stadium, as can be seen from Nos. 28, 30, 31, 33, and 35, is due to the fact that the requirements for seats within the spectator stands differed according to the number of participants in, for example, the Opening Ceremony, the presentation, "Music and Dances of the Nations," the Military Concert, and the Closing Ceremony.

No.	Type of Sport or Event	Site	August	Number of Days and Events	Number of Seats Reserved and Sold				Total Number of Spectators during the Events
					Guests of Honour and Complimentary tickets	Press and Radio	Participants and Active Competitors	Seats Sold	
1	Athletics	Olympic Stadium	2nd- 9th	8	45,209	8,408	37,821	654,683	746,121
2	Marathon Race	Avus Motor Road	9th	1	386	202	unlimited	13,399	13,987
3	Wrestling and Weight-Lifting	Deutschland Hall	2nd- 9th	8/15	33,229	7,290	14,780	82,640	137,939
4	Boxing	Deutschland Hall	10th-15th	6/11	12,490	5 857	11,097	105,321	134,765
5	Fencing	Cupola Hall and Tennis Stadium .	2nd-15th	14	4,002	2,439	5,776	23,441	35,658
6	Shooting	Shooting Ranges at Wannsee	6th- 8th	3	450	210	1,105	845	2,610
7	Modern Pentathlon:				unlimited				
	5,000 Metre Cross-Country Ride	Döberitz	2nd	1	+ 200	230	300	2,943	3,673
	Epée Fencing	Tennis Stadium	3rd	1	980	120	360	770	2,230
	Shooting	Shooting Ranges at Ruhleben	4th	1	150	65	150	354	719
	Swimming	Swimming Stadium	5th	1	1,826	491	810	11,833	14,960
	4,000 Metre Cross-Country Run	Wannsee Golf Course	6th	1	1,150	130	350	980	2,610
8	Gymnastics	Dietrich Eckart Open-Air Theatre .	10th-12th	3	5,294	1,401	8,274	49,791	64,760
9	Equestrian Sports ¹⁾	May (Polo) Field	12th-14th	3	5,747	1,386	3,528	76,947	87,608
					unlimited				
10	Cross-Country Ride	Döberitz	15th	1	+ 1,398	300	300	14,671	16,669
11	Cycling (Training incl.)	Cycling Stadium	6th- 8th	3	2,130	1,572	1,750	22,392	27,844
12	100 km Road Race	Avus Motor Road	10th	1	436	302	100	2,796	3,634
13	Swimming	Swimming Stadium	8th-15th	8	7,466	3,928	11,824	117,013	140,231
14	Swimming Training	Swimming Stadium	3rd- 7th	5	free admission			61,814	61,814
15	Relay of the Continents	Swimming Stadium	16th	1	458	358	342	15,331	16,489
16	Rowing	Grünau Regatta Course	11th-14th	4	5,435	1,656	3,248	68,961	79,300
17	Canoeing	Grünau Regatta Course	7th- 8th	2	2,178	728	1,600	20,097	24,603
					Seats were provided on the accompanying boats according to the resp. requirements				
18	Yachting	Kiel Bay	4th, 10th and 13th	8				21,373	21,373
19	Football, Elimination Rounds	Post Stadium	3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th	5	3,125	1,955	2,905	84,718	92,703
20	Football, Elimination Rounds	Mommensen Stadium	3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th	4	1,450	1,404	1,976	12,849	17,679
21	Football, Elimination Rounds	Hertha-B.S.C. Field	4th, 6th, 8th	3	678	750	1,593	20,513	23,534
22	Football	Olympic Stadium	10th, 11th, 13th, 15th	4	19,313	4,204	17,762	332,274	373,553
23	Hockey	Hockey Stadium	4th-15th	12	12,532	2,916	11,124	157,531	184,103
24	Handball, Elimination	Police Stadium	6th, 7th, 8th, 10th	4	1,200	900	1,040	9,557	12,697
25	Handball, Elimination	Sport Ground on Hohenzollerndamm	6th, 7th, 8th, 10th	4	1,588	780	1,040	6,878	10,286
26	Handball	Olympic Stadium	12th and 14th	2	9,261	2,102	8,826	165,794	185,983
27	Basketball	Tennis Stadium and Courts	7th-14th	8	3,470	1,960	2,405	13,973	21,808
28	Baseball	Olympic Stadium	12th	1	5,496	1,151	4,413	81,505	92,565
29	Polo	May (Polo) Field	3rd- 8th	6	12,266	2,427	4,246	116,345	135,284
30	Opening Ceremony	Olympic Stadium	1st	1	8,617	1,051	3,637 ²⁾	78,054	91,359
31	Equestrian Sports and Closing Ceremony .	Olympic Stadium	16th	1	9,496	1,051	1,289	80,478	92,314
32	Festival Play and Repetition	Olympic Stadium	1st, 3rd, 18th, 19th	4	51,808 ⁴⁾	2,636	5,338	268,311	328,093
33	Music and Dances of the Nations	Olympic Stadium	10th	1	42,189 ³⁾	1,051	3,395	46,202	92,837
34	Military Concert	Olympic Stadium	13th	1	6,043	1,051	4,523	81,717	93,334
35	Berlin Youth	May (Polo) Field	9th	1	20,571	unlimited	unlimited	16,553	37,124
36		Dietrich Eckart Open-Air Theatre .	2nd, 5th, 6th, 14th	4	10,307	1,488	570	60,757	73,122
37	"Herakles"	Dietrich Eckart Open-Air Theatre	4th, 7th, 16th, 17th, 18th	5	4,481 ⁴⁾	1,468	602	70,437	76,988
38	Olympic Concert	Dietrich Eckart Open-Air Theatre .	15th		2,485	786	50	16,793	20,114
39	Art Exhibition	Exhibition Hall on Kaiserdamm ..	July 15th to August 16th	33	2,000	1,200	free admission	69,764	72,964
40	Participants' Festival	Deutschland Hall	16th	1	Admission on invitation tickets			1,851	1,851
Total:					358,990	69,404	180,249	3,161,249	3,769,892

