

# **Sport: Nationalism & Internationalism**



A.S.S.H. Studies in Sports History: No. 2

# **SPORT: NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM**

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## PREFACE

As part of A.S.S.H.'s services to members it has been decided to produce occasional *Studies in Sports History* focussing on particular topics or themes. Suggestions for future compilations are welcome.

It is often suggested, as did a correspondent to the *South Australian Register* back in 1859, that 'a nation indicates its character by its sports'- The essays presented here will provide evidence for those who wish to test this hypothesis. They raise some interesting questions. Why do the Japanese revere a sport full of tradition, ritual and freaks? To what extent did public school games ideology influence Britain's attitude to war? Why have the French showed a relative lack of interest in team and spectator sports? Why have sports heroes and heroines figured so prominently in Australian popular culture and what factors have influenced the decision to call some heroes but others merely celebrities?

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# **FROLICKING DRAGONS: MYTHIC TERROR AND THE SUMO TRADITION**

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The wrestlers enter the ring to confront their opponents. They come either from the East side or the West. They are tall, with big bellies, and muscles like iron. They tower like the two Deva kings. They glare, jut their elbows, and divide the ring between them, each squatting in his own half. They compose themselves for some little time, marshalling their strength. Then they rise with a roar, with forearms of iron and fists of stone, to strike each other with the speed of lightning flashing through the clouds. They sway like flowers in the wind. Feinting to deceive their opponents, they take advantage of their lapses to defeat them. Their wrath is that of Chung K'uei capturing demons, their strength that of Kiyomasa slaying the tiger, they roar like lions, they are like hawks or falcons attacking a vulture, or two tigers fighting over a carcass, or two dragons frolicking with a jewel.

Terakado Seiken, 1831<sup>1</sup>

Six times each year, for two weeks at a time, Japan's sumō wrestlers compete against each other in a blaze of publicity. The main stadium in Tokyo, the Kokugikan, where three of those tournaments are held, is always jammed. So are the annual tournaments in Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka. For every day of every tournament, between the hours of four and six in the afternoon, the major bouts are shown live on television, and broadcast on radio. The wrestlers themselves are well-known public figures, much in demand for charity occasions, much-photographed, their private lives the subject of speculation in magazines, bars and kitchens all over Japan.

None of this is unusual. Public interest and enthusiasm have followed all modern spectator sports into the media age. Cricketers, footballers, boxers, swimmers, bullfighters, players of tennis, golf and baseball, like the sports they represent, have all basked in, fretted under, and profited from, the same public regard. What is unusual is that of all the sports

mankind has carried with it into the television age, sumo is by far the most peculiar. In almost every respect it seems out of place, as if by some strange quirk it alone has escaped the evolutionary pressures which have streamlined and secularised the rest of modern sport, and has lumbered uneasily into the twentieth century with its pre-modern features intact, a dinosaur among gazelles.

Take its pace, for example. It is impossible to imagine a sumo wrestler running, or even so much as hurrying. They move instead with a measured and rolling gait - the 'slow and deliberate steps' noted by a Western observer in 1854.<sup>2</sup> This is striking enough when seen as they make their majestic progress towards the ring before a bout, but still more so when glimpsed in the street, against the kaleidoscopic background of their scurrying fellow-countrymen. In a nation where everybody seems to hasten, wrestlers saunter. They deport themselves with similar deliberation in the ring, approaching their bouts with a minimum of fretful haste, and a maximum of dignified ceremony. Each confrontation is preceded by what sometimes seems an interminable succession of delaying tactics - crouching, stamping feet, flexing muscles, glaring at each other, retiring to their corners from time to time to rinse their mouths, or spit, or wipe their armpits, or grab a handful of salt to scatter over the ring. Then, at what at first glance may seem a completely arbitrary moment, they attack each other. The contrast with other modern spectator sports, where warm-ups and psychological foreplay are confined to the locker-rooms, and where confrontations are brisk and matter-of-fact, could hardly be more marked.

Not even when wrestlers come to grips is this air of solemn dignity dispelled. Elsewhere, hand to hand combat, whether boxing or wrestling, is inevitably accompanied by violence: boxing, despite the demands it makes upon a diversity of skills, always involves a deliberate attempt to hurt one's opponent; Greco-Roman wrestling requires that the opponent be immobilised and - by extension - humiliated. In either case, once the bell rings, both dignity and equanimity tend to be forgotten. Such is not the case with sumō, which is so hedged about with restrictions as to make even a nose-bleed a matter of great rarity. The

*Sumō densho*, written early in the eighteenth century, established rules far more severe than those designed by the Marquis of Queensberry. It forbade not only gouging, breaking fingers, grabbing genitals, and kicking at chest or abdomen, but also striking with the clenched fist, whether to eyes, nose, throat, chest, solar plexus or navel. So solicitous has the sport been of its contestants that even some thrusts with the open hand were prohibited -an upward thrust to the bridge of the nose, for example, or a simultaneous strike with both palms to the ears of an opponent, on the curious grounds that either form of attack could cause the adversary 'to become dazed'.<sup>3</sup> With such protection, therefore, the most common form of injury actually inflicted by wrestlers upon each other would be the cauliflower ear, and even this has virtually disappeared. Certainly it is not the problem it was in 1935, when a medical survey of 161 wrestlers revealed that 118 (73%) sported this particular emblem.<sup>4</sup>

A *sumō* bout is decided in one of two ways - when a wrestler is forced out of the ring, or when he is brought to the ground; in the case of both wrestlers leaving the ring, or falling over, together, the decision goes to whomever of the two holds his ground longer. There is, therefore, none of the unseemly scrambling one sees in Greco-Roman wrestling when contestants go to the mat; only when a *sumō* wrestler loses his balance does he lose his dignity, and since the bout comes to an end the moment he does so, his discomposure is kept to the minimum. The bouts themselves, too, tend to be short - quite often lasting only a few seconds - and this is encouraged by the size of the ring itself. Only fifteen feet in diameter, it does not really lend itself to prolonged - and potentially humiliating - evasion. In the unlikely event of a bout continuing long enough to cause the contestants serious distress, the referee can call for a break, a *mizuri*, after which the wrestlers begin their contest afresh. All in all, the elements of the sport are fairly simple - despite the existence of forty-eight recognised techniques, each with its own name. Strength and bulk are the crucial factors in determining the outcome of a contest - strength to push or twist an opponent out of the ring, or pull him to the ground, or lift him by the belt, and bulk to deter one's adversary from doing the same. Agility comes a very poor third,

while the main tactical decision - frequently, given the speedy conclusion of most bouts, the only one - is what to do at the *tachiai*, the very opening of the bout, whether to thrust the opponent backwards, or to grasp his belt, or to dodge and pull him off balance.

Other features are still more extraordinary, like *sumō*'s undoubted commitment to the past. It is a defiantly traditional sport, going out of its way to preserve customs which elsewhere would have been jettisoned as uneconomic, uncomfortable, old-fashioned and a downright waste of time. This would certainly apply to many aspects of the wrestler's appearance. All, for example, have their hair done in the costly and time-consuming *ōichō* style, a style which otherwise disappeared in 1876. They wrestle in loincloths, a form of dress which, although once far from uncommon, vanished more than a century ago, in deference to Western unease at the sight of the exposed human buttock. For formal display, they wear *keshō-mawashi*, brightly coloured and lavishly-embroidered ceremonial aprons, just as they have done since the eighteenth century. The referees, too, members of families associated with wrestling for more than two hundred years, wear a costume far removed from modern dress, theirs is the formal dress of the sixteenth century, and the fan they carry with them into the ring dates from the same period.<sup>5</sup>

Ceremony, in a variety of curious and time-consuming forms, is another significant part of the *sumō* tradition. Not a day of a tournament passes without its share of pageantry. At around four o'clock each afternoon, the thirty-odd leading wrestlers, dressed in their formal aprons, parade out onto the ring to be introduced ceremoniously to the crowd, just as they have done since the eighteenth century. They are followed by the *yokuzuna*, the Grand Champions, each of whom, girdled with a large white hawser, and with two wrestlers in attendance, mounts the ring individually to introduce himself in a series of movements - hand-claps, gestures, foot-stamping - expressive of his might, his courage, and his willingness to engage in unarmed combat. This is the *dezuiri*, or *yokozuna dohyōiri*, the ring-entering ceremony said to have originated with the famous Tanikaze in 1791, and developed into two roughly similar forms by Shiranui II (Grand Champion from 1863 to 1869), and Unryū (Grand Champion between



1861-65). Then, at the completion of each day's wrestling, comes yet another ceremony from 1791,<sup>6</sup> this time a series of movements in which a lone wrestler flourishes a bow and finally, laying it across his shoulders, stamps his feet, crouches, and then inches upwards to his full height, in emulation of the Grand Champions.

There is a religiousity about *sumō*, too, which sets it apart from any other modern spectator sport. The links with *Shintō*, Japan's indigenous faith, are unmistakable. Referees have a semi-priestly status, and so, in a sense, do Grand Champions; from the white hawser which denotes their rank are suspended white paper streamers, or *gohei*, denoting divine regard, exactly like those which mark sacred sites and objects all over Japan. Every man attaining Grand Champion rank, too, will make a special visit to the Meiji Shrine to announce it to the gods, and to seek their protection. Then, on January 6 each year, as the New Year celebrations reach their climax, the Grand Champions and their attendants will visit the Meiji Shrine again, to perform the formal *dezuiri*. Their lesser colleagues may be denied this special relationship with the gods, but there can be no doubt that every one of their bouts is encased in religious symbolism: as they rinse their mouths and scatter salt they enact the two most common forms of lustration; as they clap their hands they echo the standard form of invocation; as they stamp their feet they represent the ritual of exorcism. Even the ring itself shares in the religious aura. Before each tournament it is consecrated by a *Shintō* priest, who purifies it with salt and sake, and buries underneath it an unglazed jar containing such talismanic substances as nuts, seaweed and dried fish.<sup>7</sup>

One further aspect of *sumō* demands comment in this context, simply because it is so idiosyncratic and so palpable. This is the size and configuration of the wrestlers themselves - 'enormous men', so Basil Hall Chamberlain described them in 1890, 'mountains of fat and muscle'.<sup>8</sup> Even to observers of Chamberlain's generation, accustomed to a little decent Victorian *embonpoint*, athletes of such bulk seemed peculiar; to our own, they seem little short of outrageous, fair game for sniggers on the one hand, or puritanical disapproval on the other. Athletes in the modern world, if they are not lean and wiry, are at least lean

and well-muscled - even heavy-weight boxers - and the fact that these wrestlers are so manifestly not sets sumō apart from all other sports. So much do wrestlers differ from other Japanese that they might almost be a different race. What are we to make of a sport in which the nation's top thirty-six contestants can show an average weight of more than 300 pounds, and in which the lightest weighs over 240 pounds, and the heaviest 431 pounds?<sup>9</sup> Not even weight-lifters, notorious among modern sportsmen for their eccentric approach to matters of physique, can rival this massive indifference to athletic fashion. Indeed, the sumō wrestler's attitude to his bulk far transcends mere indifference. His body-weight is an integral element in his sporting performance; he sets out deliberately to acquire it, drives himself mercilessly to increase it, and sheds it (or some of it) when it is no longer needed. In the process he submits to a life-style which any other athlete would find intolerable, including a large alcohol intake, and meals at which it is not unusual for 4000 calories to be consumed at a sitting. We may be sure that this is not done without strain, and - no matter how dignified the sport itself may seem - not without considerable indignity, either. Take the experience of the 322 pound Fujizakura, currently ranked sixteenth among Japan's wrestlers:

When I started wrestling I was about five feet seven inches and 175 pounds... I wasn't very big, so I had to train twice as hard as anybody else, and I also got twice as hungry. I looked forward to my meals...I used to get through about ten large bowls of rice (*domburi-meshi*) each morning. Then I'd have a nap. But I was so full of food that I wouldn't dare turn over. I felt that I'd vomit if I did. I'd lie down on my back, to help the food digest, and just drop off to sleep. Then I'd wake up a couple of hours later, and when I did my fingers would be swollen. If I flapped my hands around, the fingers wouldn't move... So in the space of two years I got up to 220 pounds. Now having reached my present weight, I keep it constant by only having two or three large bowls of stew and rice.

Inevitably, wrestlers risk certain penalties, including chronic hepatitis, high levels of cholesterol and uric acid in the blood, chronic nephritis, and diabetes.<sup>11</sup>

All of this now seems uncomfortably old-fashioned, and indeed it is. Anywhere else in the world, such a sport would be

laughed - or yawned - out of existence. Yet it should not be forgotten that, like the dinosaur, sumō could once have claimed a massive distinction; there was a time, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when it was conceivably the most modern sport in the world. Certainly it had a great many of the features one associates with modern sport, and at least a hundred years earlier than they appeared elsewhere. To begin with, it was a spectator sport. Other traditional Japanese sports - hunting, archery, football (the customary, if somewhat misleading, translation of *kemari*, a game in which a group of elegantly-dressed gentlemen did their cooperative best to keep a deerskin ball in the air), and the whole corpus of martial arts, including unarmed combat, and fighting with sword, staff and javelin - discouraged a mass audience. Not so sumo, which depended for its existence upon the support of a paying public. By the late eighteenth century regular tournaments were being held in Edo (perhaps better known by its later name, Tokyo), Kyoto and Osaka, where they drew crowds of as many as two thousand paying spectators on each day of a ten-day tournament.<sup>12</sup> This may not seem particularly noteworthy for the largest city in the world, which Edo, with its population of one million, was. Melbourne with only 300,000 inhabitants, could send 100,000 of them to the Melbourne Cup in 1880.<sup>13</sup> But for Japan, with no real tradition of spectator sports, such figures were unprecedented.