Chart displaying the number of visitors for each event during the Olympic Games (Official Olympic Report).⁹²

⁹² The XIth Olympic Games Berlin, 1936: Official Report Volume I, 498.

Table III: Track and Field Medalists⁹³

<u>Event</u>	<u>Gold</u>	<u>Silver</u>	<u>Bronze</u>
100 Meters (m)	Owens (USA)	Metcalfe (USA)	Osendarp (Holland)
200m	Owens (USA)	Robinson (USA)	Osendarp (Holland)
400m	Williams (USA)	Brown (GB)	Lu Valle (USA)
800m	Woodruff (USA)	Lanzi (Italy)	Edwards (Canada)
1,500m	Lovelock (USA)	Cunningham (USA)	Beccali (Italy)
10,000m	Salminen (Finland)	Askola (Finland)	Iso-Hollo (Finland)
110m Hurdles	Towns (USA)	Finlay (GB)	Pollard (USA)
400m Hurdles	Hardin (USA)	Loaring (Canada)	White (Philippines)
3000m Steeplechase	Iso-Hollo (Finland)	Tuominen (Finland)	Dompert (Germany)
50km Walk	Whitlock (GB)	Schwab (Switzerland)	Bubenko (Latvia)
Marathon	Son (Japan)	Harper (GB)	Nan (Japan)
4 X 100m Relay	USA	Italy	Germany
4 X 400m Relay	GB	USA	Germany
Shot	Wöllke (Germany)	Bärlund (Finland)	Stock (Germany)
Hammer	Hein (Germany)	Blask (Germany)	Warngard (Sweden)
Discus	Carpenter (USA)	Dunn (USA)	Oberweiger (Italy)
Long Jump	Owens (USA)	Long (Germany)	Tajima (Japan)
High Jump	Johnson (USA)	Albritton (USA)	Thurber (USA)
Triple Jump	Tajima (Japan)	Harada (Japan)	Metcalfe (Australia)
Pole Vault	Meadows (USA)	Nishida (Japan)	Oe (Japan)
Decathlon	Morris (USA)	Clark (USA)	Parker (USA)
<u>Women's (W) 100m</u>	Stephens (USA)	Walasiewicz (Poland)	Krauss (Germany)
W 80m Hurdles	Valla (Italy)	Steuer (Germany)	Taylor (Canada)
W High Jump	Csak (Hungary)	Odam (GB)	Kaun (Germany)
W Javelin	Fleischer (Germany)	Krüger (Germany)	Kwaniewska (Poland)
W Discus	Mauermayer (Germany)	Wajsowna (Poland)	Mollenhauer (Germany)
W 4 X 100m Relay	USA	GB	Canada

⁹³ Hart-Davis, *Hitler's Games*, 247-249.

Table IV: Medal Count and Point Tabulation

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Gold</u>	<u>Silver</u>	<u>Bronze</u>	<u>Points</u>
Germany	33	26	30	181
United States	24	20	12	124
Italy	8	9	5	47
Finland	7	6	6	39
France	7	6	6	39
Hungary	10	1	5	37
Sweden	6	5	9	37
Japan	6	4	8	34
Netherlands	6	4	7	33
Great Britain	4	7	3	29
Austria	4	6	3	27
Switzerland	1	9	3	26
Czechoslovakia	3	5	-	19
Canada	1	3	5	14
Argentina	2	2	3	13
Estonia	2	2	3	13
Norway	1	3	2	11
Egypt	2	1	2	10
Poland	-	3	3	9
Denmark	-	2	3	7
Turkey	1	-	1	4
India	1	-	-	3
New Zealand	1	-	-	3
Latvia	-	1	1	3
Mexico	-	-	3	3
Yugoslavia	-	1	-	2
Romania	-	1	-	2
South Africa	-	1	-	2
Belgium	-	-	2	2
Australia	-	-	1	1
Philippines	-	-	1	1
Portugal	-	-	1	1

Point tabulation: three Points for Gold; two points for silver; one point for bronze (Mandell).⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics*, 207.

Table V: List of Jewish Medalists (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Medal</u>
Samuel Balter	United States	Basketball	Gold
György Bródy	Hungary	Water Polo	Gold
Miklos Sarkany	Hungary	Water Polo	Gold
Karoly Karpati	Hungary	Freestyle Wrestling	Gold
Endre Kabos	Hungary	Individual Sabre, Team Sabre	Gold
Irving Maretzky	Canada	Basketball	Silver
Gerard Blitz	Belgium	Water Polo	Bronze
Robert Fein	Austria	Weightlifting	Gold
Helene Mayer	Germany	Individual Foil	Silver

Images

Image I: A cartoon promoting the boycott (Committee on the Fair Play in Sports).