Not that this met with much initial sympathy from the Tokugawa government. Japanese officialdom - that is, the hereditary samurai class, some seven per cent of the total population of Tokugawa Japan (1600-1868) - subscribed to the view that the common people, although well meaning enough, were inherently stupid and idle. A good government was that which, firmly but benevolently, kept them away from frivolous entertainments; further, a safe government was one which prevented large assemblies of people. On both counts, therefore, the sumō of the seventeenth century failed to arouse any official enthusiasm; on the contrary, the government did all it could to prevent it. Sumō was banned, as often as not, until 1684 when, finally, the government laid down the conditions under which it was to be tolerated. By the eighteenth century, the official attitude had relaxed considerably, and automatic permission was given for

four tournaments a year, two in Edo, and one each in Kyoto and Osaka.<sup>14</sup> In the nineteenth century, indeed, the Tokugawa government came to appreciate, and even to rely upon the special qualities of its sumō wrestlers. During the Perry crisis of 1853-54, when Japan was in very real fear of foreign attack, sumō wrestlers were used to convey to the intruders, none too delicately, the idea that Japan might not be the pushover they imagined. In March 1854, when Perry returned for a reply to the previous year's ultimatum, he was met by a troupe of twenty-three wrestlers<sup>15</sup> ('a body of monstrous fellows, who tramped down the beach like so many huge elephants...men enormously tall, and immense in weight', according to the official American account)<sup>16</sup> who nonchalantly lifted several bales of rice at a time, and then wrestled with each other. Clearly the intention was to impress the foreigners, which it certainly did, although not quite in the way the Japanese would have wished:

Koyanagi, the reputed bully of the capital, was one of them, and paraded himself with the conscious pride of superior immensity and strength. He was especially brought to the Commodore (Perry), that he might examine his massive form. The (Japanese) commissioners insisted that the monstrous fellow should be minutely inspected, that the hardness of his well-rounded muscles should be felt, and that the fatness of his cushioned frame should be tested by the touch. The Commodore accordingly attempted to grasp his immense arm which he found as solid as it was huge, and then passed his hand over the monstrous neck, which fell in folds of massive flesh, like the dewlap of a prize ox. As some surprise was naturally expressed at this wondrous exhibition of animal development, the monster himself gave a grunt expressive of his flattered vanity.<sup>17</sup>

Sumō was also a professional sport very early. Indeed this was one of the prices it was obliged to pay for survival. When the Tokugawa government approved a request to hold a tournament at the Hachiman Shrine at Fukagawa over a period of eight consecutive days of good weather in 1684, it did so only on certain conditions, among them that none but professional wrestlers should appear, and that responsibility for running the tournament should be borne by formally designated administrators, or elders.<sup>18</sup> Amateur wrestling bouts, known as *tsujizumō* (since they took place on street corners), were consistently prohibited, as were contests of the fairground boxing

variety, in which professionals would match themselves against allcomers, or *yosekata*. As a result, *sumō* was totally professional from the early eighteenth century onwards, providing the sole support for large numbers of people. Just how many is difficult to determine, but figures for 1843, although they omit what would have been large numbers of attendants, indicate 36 administrators and 226 wrestlers.<sup>19</sup> There was also a star system, fed by woodblock prints of wrestlers in various heroic poses, and wrestlers themselves were known all over Japan by people who had never seen them. The rules of the sport, too, were codified at the beginning of the eighteenth century, at a time when no other modern sport had begun to deal with that sort of issue.

A further modern feature of pre-modern *sumō* is that it was democratic, something which could not have been claimed for very much else in Japan at that time. It coexisted with an aristocratic wrestling tradition, a very venerable one, characterised by a bewildering variety of complex holds and throws designed to injure or immobilise an enemy, and demanding as much nimbleness as strength. *Sumō* coexisted with this, but had little to do with it. It had scant opportunity. Aristocratic wrestling, generally known as *jūjitsu*, was an essential part of samurai education, hedged about (as so much samurai education was) by restrictions designed to keep it from the common people. Its traditions and secrets were endlessly refined, and jealously guarded, by more than a hundred different *jūjitsu* schools, none of which could be persuaded to reveal them. Except for money, of course. *Sumō* wrestling came from a far humbler tradition. Its ancestors were not professional warriors in service to imperial court or provincial warlord, but rather village strongmen, with no spare time to practise special skills, and even less money for the tuition needed to acquire them. They would meet at local religious festivals to compete with each other in tugs of war, weightlifting, and rough and ready wrestling. Many of its special characteristics - its emphasis on size and strength, its reluctance to occasion injury or humiliation, the general simplicity of its rules and technique - can be traced back to the rustic innocence of its beginnings. It was, of course, taken over by promoters once it reached the cities in

the seventeenth century, and even became a fashionable interest among the military aristocracy - the Tokugawa Shogun himself viewed command performances in his castle grounds in 1791, and on several occasions thereafter.<sup>20</sup> Several wrestlers even acquired samurai patrons. But nevertheless, sumō continued to draw its recruits from the village strongman class; it was still doing so when Chamberlain, who would have seen his first wrestler in 1873, described them, somewhat pejoratively, as men 'with low sensual faces and low sensual habits';<sup>21</sup> it does so still.

What was there, then, about this curious sport which enabled it to transcend government hostility and become the greatest popular spectacle Tokugawa Japan had to offer? Such a question cannot really be answered by reference to the sport as it is now. It is still essentially the same sport, but there is nevertheless no doubt that radio and television have left their marks upon it. In the Tokugawa period, when it first established itself as a spectator sport, it would have been far more static.

The warm-up time, still so interminable, was once infinitely longer, before television shortened it to three minutes, it used to be seven, and before radio shortened it to seven, it used to be virtually without limit.<sup>22</sup> Ceremonial, too, used to be far more intense, with wrestlers displaying themselves to the crowd for an entire day set aside specifically for that purpose. The patrons, therefore, can hardly have demanded action. They cannot have demanded impetuosity, either, for the canopy covering the ring, now suspended from the ceiling, was formerly supported by four posts on the edge of the ring mound. This must inevitably have discouraged use of the *utchari*, the last-ditch pivoting throw which is one of the most spectacular sights sumō can offer; if it did not, then the presence of the four referees squatting by each post, instead of safely off the mound as they are now, would have.

Nor can they have wanted bloodshed, since the rules were so carefully framed to minimize that risk. Obviously the crowd which, in 1825, saw Onomatsu push Inazuma out of the ring within the space of a few seconds must have been seeking a form of

gratification rather different from the Englishmen who, in the same year, watched Jem Burns and White-Headed Bob pummel each other insensible in a fight lasting over an hour.<sup>23</sup> They cannot have wanted a prolonged fight, either. Dr. James Morrow, who accompanied Perry to Japan in 1854, has left an eye-witness description of pre-modern sumō which suggests something very much more perfunctory than one might expect a professional sport to be:

The ring was very small for two men. Two were called out at a time by the manager, when they pushed and butted each other in a most violent manner for a few seconds, the lighter and smaller one always yielding without the spectators perceiving any cause except his own will, when another was called in. This one generally yielded, and a new couple entered; the same operation was repeated the heavy man fat man invariably gaining the palm.<sup>24</sup>

Did they demand agility of their athletes? Apparently not, given that the ring itself, small enough now, was even smaller then, with a diameter of thirteen feet rather than the present fifteen.<sup>25</sup> Had they wanted sprightly wrestlers, in any case, it is hardly likely that they would have encouraged them to be so large. Certainly wrestlers are heavier now - back as recently as 1910 the average weight of the top forty wrestlers was a mere 220 pounds, some 70 pounds less than their modern counterparts, but then they were on average nearly four inches shorter too.<sup>26</sup> All in all it is doubtful that their silhouette has changed much; given the obsessive regularity with which contemporaries recorded the height and weight of pre-modern wrestlers, it is quite clear that these things mattered to them very much more than anything else, except perhaps for stories illustrating wrestlers' physical strength. It was important to them that wrestlers like Raiden and Tanikaze stood over six feet, and weighed more than 380 pounds, and it was important to them that Maruyama Gontazaemon was strong enough to practice his calligraphy with a 125 pound rice bale suspended from his brush.<sup>27</sup> This did no more than reflect the fact that to win a sumō bout, it was important to be strong, and to be, in Morrow's words, a 'heavy, fat man'. It was not important to be agile.

There is other evidence for this, too, albeit of an indirect kind. If one assumes that agility decreases with

advancing age, then there is surely some significance in the fact that pre-modern sumō wrestlers seem to have had very much longer careers than their modern successors. It is unusual these days for wrestlers to delay their retirement much beyond their mid-thirties; since 1926, in fact, only five men have celebrated their fortieth birthdays in the ring - Fujinosato, Noshirogata, Ōshio, Hirosegawa and Makimoto - and only one of them (Makimoto) within the last twenty years.<sup>28</sup> In the pre-modern period, however, and even into the early twentieth century, wrestlers regularly remained active well into their forties. Of those said to have attained yokozuna or Grand Champion status before the end of the Tokugawa period in 1868, all but two wrestled into their fortieth year; of those who did not, one Maruyama Gontazaemon, died in office in his thirty-eighth year, while the other, Onogawa Kisaburō, retired at thirty-nine. Of the rest, indeed, only one - Jinmaku Kyūgoro, - having wrestled to the age of forty, failed to continue for at least another two years.<sup>29</sup> Lesser wrestlers, too, apparently continued much longer. In the 1850s Kaigamine retired at the age of forty-one, but only after breaking both wrists, while Tsurugizan, after sixteen straight years as ōzeki, or Champion, was fifty-one when he elected to stop.<sup>30</sup> The following decade saw the retirement of Sakaigawa, aged forty-one, Ryōgoku, aged forty-five, and Tamanoi, who decided at the age of fifty-five that he had had enough.<sup>31</sup> Figures like this inevitably lead to the suspicion that, whatever qualities were required of pre-modern wrestlers, a limber youthfulness was not among them; further, that if the top ranks of the sumō world could be dominated by men long past their first youth, then it was neither as violent nor as demanding as its modern descendant.

Was it, then, some sort of popular religious ritual, as the various forms of symbolism might well seem to suggest? The Shinto overtones are clear enough, and there is even the occasional Confucian echo. The instructions of a nineteenth century trainer are couched in the language of impeccable Confucian moralism:



Sumo is founded upon honesty; to this are added wisdom, benevolence and courage. It takes no pleasure in the ways of sake, lust or gambling. Though it allows respite at morning and evening, yet it demands constant and unflagging effort. It despises falsehood.<sup>32</sup>

There is also the fact that the origins of the sport are inextricably linked with religious rituals and institutions. Wrestling at local festivals was always connected in some fashion with communal hopes for a bountiful harvest - sometimes taking the form of a contest between local teams, with the winning locality held likely to produce the best rice crop. At the Oyamazumi shrine in Ehime, too, there is an ancient ceremony twice a year, just before the spring planting and the autumn harvest, in which a man dressed in wrestler's loincloth grapples with an invisible opponent, and always loses. As the unseen adversary is the rice god, this is perhaps no more than prudent. It should be noted, too, that *sumō* tournaments as they emerged in the Tokugawa period did so as *kanjinsumō*, or fund-raising *sumō*, tournaments for the benefit of some religious institution. Similarly, prior to the construction of a permanent stadium in 1909, such tournaments invariably took place within the precincts of shrines or temples.

Nevertheless, these religious associations, striking though they may seem, were largely cosmetic. This flavour of religiosity about a sport which in other countries would be considered totally secular is due to a Japanese reluctance - still apparent, but once far more pervasive - to be seen to be doing something for the sake of enjoyment alone. To be judged respectable, any occupation or pastime was obliged to cultivate a reverential atmosphere; this, plus the normal complement of superstition common to athletes at all times and in all places, was enough to give *sumō* its religious coloration - much of which was, in any case, either invented or deliberately exhumed in the course of the eighteenth century to give the sport a spurious antiquity.<sup>33</sup> *Sumō* was far from alone in this; indeed, the religious overtones of other traditional sports (and some not so traditional, like *judō* and *aikidō* are even more pronounced. The use of the element *dō*, or Way, in such sports as *kendō* (the Way of the Sword), or *kyūdō* (the Way of the Bow) denotes pretensions to spirituality far more explicit than *sumō* could ever offer.

It is just not true, either, that the *kanjinsumō*, or fund-raising *sumō*, tournaments were organized in the service of pious ends. As the government made clear in 1773, *sumō* promoters could collect fees from patrons only on condition that part of the proceeds would go to a religious institution, a principle which the promoters accepted - since they had no alternative - but jettisoned, before too long, retaining the *kanjin* title, but paying nothing but lip service to anything else.<sup>34</sup>

What is undeniable is that *sumō* promoters made constant use of land belonging to religious institutions. From the earliest recorded (although presumably not the earliest) *kanjinsumō* tournament held in Edo, at the Asakusa Sanjusangendō in 1648, until 1909, tournaments were held exclusively in the grounds of shrines and temples. Altogether 178 *sumō* tournaments, using thirty-five different locations, are recorded in Edo during the Tokugawa period, fifteen of those sites in the grounds of Buddhist temples, and twenty in Shinto shrine precincts.<sup>35</sup> It must be remembered, however, that Edo, while it could boast of a population of one million at the beginning of the eighteenth century, could not boast of very much else. It had numerous parks and gardens, but these were maintained by the military aristocracy for their own exclusive use; the only open spaces accessible to the common people lay inside shrine and temple compounds, and *sumō* promoters therefore had no alternative but to use them like everybody else.<sup>36</sup> Inevitably, too, intensive secular use leached away much of the spiritual flavour of these sites. The Ekō-in was a case in point. BY 1868, having accommodated more than half of the city's 178 recorded tournaments, this temple, located on the east bank of the Sumida River, had come to be synonymous with *sumō* wrestling; from 1827 onwards it monopolized *sumō* tournaments completely, and by 1868 had served as the location for more than eight times as many of them as its nearest rival.<sup>37</sup> In the process it had become anything but a place for religious contemplation. To the compilers of Murray's *Handbook of Japan*,

Ekō-in might well be taken as a text by those who denounce 'heathen' temples. Dirty, gaudy, full of semi-defaced images, the walls plastered with advertisements, the altar guarded by two hideous red Ni-ō, children scampering in and out, wrestlers

stamping, crowds shouting - the place lacks even the semblance of sanctity.<sup>38</sup>

If *sumō* was deficient in athletic interest, however, and could claim no particular religious status, why was it so much of a success in the Tokugawa period? What exactly was it that prompted two thousand people to part with their money each day of a *sumō* tournament? There are some clues available to us. The first is to be found in the freak-show, for Tokugawa Japan was very much addicted to the curious and the bizarre. No *kaichō* (fetes at which religious institutions displayed sacred images for fund-raising purposes) was complete without its sideshow booths where, for a few coppers, the public could stare all they wished at albinos (sight of whom was believed to ward off measles and smallpox), at armless men and women writing, playing musical instruments, folding paper - even arranging flowers - with their feet, at legless people who could walk on their hands, at those with any kind of deformity.<sup>39</sup> Dwarves were particularly popular. For thirteen coppers in 1822 you could have seen the famous Umekichi, a thirty-one year old man, allegedly standing less than two feet, and weighing little more than 14 pounds.<sup>40</sup> But giants were much more in demand. In 1809 the crowds flocked to see Yodotaki, a woman 7'5" in height, and paid twenty-four coppers for the privilege. Nearly fifty years later, the three giant sisters (Omatsu, sixteen years old and 6'8"; Otake, eleven years old and 5'7"; and Oume, eight years old and 5'1") were the sensation of 1856.<sup>41</sup>

What had this to do with *sumō*? There is, first of all, a strong geographical connection. One of the great freak-show areas of Edo was down by the Sumida River, on either side of Ryōgoku Bridge; you could have seen Umekichi the dwarf there in 1822, or a troupe of dancing midgets in 1844, or, in 1850, a five-year old totally covered with hair.<sup>42</sup> You could also have seen wrestlers, for the Ekō-in, where most tournaments were held, was only a block away. In fact, the geographical nexus between wrestling and freak shows was closer still. Not only was the Ekō-in in the main site for wrestling tournaments, it was also the main location for the religious fetes, or *kaichō*, at which wonders of various sorts - including freaks - were displayed. It dominated the *kaichō* industry just as surely as

it. did wrestling, leasing its grounds for this purpose on 174 occasions during the Tokugawa period, generally for a month at a time - nearly three times as often as its main rival, the Eitaiji at Fukagawa.<sup>43</sup> At various times at the Ekō-in one would have been able to see a 'devil woman' with a misshapen face, a woman whose hands looked like feet, and, to confirm the association with the monstrous and the prodigious, a large rosary, the beads of which measured five inches in circumference.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that, just as the world of the sideshow booth and the sumō stadium intersected at the Ekō-in, so did the world of the wrestler and the freak, the two shading imperceptibly into each other. It is quite clear from contemporary woodblock prints that some wrestlers were, quite literally freaks - endocrine giants, their misfortune indicated as much by their massive jaws and brows as by their size. Passive and gentle, like most acromegalics, they were not necessarily very good at wrestling. But this never seemed to matter to the patrons. The eighteenth century wrestler Shakagatake, a very clumsy and gentle giant, weighing twenty-eight and a half stone, and measuring perhaps as much as 7'5", was a case in point. "He was not a particularly good wrestler", wrote one contemporary, "but he was so large that he fascinated high-born and low-born alike; from morning till night they could talk of nothing else."<sup>45</sup> There were others, equally popular, and even less talented. Sumō promoters, in fact, would pay these giants to dress as wrestlers, and display themselves to the crowd, but never to wrestle. Saitō Gesshin, a gossipy old chronicler and publisher, noted some of these in his diary - Ōzora Takezaemon, for example, a non-wrestler<sup>46</sup> who, in 1827, stood 7'5" and weighed over 300 pounds. "The palms of his hands measure 1'2"," Saitō recorded, "and his feet are 1'3" long, so they say".<sup>47</sup> Mitateyama Kisaku, who appeared in 1843, weighing 260 pounds, was another. "He wants to be a wrestler", Saitō noted, "but he is not good enough". Nevertheless, he appeared regularly in the ring, and Kunisada's portraits of him - massive jaw and cranium well in evidence - are among the most powerful the woodblock print was ever to produce. The following year, a third giant appeared, "A giant called Ikezuki Geitazemon, from Hirado in Hizen, has come to be a wrestler", Saitō

recorded; "he is 7'5" in height, and weighs 314 pounds; his hands are 1'8" long. He is eighteen years old, and is said to have the strength of eighteen men".<sup>49</sup> He never wrestled either.

The freak-show overtones of sumō wrestling did not end there, by any means. The display of adult giants was frequently counterpointed by the exhibition of giant children. One of them, the child Daidōzan Bungorō, who at the age of seven stood a fairly modest 3'10", but weighed a staggering 183 pounds, was a popular figure in 1795 - popular enough for artists of the eminence of Sharaku, Utamaro, Shun'ei and Shunzan all to portray him; Sharaku, indeed, has left no fewer than five portraits of him.<sup>50</sup> Daidōzan was not the only child prodigy to appear at the wrestling, however. Among his successors were the seven year old, Jintsūriki, weighing 174 pounds, in 1836 an eight year-old called Oniwaka who, in 1850, weighed 156 pounds, and a thirteen year-old the following year, Kikenjō, who weighed a breathtaking 252 pounds. In 1859 Saitō Gesshin wrote of Maizuru Komakichi who, at the age of eight, was displaying his 218 pound frame to the wrestling fans at Ekō-in. They must presumably have enjoyed the sight, since he continued to do so for a total of eleven tournaments, extending over several years.<sup>52</sup>

As we have seen, the wrestlers who appeared with these prodigies were also prized above all for their size; the obsessiveness of pre-modern sources on this point is too plain to be denied. There are other indications, too, equally persuasive. Since the eighteenth century, for example, the characteristic artefact of the sumō wrestler has been his handprint, impressed in either ink or cinnabar, and presented to his admirers, undoubtedly in expectation that later, surreptitiously comparing the span of their puny hands against his massive one, they would be reminded afresh of his size, and pause to wonder. In the woodblock print, wrestlers were treated quite differently from other subjects, and always in such a way as to accentuate their size. What the wrestler prints display, quite unambiguously, is bulk, and what they suggest, with equal force, is phenomenal strength accompanied in many instances by an indefinable air of menace. These qualities emerge most clearly in portraits of individual wrestlers, in all of which the subject, his rippling muscles and billowing rolls of fat exaggerated to

the point of caricature, is placed squarely in the foreground, as if threatening to burst out of the borders which confine him. In other prints the air of menace is deliberately exorcised through burlesque - wrestlers shown in comic juxtaposition with children, for example, or referees (then, as now, always small men), or taking their ease in palanquins, supported by bearers half their size; they are even to be seen associated with the ultimate Japanese tokens of delicate fragility, the *geisha* and the cherry blossom.<sup>53</sup> Since these prints were all designed as commercial propositions, it seems reasonable to assume that in emphasizing their subjects' size, explicitly or implicitly, the designers were giving the public precisely what it wanted.

It was the wrestlers, more than the wrestling, that the people of Tokugawa Japan went to see, and with precisely that blend of fear and amazement with which they would, at other times, have visited the freaks in their booths on the same site. The wrestlers, whether they were athletes or no - whether, indeed, they were active wrestlers or merely acromegalic counterfeits - were there not so much to wrestle as to gratify that ancient and instinctive impulse, defined by Leslie Fiedler as 'quasi-religious awe', that we all feel in the presence of the abnormal.<sup>54</sup> This is precisely why the *sumō* of the pre-modern period was so unhurried, why wrestlers could spend unlimited time for their stately warming-up exercises, why a whole day could be spent on ceremonies in which they displayed themselves to the public. Not that the wrestling itself was unimportant. Terakado Seiken's description of superhuman combat - 'like hawks or falcons attacking a vulture, or two tigers fighting over a carcass, or two dragons frolicking with a jewel' - suggests the ritual of the bout also played its part. To the public, watching these threatening beings go through their pantomime of conflict, the experience was, like Fiedler's freak-show, 'finally therapeutic and cathartic, no matter what initial terror and insecurity it evoked'.<sup>55</sup> By summoning, then controlling, and finally dispelling the mythic terror embodied in the *sumō* wrestler in the ring, the *sumō* promoters had stumbled upon one of the oldest and most basic of recipes for success. Despite the inroads of radio and television, they have still not quite forgotten it.

NOTES:

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2. Frances L. Hawks, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan*, abridged and edited by Sydney Wallach, New York, Coward-McCann, Inc., 1952, p.192.
3. Funabashi Seiichi, *Sumō-ki*, Tokyo, Bēsubōru Magajin-sha, 1982, pp.26-28.
4. *Ibid.*, p.147.
5. The two hereditary referee lines, Kimura Shōnosuke and Shikimori Inosuke, have provided referees since 1726 and 1729 respectively. For this, and much else on the history of sumō, see P.L. Cuyler, *Sumo: From Rite to Sport*, Tokyo, Weatherhill, 1979, p.74.
6. *Ibid.*, p.177.
7. *Ibid.*, p.13; *Taiyō*, No.106, p.23.
8. Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Japanese Things: Being Notes on Various Subjects Connected with Japan*, Tokyo, Tuttle, 1971; v.supra, 'Wrestling'.
9. Based on material contained in *The Japan Times*, January, 1982.
10. Hayashi Eiroku, *Rikishi o miru*, Tokyo, Chūō Kōron-sha, 1979.
11. *Ibid.*, p.118.
12. Bunkyo-ku yakusho, *Bunkyo-ku shi*, Tokyo, 1968, v.2, p.903.
13. K.S. Inglis, "Imperial Cricket: Test Matches Between Australia and England, 1877-1900", in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds.), *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1979, p.163.
14. Furukawa Miki, *Edo jidai ōzumō*, Tokyo, Yūzankaku, 1968, pp. 73-141.
15. *Ibid.*, p.220; cf. Hawks, p.189, which speaks of "some twenty-five in number".
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Furukawa, p.103.
19. *Ibid.*, p.207.
20. *Ibid.*, pp.147, 161, 183, 197, 207.

21. Chamberlain, v.supra 'Wrestling'.
22. Funabashi, p.73.
23. *Recollections of Reading*, by an Octogenarian, Reading, Blat-grave Street Steam Printing Works, 1888, pp.43-46. I am indebted to James Rundle for the reference.
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25. Funabashi, p.62.
26. Hayashi, pp.84-94.
27. Furukawa, p.126.
28. Kojima Teiji, "Dohyō jimbutsu-shi, No.63; Gojussai rikishi katsuyaku su", in *Ozumo*, November, 1981, p.150.
29. Cuyler, pp.196-197; Takanaga Taketoshi, *Kokin meirikishi hyakketsu*, Tokyo, Kōbunsha, 1982, pp.7-75.
30. Furukawa, pp.90, 212; Saitō Gesshin, *Bukō nempyō* (Kaneko Mitsuharu, ed.), Tokyo, Heibonsha Tōyō Bunkō Series, No.118, 1968, vol. 2, p.132.
31. Kojima, pp.151-152.
32. Furukawa, p.204.
33. Cuyler, pp.80-81.
34. Furukawa, pp.139 ff.
35. Hiruma Hisashi, "Edo no kaichō", in Nishiyama Matsunosuke (ed.), *Edo chōnin no kenkyū*, Tokyo, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1973, Vol. 2, pp.450-452.
36. Itō Yoshiichi, "Edo no akichi; in *Gekkan hyakka* (Heibonsha), No. 233 (March, 1982), pp.13-18.
37. Hiruma, pp.450-452; Furukawa, p.197.
38. Basil Hall Chamberlain and W.B. Mason, *A Handbook for Travelers in Japan*, London, John Murray, 6th Edn., 1901, p.138.
39. Furukawa Miki, *Zusetsu shōmin geinō - Edo no misemono*, Tokyo, Yūzankaku, 1982, pp.143-144, 126-128, 138.
40. *Ibid.*, pp.133-134.
41. *Ibid.*, pp.77-78, 134-135.
42. *Ibid.*, pp.133-134, 132, 142.
43. Hiruma, pp.349-365, 388-398.



44. *Ibid.*, p.444; Saitō, Vol. 2, pp.86, 89-90.
45. Quoted in Funabashi, pp.107-110.
46. I owe the term to Jenepher Duncan.
47. Saitō, Vol. 2, p.77.
48. *Ibid.*, p.100.
49. *Ibid.*, p.104.
50. *Sumō ukiyo-e*, Tokyo, Bēsubōru Magajin-sha, 1975, p.101.
51. *Ibid.*, p.100; Saitō, Vol. 2, p.123; Furukawa, *Edo jidai ōzumō*, p. 181.
52. Saitō, Vol. 2, p.177; *Sumō ukiyo-e*, p.100.
53. *Ibid.*, *passim*.
54. Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1978, p.17.
55. *Ibid.*, p.31.