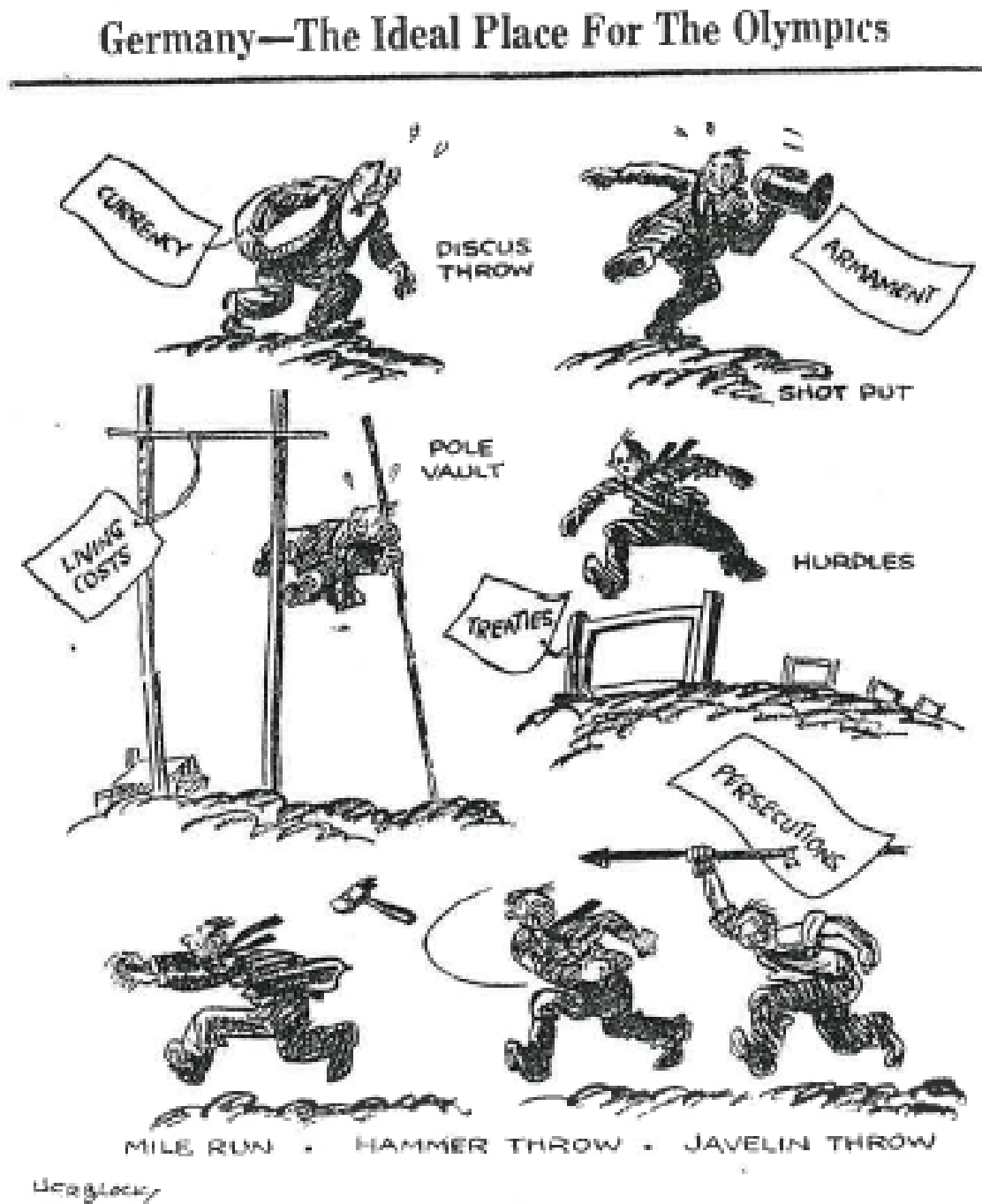


Image II: A sign outside a ski club in Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Committee on the Fair Play in Sport).



Image III: Sketch plan for the Olympic Stadium (IOC Official Report)