# BRITISH SPORTING TRADITIONS AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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In 1914, Britons at all levels of society had a 'tragically unrealistic' attitude towards war.<sup>1</sup> Hard lessons needed to be learned before Liberal traditions and the nation's unique emotional and moral patriotism adjusted to the sober requirements of a modern and horrific total war beyond the imagination of anyone before 1914. Such lessons explain in part perhaps why the impact of this fifty-one months of war on the nation's society, structure, and psychology has been so monumentally long-lived.

The wider subject of this study is the impact of events on attitudes - especially patriotic attitudes - how the elements of these attitudes are changed, adjusted, or remain. Before the fact, abstract patriotism may draw promises of abstract sacrifice and heroism from us all but when the moment of truth arrives, in the context of the busy and complex modern world, almost everyone would be forced to make real choices and some individual adjustments to previous pledges. The focus of this paper is on a very powerful component of the British ideology in 1914, its sporting traditions, and explores one case of how their particular promise changed, adjusted, or remained during the first months of World War.

Britain's sporting traditions had helped prepare the nation for war. Colin Nicolson posits that public school values permeated Edwardian discussions of patriotism at almost every level of society and dictated that 'if the cause was just, a man must do his duty with courage, discipline, and sportsmanship.'<sup>2</sup> These in turn fed from Victorian elite ideas of the moral worth of games in what J.A. Mangan has called 'a unique atmosphere and a simple faith.'<sup>3</sup> Working class sports even were seen to retain their own version of this ethos. Three years before Sir Henry Newbolt wrote his famous 'Vitai Lampada' lines, 'Play up and play the game!' a Sheffield sports paper held forth that foot-

ball built in local young men 'the spirit of pluck, opposition, competition, never-know-when-they-are-beaten, never-say-die, play up Wednesday or United kind of feeling, which tends to the greatness of our national character.' <sup>4</sup>

As we know, there were questions about the directions of these sporting traditions, especially as professional sports produced, according to one hostile observer 'thousands of pale, rickety young fellows, who ought to be doing a little kicking on their own account . . . or better still . . . joining the territorials ...' <sup>5</sup> Still, when war came in August 1914, and the emotional and moral expectations of duty found their stage in the war against Germany, it was the positive worth of British sport that held the initial spotlight. In a heady atmosphere, the product of both the voluntarism of an older, nineteenth century nation and the newer Edwardian popular militarism that had embraced people of all political parties and brought into existence the Boy scouts, the Boys Brigade, and the National Service League, the only nation involved without a peacetime conscription recruited an army of a million men, each seemingly enlisting, Ann Summers says 'as he might join the Salvation Army.' <sup>6</sup>

Well in the vanguard here was the uniquely English-speaking connection of sports with the national life. Commentators were swift to assess the value sporting experience would have to the physical and moral heart of a Britain actually at war. British sport was extolled, defended, and compared with that of the enemy, while its language and images were used to bring the war home to the home front and the potential recruit. The *Athletic News* proclaimed, for example, that:

The nation of gentlemen and sportsmen are showing that games are doing more than develop physique, for they have encouraged the fighting qualities of our race, trained powers of endurance, the capacity for hard work, a contempt for peril, and indifference to pain and even death. We have no need to be ashamed of the effects of the sports <sup>7</sup> and pastimes of the English and Greater Britain.

Conversely, the moral failings of the 'Hunnish enemy' and their highly publicized brutality in places like Belgium, the British sporting ideology found simple to explain. F.S. Jackson, an

England and cricket captain and a new army officer, told a recruiting meeting that Germans did not play games and noted the result. Another commentator went further, saying that 'the German legions have not been civilized by contact with their fellow in friendly fight' and claimed that 'an Army of sportsmen could never have committed the atrocities laid to their charge.'<sup>8</sup>

As has been documented elsewhere, sportsmen's response to this call to action contributed heavily to what the *Guardian* called 'the intensely un-Prussian spectacle of free England freely taking up arms.'<sup>9</sup> During the eight weeks of August and September 1914, British Army records indicate that 761,824 men enlisted for the duration of the war, astonishing numbers that included many sportsmen.<sup>10</sup> By the start of November 1914, for instance, 89 out of the 208 entries to the Football Association Amateur Cup had withdrawn from the competition for reasons of player enlistments.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most famous and controversial support came from Lords, the headquarters of County Cricket, when the Marylebone Cricket Club ostentatiously called off the remaining few weeks of the county championship and declared the then leading county Middlesex, as the winners. This followed the last public statement of W.G. Grace, the greatest name of the past half century of British sport - a letter to the *Sportsman* at war's outbreak urging the enlistment of all able bodied cricketers.<sup>12</sup>

This all was a happening of which many nations would be proud but the voluntary system upon which Britain was depending bore within it the seeds of several important problems. Primary amongst these was the dependence of the nation for its war effort on passion. As abstract patriotism came face to face with the deadly reality of Europe at war, it was inevitable that sooner or later certain groups or individuals would be deemed by official or public opinion as not contributing fully or sufficiently to the national effort. Already, soon after the declaration, talk of 'slackers' and 'shirkers' had come into vogue.<sup>13</sup> The sustained appeal of emotion alone, whatever its form, was clearly not adequate for the organisation of a complicated nation for global conflict, and this was certainly true in the part the country's sporting ideology played. Despite the M.C.C.'s simplistic answer, sport in Britain was no longer a matter of

small clubs or individuals; it had become in the previous twenty-five years a complex part of the national social and economic life that could not be subsumed in a simple and abstract definition of patriotism. One part of this complexity - professional association football, preparing to open its season as cricket was suspended - entered this arena of pride and expectation in the country's sporting traditions during September 1914. This multi-million pound concern with all its very real financial, contractual and demographic concerns of an 'industry' employing up to 7000 skilled players to entertain hundreds of thousands of spectators each week had in the previous twenty-five years taken pride of place in the winter leisure patterns of the mass classes. An important question was to arise; what role was the 'people's game' going to play in the enlistment of the nation's sporting ideology for the great struggle against the Central Powers?

The decision of football to continue and the response of outraged 'respectable public opinion' is well known. Many considered this a cruel betrayal of British sporting traditions. The rest of this paper concentrates on the ideological argument over differing 'definitions of patriotism' and especially on the defenses of those who championed soccer's 'crisis season.'

Football's major champion was, of course, the Football Association, the governing body of the sport in England, responsible for the registration and discipline of all players and clubs whether amateur or professional. This role had evolved in the previous thirty years as an uneasy compromise between the founding, upper middle class, amateur spirited ideals of the association and emerging urban and business-based professionalism and its large working class following. It was clear from the beginning that this elite organisation - its patron was King George V - located so close to the center of the criticism in the capital was nervous about its commitment to continue the professional program. Such sensitivity seems understandable when one considers the vitriolic levels to which the voices of enraged sporting patriotism were raised. Spectators, clubs, players, and others connected with the professional game could not escape it. Letters in the press urged players to enlist en masse as a great example to all, handbills were distributed

at matches which pointed out that the consequences of defeat at the hands of Germany would include the end of football, applications for licences to provide refreshments at matches were indignantly dismissed in magistrate's court, the Bishop of London denounced the sport as 'monstrous' at the 1914 autumn session of the London Diocesan Conference; and suggestions were made in the Commons that the government, now controlling the railways, should see that anyone travelling to see football matches should pay double the normal fare.<sup>14</sup>

In this atmosphere, the F.A. set out to defend itself. And it did so using three of the most time-honored totems of British sporting ideology, an appeal for 'fair-play', an evocation of the need for 'rational recreation', and a dedication of service to the nation as a duty.

The first element of the F.A.'s attempt to turn the nation's sporting traditions to its own defense - the appeal to 'fair play' - can be seen in a widely circulated report of a special subcommittee the F.A. Council adopted on October 12, 1914. It announced,

Football, which is essentially the pastime of the masses, is the only sport which is being attacked. It is producing more men for the Army and money for relief, than all the others. Other sports and the places of entertainment, are being carried on as usual without objection. Although the Football Association publicly stated its willingness to place its whole organisation and influence at the service of the War Office, the agitation by parties not connected with the game to stop and playing of matches continued. As the War Office are satisfied, the Football Association are of opinion that its members should continue to play matches...<sup>15</sup>

Others took up this tactic; the London professional clubs were rather more forceful in their language when in December 1914 they called the criticism 'unscrupulous, unwarrantable, and undignified, and wholly opposed to British traditions' and declared themselves 'prepared to discontinue the game and close the grounds simultaneously with the closing of race-courses, golf links, theatres, music halls, picture palaces, and kindred entertainments.'<sup>16</sup>

The *Athletic News* called such entertainments 'antidotes to mental tension' and towards this justification, the F.A. aimed the second arrow of its quiver.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, influential opinion had had thoughts about the leisure of not only those left behind but also of the thousands of recruits in training. Some lamented the temptation of these men to drunkenness and advocated the closing of public houses and the setting up of adult evening classes and community sing songs as alternatives. Such activities were certainly not what most recruits would have chosen and even the most vociferous of commentators were forced to admit that 'a certain amount of relaxation from the stress and anxiety of the period is nothing short of essential.'<sup>18</sup> The Football Association used this fact to defend itself, stating in a memorandum for public release in December 1914 that 'it is in the best interest of the country that the workers who are not wanted for the War should continue to have the same facilities of recreation as those to which they have been accustomed for as many years.'<sup>19</sup> This approach gained some support outside of football as well. The *New Statesman* called the effort to stop games 'un-English' and hinted darkly that 'the penalties of war will fall heavily enough even on the gayest of us before all is over.'<sup>20</sup>

But 'service to the nation' proved to be the F.A.'s most potent defense. Sport had always been expected to 'serve' and from the very beginning the F.A. had stressed this role. In the first days of the war, the F.A. only allowed the customary professional practice matches to be played on the condition that the gross receipts were paid to the Prince of Wales' Fund for war relief. Though the clubs were not altogether happy with this instruction, soon the Football Association was announcing that professional soccer had provided £10,000 for war charity.<sup>21</sup>

By far and away the most effective defense for football and the Football Association during the 1914-15 season, however, were the efforts poured into what was the most visible contribution to the war, recruiting for the voluntary army. Through a series of energetic and self-publicized moves the Football Association was able to turn the most telling of criticism, that professional football was hurting the nation's efforts against itself and emerge, in the end, in legend if not in fact, as the most effective voluntary recruiting bureaucracy of the war. When the orig-

inal negotiations with the War Office had taken place, the F.A. had offered facilities for public figures to give recruiting speeches to crowds at matches. In a letter to the East Riding of Yorkshire F.A. soon after, the secretary of the F.A., F.J. Wall said that he felt that 'football was going to prove one of the best of the recruiting agencies, and he was convinced that the F.A. Association would be able to justify themselves in the eyes of the public.'<sup>22</sup> Although there is no doubting the patriotism and genuine endeavours of this recruiting drive, it was certainly used as an almost blanket protection for the health of especially professional football.

The image of the F.A. as a master recruiter did not lay on an altogether smooth path, however. As anti-football voices doubted the claims of the sport for its service, the Association and its supporters sought to defend its record as the nation's top recruiter, sometimes down-playing the percentage of eligibles attending matches where recruiters spoke and results were poor, and at other times stressing the numbers other football organisations, mostly amateur, had provided to the Army. As response to Lord Durham's claim, for example, that only 10% of County Durham's footballers had enlisted, the Durham F.A. publicized through the parent F.A. in London that of the 7,020 eligible registered amateur players in the county, 3520, or 50.14%, had enlisted by the second week in December 1914.<sup>23</sup> Again the game found allies in the sporting press; one Bristol sports paper (estimated that of the 14,000 men who had enlisted in the area by December 1914, three quarters were 'as players or spectators, devotees of the Association code.'<sup>24</sup>

The full story of the F.A. as recruiter, culminating with its sponsorship of a Footballers Battalion is a complex and fascinating one, sadly far beyond possibilities for expansion here.

The F.A.'s three pointed defense was hard pressed through the 'crisis season' and the Association watched with relief as Sheffield United played Chelsea the last game of the year, the so-called 'Khaki Final' of the Challenge Cup, on April 24, 1915, in Manchester. Lord Derby was asked to present the Cup and he did so with the now almost legendary words, 'You have played



with one another and against one another for the Cup; play with one another for England now.' <sup>25</sup> It is this image that the Football Association salvaged from the vicissitudes of this first nine months of total war. There were no long-term recriminations on this score, as perhaps many of the game's detractors hoped. Both Wall and his controversial vice-president, J.C. Clegg, received knighthoods before their retirement and histories of the F.A., both official and otherwise, stress the Association's service rather than its awful dilemma. Wall, in his memoirs entitled *Fifty Years in Football*, devoted only a few pages to the entire war and these made little reference to the difficult debate over sporting traditions. <sup>26</sup> This glossing of the difficulties of 1914-1915 reveals both the continuing sensitivities of a man at the center of the F.A.'s public struggle with official and mass opinion twenty years earlier, and the success of the strategies the body followed in these tumultuous months.

Sporting traditions played an important part in the way Britain fought the opening years of the Great War as they helped stir and direct emotional patriotic sacrifice through horror-filled times. In this atmosphere, forced to serve competing public desires, the Football Association, too, drew upon past sporting values to justify its actions. The resolution of this effort highlights the transition from the older to the more modern traditions of sport in Britain and equates in many ways with the emergence of a new, broader, 'professional' society equipped for modern war, from a very different and narrower 'amateur' Victorian past.

NOTES:

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2. Nicolson, p. 167.
3. J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism and the Victorian and Edwardian School - The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge, 1981) p. 206.
4. Football World, 9 September 1985, quoted in Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915* (London, 1980)p. 225.

5. H. Hargreaves, 'The General Press and the Rot in Sport,' *Westminster Review*, July 1913, p. 55.
6. Ann Summers, 'Militarism in Britain Before the Great War,' *History Workshop*, #2, Autumn 1976, p. 117.
7. *Athletic News*, 4 January 1915, p. 1.
8. *Athletic News*, 21 September 1914, p. 1.
9. *Manchester Guardian*, 14 August 1914, p. 4.
10. General Annual Reports on the British Army, 10 October 1915 to September 1919, *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1921, Cmd. 1193.
11. Minutes of the Amateur Cup Committee, 2 November 1914, F.A. Archives London.
12. *Sportsman*, August 1914, p. 1.
13. See John Morton Osborne, *The Voluntary Recruiting Movement in Britain* (New York, 1982).
14. *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 28 August 1914, and 3 March 1915; *Western Daily Press*, 3 September 1914, 19 November 1914, and 24 November, p. 4.
15. Minutes of the Meeting of the F.A. Council, 12 October 1914, F.A. Archives.
16. Reported in the *Sports Times*, Bristol, 5 December 1914, p. 2.
17. *Athletic News*, September 7, 1914, p. 1.
18. *The Referee*, February 14, 1915, p. 5.
19. Minutes of the Emergency Sub-Committee, 5 December 1914, F.A. Archives.
20. *New Statesman*, September 12, 1914, pp. 680-682.
21. *Sports Times*, 26 September 1914, p. 2.
22. Quoted in *Sports Times*, 26 September, 1914, p. 2.
23. *Sports Times*, 12 December 1914, p. 2.
24. *Sports Times*, 5 December 1914, p. 2.
25. Quoted in James Walvin, *The People's Game - The Social History of British Football* (London, 1974) p. 90.
26. See Walvin, pp. 89-90. Sir Frederick Wall, *Fifty Years of Football* (London, 1935) p. 148.

# SPORT AND POLITICS IN FRANCE IN THE 1930s: THE WORKERS' SPORTS FEDERATIONS ON THE EVE OF THE POPULAR FRONT

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## INTRODUCTION:

Few people, the French included, see France as a great sporting nation. In a recent edition of the French government sponsored *France Information* devoted to sports in France,<sup>1</sup> one of the first questions it posed was one that few other countries would have considered necessary applied to themselves: 'Is France a sporting country?' Its answer was in the affirmative, but followed by the qualification 'And yet...', pointing to the much greater attendances at football matches in Italy, West Germany and Great Britain. It went on:

One gets the distinct feeling that the great majority of Frenchmen are loathe to appear fanatical about sports, let alone to identify themselves with teams or individual athletes, as if such demonstrations appeared beneath their dignity. Some people claim this attitude springs from the French educational system, which puts a premium on the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual attainments and pays but little importance to sporting results. It has long been a tradition that the French will attempt to stand out for their knowledge and culture rather than for their physical skills.<sup>2</sup>

Some nations may have seen this as a matter for pride, but the writer of this article went on to note the solid grounds for optimism in the way French people were taking on a new outlook in regard to sport. The rest of the brochure expanded on this theme, showing the great variety of sporting attractions France had to offer.

The fact that the reputation of France for serious writing, by her intellectuals and by her historians in particular, has helped conceal what even a short acquaintance with that country will make patently obvious: the French not only have a passion for sport, but they have made some important contributions to its development, while the role of sport in everyday life has been one of the most neglected aspects of its much

analysed history.

France was responsible for the world's two greatest international sporting events: the modern Olympic Games and the World Cup in football. Few people will need reminding that the major driving force behind the revived Olympic Games, first held in Greece in 1896, was the French aristocrat, Pierre de Coubertin. Less than ten years after the troubled but none too inauspicious revival of the Olympic Games, what was to become the world body for controlling the most rapidly expanding of all popular sports, Association Football, was founded in Paris on 21 May 1904. There delegates from seven European nations - but none from the four British associations - constituted the Federation Internationale de Football Association: its first president was a Frenchman, Guerin, and it is by the French initials that FIFA is known today. Another Frenchman, Jules Rimet, gave his name to FIFA's most famous creation, the World Cup, first played in Uruguay in 1930. It might be noted, too, that the major international club championship, the European Cup, first played in the autumn of 1955, was founded by the French newspaper, *L'Equipe*.

As participants in sport the French have not, until recently, made a great impact on the world scene. In tennis the famous 'four musketeers' (Borotra, Brugnon, Lacoste, Cochet) managed to break the Australian and American dominance back in the 1920s, while Suzanne Lenglen remained champion of the female branch of the game for most of that decade. But it is only in recent times that France has achieved spectacular international success, with the performances of its national soccer team. One of the reasons for the French staying out of the world sporting headlines has been their comparative lack of interest in team sports and sports with large spectator appeal. Traditionally the French have favoured individual sports, elitist ventures like fencing, horsemanship and skiing; cross-class pursuits like shooting, and a universal obsession with *boules*, or *petanque* - an exotic pastime in Anglo-Saxon countries. The sport most associated with France is cycling, and, although its supremacy here has often been challenged by countries like Belgium, Italy and Holland, the annual Tour de France ranks today, as it has done for over three quarters of a century, as

one of the world's great sporting events, capturing the nation's interest every July with the same passion as the Melbourne Cup or Test Matches in cricket for Australians, or the Superbowl or World Series in baseball for Americans - with this difference: it lasts for the whole month! The Tour de France originated in a circulation war between two sporting newspapers and has captivated the media and the public ever since, encompassing as it does a heroic test of strength, skill and courage for the rider, a demonstration of reliability and quality for the bicycle manufacturers, and a chance to promote not only the goods of many advertisers, but also the manifold delights that the French countryside has for the tourist. Having assured the success of the newspaper, *L'Auto*, that founded it,<sup>3</sup> the Tour has been a major media event ever since, followed today by press, radio and above all television, with cameras beaming pictures direct from helicopters or from the backs of dozens of motor cycles, a far cry from the early days when other newspapers tried to ignore it, while *Auto's* reporters had to cover it with their own ingenuity, including in particular the ability to read a railway timetable.

The success of *Auto* has continued with a few vicissitudes down to the present day, and this in itself represents a remarkable, ii not unique, contribution to the history of sports journalism, for *Auto* has been appearing as a daily since it first appeared on 16 October 1900. *Auto* appeared throughout the two world wars, and after 1944 it suffered the fate of all newspapers that had continued to appear under the Nazi occupation: it was suppressed as 'collaborationist'. However, it reappeared in 1946 with the same staff and style, but a new title: *L'Equipe*. Since then *L'Equipe* has continued to appear daily,<sup>4</sup> arguably the finest sports daily in the world. *L'Equipe*, like *Auto* before it, had to face stiff opposition from other sporting newspapers, and it is possible that no other country has had such a varied sporting press, for the size of its population, than France. In 1960 France had at least fourteen well established sporting journals, appearing as dailies, weeklies and monthlies.<sup>5</sup> In the 1930s the range of titles was equally impressive, although it has to be admitted that in most English speaking countries by this time sports coverage was adequately handled by the

information press.

The French, then, have been leaders in sport; they have competed at the highest levels; and have watched it and read about it in innumerable periodicals. Until recently this interest has not been matched by that of historians in trying to explain the phenomenon, or in using sport as a means of illustrating or explaining aspects of the development of French society. This is not altogether surprising, as it is only in fairly recent times that English speaking historians have turned their scholarly attention to what has been a more all-consuming passion in most people's (mainly male) lives than all but the basic necessities. Of all the great trivial pursuits of the past people's Leisure activities have been treated with unwarranted disdain. In this the French have not been without their own particular streak of arrogance, but the country that gave us the *Annales* school of history can hardly claim to despise trivia as such.

The first, and still the most important history of sport and society in France, was written by an Englishman: Richard Holt's *Sport and Society in Modern France*<sup>6</sup> is an excellent pioneering work, particularly strong on the formative period of sport in France, the three decades or so before the First World War. Eugen Weber seemed to have been about to embark on a major study of sport in France, with two pathbreaking articles, but unfortunately (for some of us anyway!) seems to have concentrated his attention on other fields.<sup>7</sup> There have been other articles, and several more or less contemporary studies of sport and politics:<sup>8</sup> in particular Jean-Marie Brohm has thrown out some good ideas along with his vituperation, but his work is still more polemical than academic.<sup>9</sup> There have also been biographies of prominent individuals, like Coubertin<sup>10</sup> and monographs on individual sports or people who made a particular contribution to sport.<sup>11</sup> In this latter category should be noted the recent rather earnest and adulatory biography of Leo Lagrange in which his role as Minister for Sport and Leisure in the Popular Front government is given due prominence.<sup>12</sup>

It is perhaps surprising that among the most cherished and long-lasting of the reforms of that government, those affecting the leisure hours of most French people, historians,

apart from Chappat, have usually noted their great popularity and then passed them over.<sup>13</sup> There have been extensive studies of the Popular Front government of 1936-37, as well as of the Communist, Socialist and Radical Parties that composed it, and more or less narrative accounts of the unfolding of the dramatic events surrounding its rise and fall, but Leo Lagrange and his reforms get little more than passing mention or reference in a footnote. And yet today France is dotted with streets and physical education centres commemorating his work. The circumstances of his death in part account for this: he was killed in the early months of the war, the only former minister to die in defence of his country, thus silencing the abuse of the Right which, had ridiculed his attempts to create a healthier France, and touching the conscience of a nation which had too few, especially politicians, who were prepared to stand on the side of honour and courage when factional interests decreed otherwise. Leon Blum, leader of the ill-starred Popular Front government, placed the highest value on his young Minister's reforms. When facing his would-be tormenters at the Riom Trials of 1942 he was particularly proud to recall the work of Lagrange:

There is one law I must insist upon mentioning because I have been questioned about it, and if I am not mistaken it figures in the list of charges as enumerated during my final examination. I refer to the Paid Holidays Act. This Act, together with the creation of an Under-Secretary of State for Leisure and Sport, was the basis of one of the accusations trumped up against me. I was reproached with having caused the French working man to lose taste for work, and with having encouraged in him what official personages called the spirit of enjoyment and ease. This accusation no longer appears in the order for adjournment, but you cannot deny that it persists in the whole atmosphere of the Prosecution. Was it dropped explicitly when the death became known and the posthumous award was announced of the man who had been my close collaborator in this work, my friend, Leo Lagrange, who occupied the post of Under-Secretary of State for Leisure and Sport? You know that...

*The President:* I know all that. It is one of the reasons why I should never have mentioned it to you.

*Leon Blum:* Yes, M. Le President, but all the same, I may be allowed to say that the example given by this man, whose heroic qualities are known to you, whom you have known and who overflowed with youth and enthusiasm, proves that for months a man could give all his energy and faith to a task like that of organising leisure and

sport, and yet preserve some heroic virtues. But I think that, in addition to this reason, and I am touched, M. le President, to hear you recall it as you have done, it was realised that in the whole affair there was a confusion which it was in no one's interest to prolong.

It was realised that leisure was not laziness, that leisure is rest after labour and is a sort of a reconciliation with the natural life from which it is so often separated and of which it is so often defrauded. I do not wish to press this again as the charge no longer appears in the indictment, nor in the order of adjournment of the Court. But it moves me deeply when I think of this task as a whole, and recall all the mumbo-jumbo that was talked about it. I did not often leave my ministerial office during the course of my Ministry, but each time I did go out, when I passed through the great suburbs and saw the roads crowded with ramshackle cars, motor-bikes, tandems, with working-class couples in their gaily-coloured pull-overs, showing that the idea of Leisure was awakening within them a sort of simple and natural coquetry, I had in spite of everything the feeling of having introduced a little beauty, a ray of light into their drab and difficult lives. Not only were they being taken away from the cabarets, not only had they been given more facilities in their family lives, but a prospect for the future had been opened up to them, hope had been kindled within them. And I recalled with a certain feeling of pride words uttered during the last Parliamentary appearance of his career by a British statesman when, having repealed the Corn Laws, and having been removed from power after this victory, he said: 'I will leave a name which will be uttered with hatred or anger by the monopolists and speculators, but will perhaps be mentioned with gratitude in the homes of those whose lot in the world it is to work.' I, for my part, experienced a similar feeling of pride, and I think I have the right to express it here before my Judges.<sup>14</sup>

The leisure reforms of the Popular Front government did not appear out of a vacuum: like so many of its reforms they were a recognition of necessity, an attempt to clear a backlog of years of neglect and powerlessness. In sport and leisure, as in so many other social reforms, France trailed behind its neighbours. This was noticed by groups on the Right who castigated the decadence of bourgeois society, and by the sports branches of the Socialist and Communist parties, before 1934 bitterly divided, thereafter united in their campaigns on behalf of French youth. The youth of France at this time, like the youth of Europe in general, was being courted as never before. This could be seen in the growth of various youth organizations<sup>15</sup> with an emphasis on sport and outdoor activity, like the Boy Scouts and the Youth Hostels Associations, and the attempts to



incorporate this spirit into overtly political organizations or movements. Sport as well as Leisure was being increasingly politicized in this time: subtly in the growth of mass spectator sports and the commercialization that went with this, less subtly in the use of sport as an instrument of political idealism, most notably by Mussolini at the World Cup held in Italy in 1934, and by Hitler at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. The 1938 World Cup was held in Paris, but by then the approach of another World War occupied most people's minds, and within a year Orwell's 'war without weapons' had given way to the real thing, with a ferocity and callousness that no mere game could imitate.