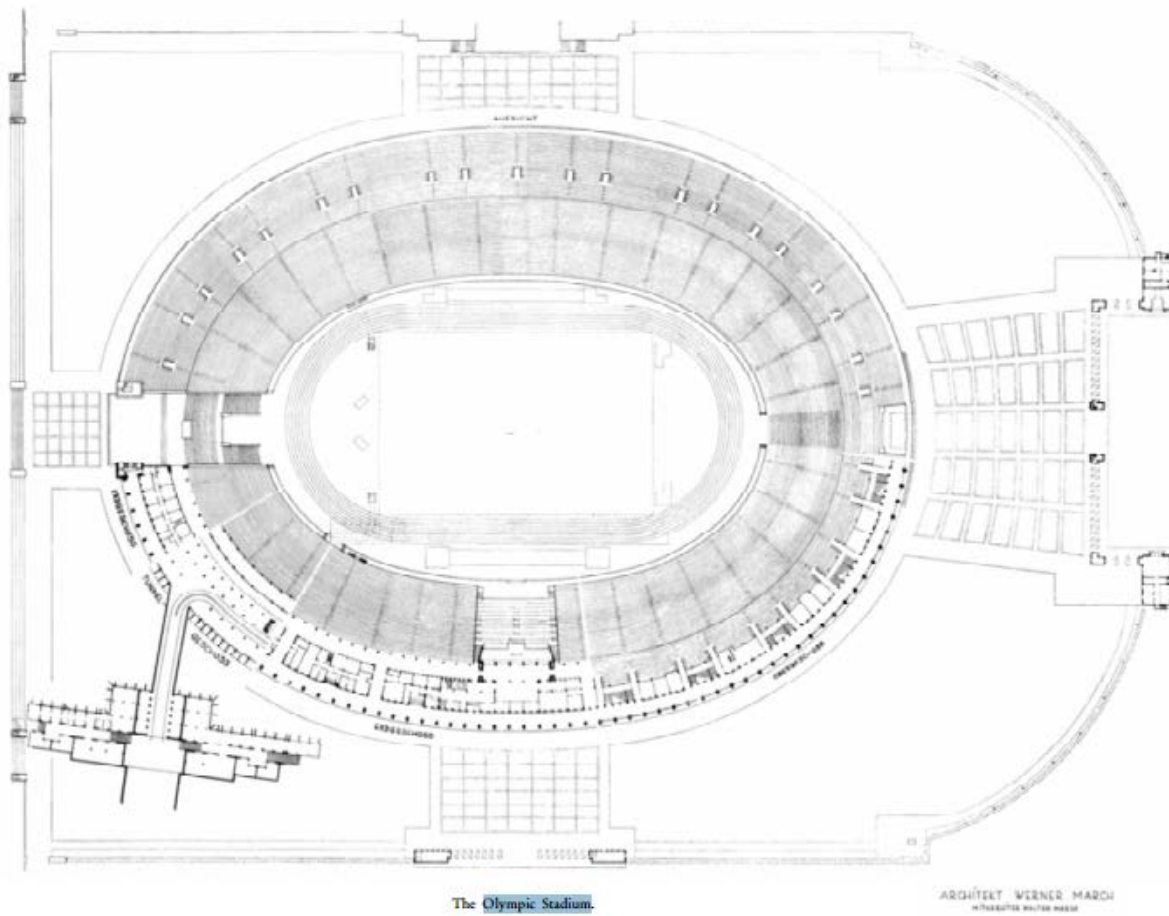


Image IV: Construction on the Olympic grounds (IOC Official Report).



The Reich Sport Field during construction. Lower left: the Cupola Hall of the House of German Sport, the site of the Olympic fencing tournament. Upper right: the [Olympic Stadium](#).

Image V: This image shows the Olympic stadium as well as the swimming stadium on the left (IOC Official Report).



Image VII: The Streets of Berlin during the Olympics (Bachrach, 86).



Image VII: Hitler is received by the IOC outside the Olympic Stadium (IOC Official Report).