This paper is an introductory survey of some aspects of the relationship between sport and politics in France. It concentrates on the period immediately before the proclamation of the Popular Front programme in January 1936, seen from the perspective of *Sport*, the official organ of the Workers' Sports and Gymnastic Federation (Federation Sportive et Gymnique du Travail - FSGT). Working class organizations and their militants have tended to ignore the importance of sport and leisure in the lives of the people they were trying to win over. Marx virtually ignored the subject, but then he lived in an age when workers were still fighting to gain leisure time itself, let alone discuss how to use it.<sup>16</sup> The period between the two world wars saw the heyday of working-class sports organization, especially in Central Europe, but even then, as *The Communist International* complained in 1937, after showing how the sports movement afforded tremendous possibilities for rallying and organizing the masses for the anti-fascist struggle, 'in some cases the attitude of the Socialists and Communists towards sports work has been one of neglect; they have regarded it as something which has only served to turn the attention of the workers away from politics'.<sup>17</sup> There is evidence here of intellectual snobbery on the part of militants who regarded sport as frivolous, of a moral earnestness that displayed more interest in the proper indoctrination of the mind than care of the well-drilled body, and a calculating spirit that was concerned only about practical political results. In short, the leaders of the workers' movements often showed in their attitude to sport, the

same blindness in regard to reality that was a major weakness in their overall strategy.

In 1934 the Communist Federation Sportive du Travail (FST) had 115 clubs and 9000 members in the Paris region, 80 clubs and 5000 members in the provinces; when the FST fused with the Socialist USSGT to form the FSGT there were 30,000 members and by 1937 this had increased to 80,000.<sup>18</sup> Thus the FSGT was always a small minority in the organized sports movements in France in the 1930s. In this time the bourgeois sports organizations in France were overwhelmingly made up of working-class members, while the leaders of the working-class sports movement had generally had to fall into step behind the rank and file. Before 1914 they had hoped to create a separate workers' culture, stressing non-competitive leisure activities like gymnastics, cycling, hiking and swimming. But the workers refused to follow the path traced out for them by their would-be mentors, and the attractions of competitive team sports like football proved too great.<sup>19</sup>

#### THE GROWTH OF MASS SPORT IN FRANCE:

Mass sport emerged with industrialization and urbanization; sport then became a spectacle as well as a pastime, and skilled sportsmen became performers as well as participants. New industries grew out of this, and it was obvious that there was money to be made out of the new passions, giving rise to professionalism and commercialization. In most of the Anglo-Saxon countries sport had come into the possession of the middle and working classes by the turn of the century. In France at this time sport was certainly in process of transforming itself, but it was not until after the First World War that sport became predominantly mass oriented, as seen in the popularity of football, soccer in particular, but rugby also in certain areas. Even then, it was not until 1932 that soccer became professionalized, a comment on the comparatively retarded development of mass sport in France. Part of this must be seen in the predominance of agricultural production in France before about 1930, and the persistence of regional variety and local isolation. In country life there is less need to seek organized

leisure; in the cities the French worker did not gain the eight hour day until 1919, and the Saturday afternoon holiday became widespread only in the 1920s - a long time after his British equivalent had won the much prized 'weekend'.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, even by the turn of the century sport and leisure in France were passing from the preserve of the rich and the aristocratic. Rugby was no longer the privileged pastime of a few Paris private school boys, but had spread to the Midi where it was adopted with enthusiasm; soccer was no longer followed merely by anglophiles, and even by the time of the First World War was the leading participant and spectator sport. From 1903 the Tour de France became the subject of genuinely national passion, and cycling in France remained a major participant and spectator sport long after it had become an essentially leisure pursuit in the Anglo-Saxon countries. The increase in the interest of sport, with its clubs and competitions, led to the formation of organizing bodies, and in France the body that came to control most rugby, soccer and athletics, the Union des Societes Francaises des Sports Athletiques, grew from about 200 members in the late 1890s to over 1600 by 1914. At the same time the divisions in French society most obviously represented in political parties, also replicated themselves in the formation of catholic, laic and working-class organizations, each of which maintained a belligerently isolationist stance.

The inevitable concomitant and auxiliary of organized sport, a sporting press, also manifested itself in this time, aided by technological improvements that put the press within the financial reach of most French people, and a spectacular drop in the figures for illiteracy in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> There were about 40 newspapers in 1900 with sporting titles; in 1930 this figure stood at 219, and included such well established titles as *Auto*, *Sporting*, *Miroir des Sports* and *Echo des Sports*. More significant, however, was the way in which the daily press was showing more interest in sport. In 1902 Parisian papers devoted only 3.2 per cent of their space to sport; a decade later many newspapers permitted as much as half a page and in the 1920s a full page covering sport was far from unusual. Most notable among these were the mass

circulation dailies, *Le Petit Parisien* and *Le Journal*, which gave several columns to sport, and every Monday a complete page was devoted to an account of the previous day's events.<sup>22</sup> It was not until the 1930s, however, that sports reporting in France became a significant feature in the popular press, when *Paris-Soir* challenged the position of *Auto*. Within the space of a few years *Paris-Soir* had made major inroads into *Auto*'s sporting dominance. From 1930 to 1933 *Auto*, thanks largely to French victories in the Tour de France (Andre Leducq in 1930 and 1932, Antonin Magne in 1931, and Georges Speicher in 1933) saw near record circulation figures: 298,000 daily average for 1930, with 605,000 for July and 364,000 daily average in 1933, with 730,000 for July. By 1937 average daily circulation had dropped to 246,000, and 205,000 the following year. The worsening international situation did not explain this; rather it was the challenge mounted by *Paris-Soir* under the editorship of Jean Prouvost, who, from 1931, increased the sports coverage of the paper, taking advantage of the skills of writers like Gaston Benac and the fact that as an evening paper it could come out with that afternoon's results within a few minutes of events being completed - particularly useful in the case of the daily stages of the Tour de France. Sport became drama under Prouvost's direction, and photographs and results of important encounters took over the front page. This was not new, and *Paris-Soir* was not the first paper to discover that 'a fine match was worth as much as a fine crime',<sup>23</sup> but it was the first popular daily to make sport a major feature of its content. On the eve of the Second World War, when Desgrange was asking his 'collaborators' to accept a 2% decrease in salaries and forego their December bonus, *Paris-Soir* had 100 editors and police-news reporters (*informateurs*) on a monthly salary, and 18 sports editors.<sup>24</sup>

By this time, too, *Auto* had another serious rival in the media: radio had grown spectacularly throughout the 1930s, from half a million sets at the start of the decade to five and a half million by 1939, with sport representing an important aspect of its appeal. This added to the pressures on the specialist sporting press, and from 1937 Desgrange tried to return the fire of those who were invading his territory by

introducing straight political coverage in the columns of *Auto*.

The growth of sport in France was also reflected in the continually increasing number of clubs belonging to federations representing particular interests. In the period before the first World War the most notable sponsor of private sports organizations was the Catholic Church. The separation of Church and State in 1905 went some way to resolving the most bitter of the quarrels that had riven French society since the Revolution of 1789. But it did not resolve the conflict so much as change the battleground, as the Church left the openly political arena to work through various clubs and societies. One of the most successful of these was their sports and gymnastics organization, the Federation Gymnastique et Sportive des Patronages de France (FGSPF),<sup>25</sup> founded in 1903. Within ten years from 1905 it had grown from 72 clubs to 1973. It could look for financial and other support from wealthy patrons, but the strength of the movement was at the parish level where the priest organized his young parishioners in sporting competitions and adventures in the open air.

The Church shared the nationalism that had seen patriotism swing to the Right in the years after defeat in the Franco-Prussian War through to the outbreak of the First World War. The Church, however, had never been totally won over to the republican regime, and the virtual war that was waged between the two in this time, seen at its most vicious in the dispute of over 'free, secular and compulsory' education from 1882, was continued in the battle for the consciences of French youth on the sports field after 1905. The State watched in some concern, and kept an eye on what it thought might have been potentially subversive activity. On the more positive side it encouraged youth organizations under the control of orthodox lay teachers. Six thousand primary schools established youth clubs for their graduates, and by 1914 they had several hundred thousand members.<sup>26</sup>

These *Petites As* were deliberately aimed at keeping French youth out of the clutches of the clergy, and their leaders soon learned that games and excursions were better calculated to achieve this than more cerebral or morally uplifting activities.

After the war these groups joined the republican and anti-clerical Union Francaise des Oeuvres Laique d'Education Physique (UFOLEP), which by the eve of the Second World War had nearly 5000 clubs and more than 310,000 members. Other republican sports, or quasi-sports organizations that combined some sort of sport with military preparation, such as gymnastic clubs or shooting clubs, were also courted by republican politicians. In such an atmosphere there was very little co-operation or friendly competition between groups using the same means for different ends: rather their relations were more liable to be marked by open hostility or just plain farce.<sup>27</sup>

By the 1920s, however, and with the unprecedented involvement of working-class Frenchmen in sport, sectarian conflict turned more to the battles of the workers' federations. The first workers' sports clubs date back to the beginning of the century, in regions such as the Gironde, Paris and the Nord, but it was not until 1908 that the first socialist organization was founded on a national basis: this was when the Section Francaise de l'Internationale Ouvriere (SFIO) founded the Federation Sportive Athletique Socialiste (FSAS), which became the Federation Socialiste de Sport et de Gymnastique in 1913, and then, more permanently, the Federation Sportive du Travail (FST) in 1919.<sup>28</sup> Splits in the workers' sports movement soon followed the splits in the international workers' political movement after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. The Socialist workers founded their international sporting body at Lucerne in Switzerland, in 1920, the Internationale Sportive Ouvriere Socialiste (ISOS) also known as the Lucerne Sport International. In June 1921 a rival communist body was set up in Moscow, the Internationale Rouge des Sports (IRS). Its goals were not concealed:

The Red Sports International (IRS) brings together all worker and peasant sports and gymnastic organizations which adopt the platform of the class struggle. The IRS is a unified and worldwide organization of all worker and peasant sporting and gymnastic organizations and unites the labouring classes of the towns and country to educate them, and to develop their physical qualities through sports and gymnastics, in order to make of them resolute, courageous and combative fighters

in the class struggle of the proletariat against the capitalist order. Sport and gymnastics are not the goal to be pursued, but merely a means of carrying out the proletarian class struggle.

By this time the French Socialists had seceded from the International at Tours, in 1920, and relations between the communists controlled from Moscow and committed to revolutionary violence, and the SFIO prepared to find the reformist and parliamentary road to socialism, had split the international socialist movement. The tactics of the IRS were to try to maintain the unity of workers at the base, and so to work within the national workers sports organizations; the ISOS on the other hand sought to create a scission wherever the communists were dominant. In France matters came to a head at the National Congress of the FST at Montreuil, on 22 July 1923. There the minority of socialists left to found the Union des Societes Sportives et Gymniques du Travail (USSGT), pledging loyalty to the ISOS and issuing a newspaper called *Sports et Loisir*. The FST remained faithful to the IRS and retained as its newspaper *Sport ouvrier*.

If the establishment of the Bolsheviks in Russia caused problems for the socialist movement, it was not likely for that reason to win favourable comment from the capitalists. Frightening the average voter with posters of a communist with a dagger between his teeth was one way to discourage dangerous experiments, but some employers did try more positive methods of dealing with the communist spectre. In the 1920s firms like Peugeot, Michelin, Renault, Schneider and the champagne firm of Pommery had set aside playing fields and even installed swimming pools for the use of their employees. André Citroën admitted to being a keen advocate of sport and claimed that he did his best to encourage it among his workers. As a result he expected his workers to reject wild political notions: as one industrialist put it, 'any young worker who dons the garb of an athlete soon considers himself a gentleman, and rejects all anarchistic notions'. An inquiry undertaken in 1935 showed that of the 85 factories surveyed, 80 had their own sports facilities. Many of these were run by the workers themselves. <sup>30</sup>

This was of great concern to socialist and communist militants who saw their fellow workers being wooed and won by the class enemy, but for most of the 1920s they concentrated their hatred on each other. Nevertheless, through to 1927 the FST tried to win back the USSGT, before designating them to the dust bin of history with the 'class against class' policy. In 1929 the FST split again, with one group trying to increase the influence of the Communist Party (PCF) on the organization - it had only 5% to 10% party members - and another that wanted to free the FST from the grip of the PCF and to concentrate on spreading sport rather than propaganda to French workers. The latter group was defeated in 1930, castigated and condemned by P. Vaillant-Couturier in *Sport ouvrier*:

Those who left the workers' sporting formation in violation of the accepted discipline, will find their chastisement in the very welcome they will receive in bourgeois haunts and newspapers. Floating between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, they will present to sporting capitalism a mere scare-crow. Freed from their dead weight the FST, whose strength will grow day by day with the addition of new clubs, will be able to take the path that sport itself - a manifestation of health-dictates to the masses: the revolutionary way.<sup>31</sup>

The revolutionary way was the Moscow way, in sport as in politics. During the trials of 1930 in the Soviet Union the FST sent a telegram of support:

Red sportsmen of France follow with closest attention trial of counter-revolutionary saboteurs. Ask that you be pitiless against the enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat, demand the death of the saboteurs, pledge to defend the Soviet Union, to struggle against French imperialism through the soviets and workers and peasant government.  
Long Live the success of the Five Year Plan  
Long Live the Red Army  
Long Live the world revolution<sup>32</sup>

Despite the brave words, the French Communist Party in 1930 was far from being in a position to seriously challenge the bourgeois order. From 1927 to 1934 it followed the dictates of the International which decreed that in addition to the struggle against imperialist war and the war preparations of the bourgeoisie, good communists had to struggle against the social democrats whose reformist tactics made them one of the



chief pillars of the bourgeois regimes. This was the policy of 'class against class' in which no insult was too strong to throw at the 'social fascist' traitors led in France by Léon Blum and under the direction of the SFIO.<sup>33</sup> There were some misgivings within the Party about such tactics and not all were convinced that the distinction between socialist workers and their Leaders was not too fine. Certainly it was not one that the socialist leaders appreciated, while millions of French workers refused to align with either of the groups struggling over the souls. The communists in particular were left with their ideological purity and continually falling support at the polls.

A year after the accession to power of Hitler the French Communist Party still held to its destructive policies, although it had made a notable expansion of its policy of 'unity at the base' when it allowed members to take part in the Congress at Amsterdam in August 1932, which created an International Committee to oppose war - Even after the riots of 6 February 1934, in which right-wing demonstrators converged on the French Parliament, threatening to invade it, and were beaten back after a night of riots in which at least 14 were killed and thousands injured, the communist leadership still refused to take joint action with the socialist leaders- This was despite its strategic necessity; shown when the communist strike called for 9 February proved to be a tragic failure in the absence of socialist participation, with nine demonstrators being shot by the police, and despite clear signs for grass roots support for unity of action shown when communist and socialist demonstrators came together on the Place de La Republique in a spontaneous upsurge of fellow feeling. In the end it was the communist leaders who put out the call for unity, less, however, in response to grass roots prompting as under directions from Moscow. By this time it was clear that Hitler was no seven day wonder, and the threat from extreme right-wing forces in France was not negligible, but throughout March the PCF continued to denounce the socialist as the 'principle supporters of the bourgeoisie in the development of fascism' and as such their party had to be 'unmasked for what it was in the eyes of the workers'. At the end of April, however,

Thorez was called to Moscow (along with Doriot who refused to answer the summons) and on 30 May 1934 the Central Committee of the PCF sent a letter to the controlling committee (CAP) of the SFIO proposing unity of action to secure the release of Thaelman, the German communist languishing in a Nazi gaol. Just over a week later the communist trade union, the CGTU, proposed a united front with the CGT in defence of workers wages and against the decree laws. The national conference of the PCF at Ivry, 23-26 June, finally abandoned its 'social-fascist' policy, and when the Socialist Party's conditions for unity were accepted without demur, the way was clear for the signing of a unity pact. between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party on 27 July 1934. There were still details to be worked out, but the two socialist parties had set out on the road that would see them -join with the radicals in the proclamation of the programme of the Popular Front in January 1936, leading to electoral triumphs in the May elections of that year. <sup>34</sup>

In the union of the left-wing parties that made up the Popular Front, the respective sporting organizations both mirrored and played an active role in the sure but stuttering progress to union. Indeed as active promoters of union the sporting federations had a particularly crucial role to play, in no small part because the stupidity of the class against class policy was most starkly revealed in the refusal to allow one group of workers to play with or against another. Once the word went out that this nonsense no longer applied then communist and socialist could march alongside each other and play against each other as they wished. But there was still a legacy of insult and provocation to overlook, and socialists, party officials in particular, had good reason to distrust the hand of friendship stretched out to greet them. All of this was dramatically illustrated in Sport, the official organ of the FST, then of the FSGT after fusion.

## SPORT AND UNITY WITH THE SOCIALISTS

*Sport* first appeared as a four page small format weekly on 5 October 1933. Under the editorship of R. Rousseau it slowly prospered, to become a useful weapon in the propaganda war

against the bourgeoisie. While other organs of the workers' press and its more serious literature sought to 'elevate and impart the ability to reason to minds that had been besotted by the bourgeois press, cinema and literature', Sport would awaken the workers to the turpitudes of bourgeois sport while fighting for their rights to benefit from sporting facilities that would allow them to build up their bodies,<sup>35</sup> Readers frequently complained that Rousseau spent so much time on politics that there was not enough room left for sport; Rousseau admitted this, and tried to accommodate such complaints by increasing the format of the paper, but he was just as likely to retort that his was a 'journal de combat' and so the readers would just have to put up with it.<sup>36</sup> To begin with, too, Sport was unashamedly an organ of the Communist Party, and while the administrators of the bourgeois federations were regularly lampooned, and while the evils of fascism were constantly brought to the readers attention, so too the various treacheries of the reformist social democrats were revealed in its columns - until the sudden turn around after April 1934.

In January 1934 Sport was coming out in eight folio pages, four columns to the page, with photographs or illustrations on each page. Its banner on the front page included a runner sporting a Soviet star on his vest, and carrying a banner with the initials IRS (Red Sports International) and the words, Rederation Sportive du Travail. The issue for 24 January was fairly typical. The front page included two photographs, a cartoon of caricatures, an editorial and two match reports. Apart from the cartoon, which featured the faces of the football team from Budapest that had just beaten a Paris select 3-1, none of these items was without some political comment. Of the photographs, one was of an FST cross-country race, with an inset photograph of the face of the winner of a female section of the race. The other photograph was taken from a basket-ball match played as part of a day set aside by the communists to show solidarity with the unemployed. The editorial featured the fears felt by the President of the Austrian Olympic Committee, Herr Schmidt, in view of the Nazi threat to the north and the danger this posed to Austrian independence.

MM. Armand Massard and Jules Rimet, of the French Olympic Committee, had sent their assurances of support and sympathy, allowing *Sport* sarcasms about 'neutral' sport at the same time as it dissociated itself from the 'fascist' Massard and the 'godfather' [compere] Rimet. Such support for the 'Austrian cause', the editorial stressed, was no more than support for 'the Austrian fascists supported by the social-democrats'.

The two match reports were also mainly concerned about attacking the socialist workers sports movement. The match reports appeared alongside each other. In one column there was the description of a football match organized by the USSGT, the profits of which were supposed to go to German Jewish refugees. Both teams were Jewish, Etoile Juive (Jewish Star) from the USSGT, and the famous professional team from Vienna, Hakoah. According to *Sport* it was all a monstrous fraud, for the cost of publicity, but above all the cost of paying the Viennese professionals (an argument over which delayed the start of the second half, so that it was too dark to finish the game - although the result was hardly in doubt with Hakoah winning 10-1), and a crowd of only three to four hundred, meant that the German Jewish refugees got nothing. Why, asked *Sport* in a tone of outraged decency, did the sportsmen of the USSGT allow their leaders to get away with this?

The football match reported alongside this one was of a totally different nature. It was played between Union Scolaire from the amateur association (Federation Francaise de Football Amateur) and YASC from the FST, a game arranged after Etoile Juive had rejected a request from the Committee of the Jewish Spartakiade to play a benefit match between them and YASC. Here was the proper example for working-class footballers to follow: a match played in the true sporting spirit, where - evocation of the early days of soccer in Great Britain and teams like Queen's Park and Corinthians - YASC had refused to take a penalty kick that had been rightfully awarded to them (charging the goalkeeper was also banned in FST competitions). Seven hundred spectators enjoyed the game, and the curtain-raiser that preceded it, and afterwards the four teams had a convivial drink and a few speeches were made before the evening

broke up to the singing of the International.

On page three Rimet was attacked again, as the 'Accomplice of Valere-the-Corrupter', and on page 5 he had the 'Tete de Pipe' article devoted to him. This was a regular feature, conducted in a more satirical vein. Immediately under it on this occasion was a short but pungent article on Desgrange and the Tour de France. Page 4 was mainly devoted to a report on the Parisien Congress of the FST held the previous Saturday and Sunday: in summary, it stressed the need to assist the German workers by continuing more energetically the struggle against the French bourgeoisie; denounced the reformist leaders in Germany who had restrained the willingness of the young German sportsmen to resist their oppressors and so delivered them into the hands of fascism; foreshadowed an international workers' sports meeting to be held in Paris instead of the annual Spartakiade in Moscow; urged its members to take the fight into the bourgeois camp instead of waiting for the workers to join the FST; then, on a matter which had less obvious political implications, tabled Dr. Chassigneux's report on the need for medical controls at sports meetings; and finally, reminded everyone that the FST was a class organization which women fought shoulder to shoulder with the men, and chided those clubs that still did not have a female section.

In the midst of all this there were sports results and simple match reports, but also frequent sarcasms directed at the inanities of the reporting in the bourgeois press, exposes of corruption in bourgeois sport, and regular articles like that by Alfred Menguy who wrote a humorous piece in popular language: 'La Chronique de "Ma Boule"'. The last page featured two columns on what other newspapers had chosen to omit from their reports; in one case what *Auto* had *not* seen when its reporter went to Germany, in the other what the socialist paper *Le Populaire* had chosen to leave out of a report on the workers' international sports movement, ending with an appeal to the rank and file of the USSGT to forget the injunctions of their leaders and engage in sporting fixtures with the FST - then they would be able to meet the Soviet sportsmen. The main article on that page was one of a series on athletics in the

Soviet Union, another in a series on famous sporting scandals, and, in what was virtually another regular series, the editor urged his readers to join in the competition to increase the sales of *Sport*.

To complete the page there was a cartoon in which a muscular Max Schmeling put his arm around an equally muscular nursing mother with the caption that he would be boxing in Germany for the benefit of breast-feeding; and a short report of how a German sports commissioner had proposed to the German Football Federation that no more games be played abroad following the reception suffered by a German team at Nancy, when demonstrations and whistling prevented the players from giving the Nazi salute. At Metz the salute was banned, otherwise the game would have been cancelled, and as a result of all this a boxing match in Warsaw between Poland and Germany was officially cancelled. Such were the fruits of the anti-fascist agitation of working-class militants.

The events of early February - the riots of the 6th, the demonstrations of the 9th and 12th - did not change the attitude of the PCF to the leadership of the Socialist Party. *sport* followed the party Line. Its issue for 15 February came out with a black lined announcement on the front page, signed 'The Federal Council of the FST'. It opened: 'The blood of the workers has flowed... They fell for their class' and went on to make an appeal to 'all sportsmen from any federation whatsoever to turn up en masse for the funerals of the victims. The united front that came about in the recent workers demonstrations must be consolidated in order to crush the rising tide of fascism'. More than ever the communists stressed the need for working-class unity, but while they appealed to the socialist workers they continued to attack the socialist leaders. In a brief history of the formation of the FST, in the issue of 10 April 1934, the writer referred to the 'reformist demagogy' that had cheated workers into following the USSGT, and referred to those who seceded in 1930 as seeking 'tranquillity in collaboration'. A follow-up article in the next issue compared the organization of the FST with that of the bourgeois

and reformist organizations, trying to show how theirs was the truly democratic body, unlike the others who made no more than pretences to democracy: the FST was the only true defender of the rights of the working-class sportsman. In that same issue, however, the Executive Committee of the IRS made an impassioned appeal to its 'Class Comrades', calling their attention to the rapidly deteriorating international scene and calling for unity at the base and defence of the Soviet Union in face of the intrigues of the capitalist imperialists. It reminded them that the 'treachery over a dozen or so years by the German and Austrian social democrats had presented the possibility for the bourgeoisie in these countries to establish their bloody fascist regimes...' Such treachery could not conceal the growing hatred felt by the workers for their exploiters, supported by the social democrat Leaders. This had been shown at recent events involving the workers in France and Austria; 'The sporting workers of the entire world salute the heroic struggle of the Austrian workers who, cowardly abandoned by their social democrat Leaders, heroically fought against the forces of the state and the fascist bands, despite being hopelessly outnumbered'. That was in the past. Now the IRS had to look to the future. And since the bourgeoisie used sport as one of its most successful weapons in the ideological orientation of the masses towards fascism and imperialist wars, then it was up to the workers of the world to unite in the same way to oppose this pressure. As a result the Executive Committee of the IRS in conjunction with the sporting organization of the USSR and the most important Bureaux of the European Sections of the IRS had decided not to hold the annual Spartakiade in Moscow, but had chosen Paris instead. They were to mobilize all the workers, without distinction of federation, in an antifascist front, and so free the workers from the harmful influence of 'the reformist and bourgeois sporting leaders'.<sup>37</sup>

One of the 'harmful influences' leading the sporting workers astray was Pierre Marie who wrote the sporting column for Leon Blum's *Populaire*. In the *Populaire* for April 1934 Marie accused the FST of acting with hatred and rejecting the USSGT's invitations for the two organizations to compete together.

*Sport* denied this and tried to turn the tables on Marie with some selected quotes.<sup>38</sup> Later in the month it condemned him for condoning professionalism,<sup>39</sup> and when the FST started to make overtures to the USSGT to bring about sporting unity, he was frequently accused of dragging his feet.

The sudden change in the attitude of the FST caught the leaders of the USSGT by surprise, just as it did the leaders of the SFIO, and the sudden courting by those who had been condemning left the leaders of the USSGT in the situation of appearing to hold back the cause of working class sporting unity. From the end of June *Sport* made constant appeals for unity: on 27 June it argued 'For a single Movement'; on 4 July an editorial urged: 'Antifascist Sportsmen, Let Us Unite!' and on the same page an article pleaded: 'We want a single Federation'. *sport* promised to cease its attacks on the USSGT if they would agree to unity, and wished them success in their demonstrations planned for 5 and 15 August to commemorate the anniversary of the deaths of Jaures and Guesde. At the same time *Sport* gave full details to its readers of the new propositions they had made to the USSGT, a practice which it followed until union was eventually achieved.