Image IX: Hitler enters the Olympic Stadium with Baillet-Latour and Lewald (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

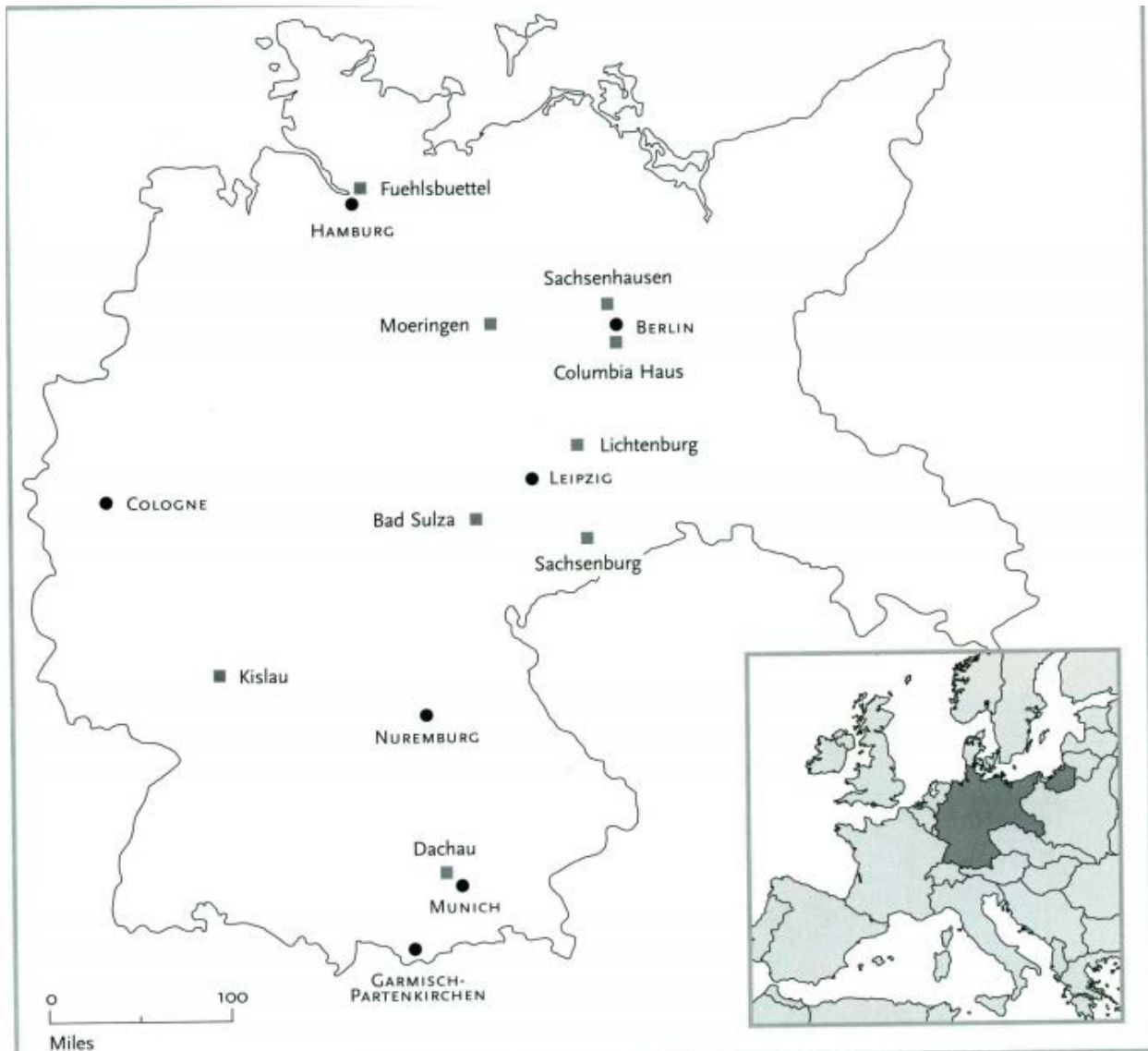


Adolf Hitler, flanked by Dr. Theodor Lewald (right) and IOC president Henri de Baillet-Latour, enters the Olympic stadium. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Germany.

Image X: Helene Mayer giving the Nazi salute on the podium accepting her silver medal (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).



Image XI: Concentration camps in Germany in 1936 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).



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