The communists had turned a complete somersault and were finding virtues in that which they had been previously so fulsomely denouncing. Unity from summit to base was now absolutely essential, claimed their editorial of 18 July, and as an earnest of their intent the FST leaders asked if they could join the socialist anti-fascist demonstration to be held at the Stade Pershing on 5 August; in turn they invited the USSGT leaders to join them in helping organize the great workers international sports meeting (Rassemblement International Sportif/RIS) they were planning to hold in Paris between 11 and 15 August - the meeting that was being organized in place of the Moscow Sparta-kiade. The USSGT treated the proposals with caution, but in response to the decisions of the FST Congress held on 14 and 15 July, did not reject the idea of unity. Instead the organizing committee (CAP) of the USSGT refused the request of the FST to take part in their sports meeting of 5 August, and declined the offer for them to help in organizing the RIS in Paris, but did



invite the FST to send a relay team to compete at the meeting of 5 August and left it up to individual members of the USSGT to decide whether or not they wanted to take part in the RIS. In reply the FST accepted the invitation to enter a team in the relay, asked that they might be allowed at least to make a token presence at the 5 August meeting, thanked the USSGT for allowing individual athletes to participate in the RIS, and in answer to the USSGT's complaint that the FST had gone over their heads in encouraging their teams to play unauthorized games with USSGT teams, said that such interaction was impossible to avoid in the current climate. The situation, in any case, with the danger of fascism increasing day by day, was too serious to be endangered by petty quibbles.<sup>40</sup>

The great workers international sports meeting duly took place, and was a great success. The participation of the Soviet athletes was particularly welcomed, but so too was that of the socialists, prompting *Sport* to seek a suitable slogan from the text of the great Lenin's work: 'The advance guard by itself is powerless'.<sup>41</sup> To follow up the success of the RIS the first day of September was declared an International Day of the Young (*Journee Internationale des Jeunes*), with communists, socialists, Christians and independents joining together, along with the sportsmen and women of the FST and USSGT. Despite all this, the USSGT continued to demur and in successive numbers *Sport* expressed its frustration: on 5 September it showed how Paul Marie was holding up some of the practical details in regard to common fixtures, and in the next number<sup>42</sup> asked in exasperation whether there would have to be another 6 February before the socialists did something. In the meantime unity at the club level was going ahead in any case. Then late in September the Paris Regional Congress of the USSGT came out strongly in favour of unity 'in the shortest possible time', and since this was the most powerful of the regional congresses it was now only a matter of time before union became a reality.<sup>43</sup>

By the end of October most of the loose ends had been tied up, and despite the failure of the French Section of the Socialist Workers International (ISOS) to accept the invitation of the Red Sports International (IRS) to join together in a

single international body, it was expected that national unity would proceed regardless.

It did. At their respective meetings on 10 and 11 November 1934 the FST and the USSGT voted unanimously for union, and this duly came to pass at a joint session held in Paris on 23 and 24 December 1934: the Federation Sportive et Gymnique du Travail was born.

Throughout this time *Sport* carried out its own particular struggle to survive and gain new subscribers. Rousseau made no secret of the struggles he was having to keep the paper afloat, yet through to 1937 *Sport* seems to have enjoyed steady progress. It soon doubled its original format to come out in eight folio pages, then on 6 June 1934, in time for that year's Tour de France, its format changed to the large folio of the other big dailies, but in six pages. Now they had more space for provincial news and other sporting fixtures. In May 1935 the editors made a premature announcement that the paper would be increased to eight pages, but this did in fact take place in October of that year.

With each change of format readers were urged to redouble their efforts to sell more copies, and clubs were urged to pay their outstanding debts. There were special subscription drives, with special rates, competitions and prizes, and at times Rousseau seemed perilously close to adopting bourgeois methods to keep his journal running. Individual sales of the paper were made wherever a workers sports meeting or demonstration was being held, but sellers were also urged to sell copies outside the stadiums where the professionals were playing. The reward for the sellers was mainly in spreading the word, but they also received 20 sous out of the cost of 50 centimes per number. One vendor, a certain F. Padin, sold 1200 copies during the RIS in Paris in August 1934, and had his photo in *Sport* showing how it was done, an added bonus for his efforts and an example for others to follow.<sup>44</sup>

*Sport* was an organ of combat, however, and did not conceal this. When a young communist militant, Scorticatti, who was also a sportsman, was killed during the repression of February

1934, *Sport* organized a special Challenge Cup to keep alive his memory when the first anniversary of these events was celebrated in February 1935, *Sport*, in its more oecumenical spirit, revealed that there had been other sporting militants killed at that time: Henri Vuillemin, then of the USSGT, and Fontaine who had belonged to a bourgeois gymnastic club.<sup>45</sup> When *Sport* published an action photo of two young German hockey players, one of their faces was blanked out: *Sport* explained how one of them, Hornecker, had been captured and tortured to death for his anti-fascist activities, and since the other player was still engaged in illegal activities in Germany his identity had to remain a secret.<sup>46</sup> And when the Communists announced an end to their 'social fascist' policies with their 'Free Thaelmann' campaigns, there was hardly an issue of *Sport* for months thereafter that did not include some reference to the gaoled German communist - even although he was not noted for any special interest in sport.

On the more strictly sporting level, *Sport* reported the results and activities of the workers' competitions. These were generally ignored by the bourgeois press, even although a meeting Like the 'Cross de L'Huma', organized by the communist newspaper *Humanite*, could attract as many as 3,000 participants and 30,000 spectators. *Sport's* own reporting of 'official' sport was never very friendly, and for this its reporters often had to put up with rudeness or rejection when they turned up to cover their games. Such rudeness was returned in full in the columns of *Sport*, where Rousseau railed against the 'traffickers of official sport' and the 'turpitudes of commercial sport'. Announcing the change of format for June 1934 he proudly proclaimed how for eight months he had sought to tear French youth from the grip of the bourgeois sporting press and the hypocrisy of the official federations;<sup>47</sup> only *Sport*, freed from the constraints of the bourgeois press, could tell the whole truth, and take up the defence of those exploited by the ringmasters of the 'muscular fairground', only to be discarded and forgotten when they were worn out, sick or no longer able to earn a living.<sup>48</sup> *Sport*, then, could not look for any assistance, financial or otherwise, from those who ruled sport in France, and had no access to the subsidies or other advantages that came from

belonging to the Church or employers' federations. Above all it had cut itself off from the lifeblood of the capitalist press: the revenue from advertising that took up so much of the space in *Auto*. *Sport* was thus forced to survive on its own merits. Moscow may have supplied some funds, but more likely all that would have come from that source would have been a supply of articles and photographs advertising the virtues of the Soviet regime. Even after the success of the RIS in Paris in August 1934, and the increased sales that this generated, *Sport* was still having trouble making ends meet, and pleaded with its own clubs whose outstanding debts amounted to 10,000 francs, to pay up immediately.<sup>49</sup> When it announced a new subscription drive on its first anniversary and admitted that there had been many complaints about there being too much politics, the editors dismissed such complaints as just too bad, for their newspaper was a weapon of war.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly the union of the FST and the USSGT would be a great boon for sales of *Sport*, as the USSGT did not have a separate journal, operating more or less through the sports column in the *Populaire* (as the FST also did through *Humanite*). Nevertheless, unity was not a solution in itself, and at the 'Congress of Fusion' that gave birth to the FSGT, Rousseau reported that *Sport* was still in debt and needed 2,000 more subscribers. He successfully moved that each club in the new FSGT be obliged to subscribe to *Sport* and also supply a correspondent and distributor.<sup>51</sup>

Rousseau's cries of impending doom more or less disappeared from this time, to be transmuted into complaints about readership not keeping pace with the increase in membership of the FSGT. But his paper was on a sound financial footing and this without compromising its attacks on 'the brigands of commercial sport' or the 'gambling dens (tripots) of sport known officially as "amateur"'.<sup>52</sup> Compared to the big conglomerates that were behind its rivals, like *Auto*, *Sporting*, *Miroir des Sports* and *Echo des Sports*, *Sport* was a David faced by several Goliaths. But it had more than slingshots to cast at its adversaries, and behind the slogans, propaganda and exaggerated praise or condemnation was a critique of French sport and the society that nurtured it

that could not easily be dismissed.

## NEUTRAL SPORT - A BOURGEOIS MYTH?:

The most frequent target for *Sport's* arrows of wrath was Desgrange's *Auto*. This was no mere professional jealousy, or sour grapes at the obvious success of that paper in terms of its sales. Rather *Auto* typified for *Sport* the hypocrisy of the bourgeois state which claimed to be neutral yet failed to see political bias in commercial exploitation, chauvinistic posturing and the support of individual competition. Sporting organizations that held to such beliefs, be they professional associations or amateur bodies controlled by employers' federations or the Church, were not 'politically neutral' as *Auto* and the rest of the bourgeois sporting press maintained. What was the more galling to *Sport* was that the vast majority of the workers and peasants who were the victims of the bourgeois state seemed to be taken in by this fiction: not only did they make up the majority of *Auto's* readership, they also comprised the bulk of the bourgeois federations' membership. Many of *Sport's* attacks, a neutral observer might be forced to remark, seemed designed to maintain this state of affairs, as it insisted that the struggles of the workers and the glories of the Soviet Union be consciously intruded into every athletic event, with earnest homilies, organized slogans and a few rousing choruses of the International to bring the occasion to a suitable conclusion. Despite the polemics, however, and hidden beneath the sermonizing, *Sport* had a message that was well worth listening to.

Desgrange's definition of politics was a Limited one. He saw the politics in *Sport*, the FSGT and some right-wing leagues, but he refused to believe that the State itself was 'political', or that the employers' federations and the Church had other than altruistic motives in their support of sport. Early in January 1935, unable to ignore the progress of working-class sport as seen in the formation of the FSGT, he issued a short statement in *Auto*. In it he commented on how royalists and communists tried to attract young Frenchmen into their sporting nets, and warned them that it was not sport that interested

them. *Sport* was the joy of youth, Desgrange went on, uncomplicated and savoured in the fresh air of the stadiums and the countryside. It had nothing to do with intrigue, party spirit or old men's squabbling: that was the domain of politics.<sup>53</sup> 'Pierral' in his 'Coup de Gong' article in *Sport* took up Desgrange's claims, and with a mixture of sarcasm and direct reply, suggested that Desgrange feared the way French youth was waking up to the way he fleeced them at his turnstiles, and pointed out that in the same issue of *Auto* where he declaimed against mixing politics in sport, on page 5, his young assistant, Jacques Goddet, had written an article in which he praised the organization of youth by Mussolini and Hitler.<sup>54</sup> *Sport's* editorial in the next issue repeated the charges and went further in showing how Desgrange's paper was a constant supporter of the 'Patronages catholiques de la France', big industrialists like Michelin and big administrations like the Railways and the Metro. It also quoted from Goddet's article in that same issue, showing how the mobilization of youth through sport was a 'movement that has transformed Italy and regenerated Germany' and all this in the same issue where he denounced the evil of mixing politics and sport.<sup>55</sup> *Sport* was proud of its politics, which were to build up a strong youth that would be able to defend itself against the bourgeoisie, whose class interest tainted everything it touched with its own particular brand of politics.

*Sport* believed that the essence of bourgeois sport was the pursuit of profit, and only incidentally was the health of the individual of any concern. The interests of the promoter were paramount, and since this meant attracting popular support sport was treated as spectacle rather than as participation; it was concerned with elites rather than the mass and favoured competition over individual enjoyment or fulfilment. Inevitably this sordid search for gain led to cheating, exploitation and violence. It led to cheating by performers who felt they had to win at all costs, and by promoters who fixed events and swindled the public: regular columns were devoted by *Sport* to an expose of such crimes, be it in the ambitions of a man like Jules Rimet or the organization of events like the 'Six Days'

cycling races, particularly disliked by *Sport* no doubt because it brought together workers and bourgeois as few other sports did.<sup>56</sup> Sportmen were exploited by promoters who would force them to compete in events beyond their physical capacities for rewards that were illusory, again most notably in cycle races; or by the sporting press, which lauded them when they were winning then forget them when they were past their best: when El Ouafi, winner of the marathon for France at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, lay in a hospital bed, his sporting days apparently over, *Sport* visited him and noted that his plight was being completely ignored by newspapers like *Auto*.<sup>57</sup> *Sport* had no time for professionalism, but since most professionals were from the working-class and were exploited like them by entrepreneurs, it would take up the cause of footballers like Hiden and Justi Jordan sidelined by contractual disputes that were not in their favour. Violence, an integral part of competitive professional sport, was constantly denounced by *Sport*, which campaigned in favour of larger gloves for young boxers, to save them knocking each other into stupidity or senility with the light weight gloves they were forced to wear, highlighted the brawls that seemed to accompany most professional cycling races.

There was one event above all the others that encapsulated all the abuses of bourgeois sport - sport as spectacle, commercialization and exploitation of performers: this was the Tour de France.

The Tour de France - or the Tour de [Soul France (suffering) as *Sport* referred to it - had secured the success of *Auto* in 1903, and was still organized by Henri Desgrange in the 1930s and run under the sponsorship of his newspaper. Professionalism had been permitted since its inception, the *maillot jaune* (the yellow jersey worn by the overall leader - *Auto* appeared in yellow pages) was introduced after 1919 (the year the Longest Tour (ever) was run - to take in the reconquered territories of Alsace and Lorraine), and from 1930 national teams replaced works teams. Each year new stages or special attractions were introduced, to make up for deficiencies of the previous year or to titillate the fancy of the public. Each stage of the great race was reported minutely in the press, and that included even

staid dailies that normally ignored as best they could what was happening in the world of sport. It was a triumph for Desgranges and his newspaper, but he himself saw it as a triumph for France and the sporting spirit. In a special free supplement to *Auto* of 17 July 1933, in a supposed answer to his grandson by Flaubert's fictional representation of the essence of bourgeois life, M. Homais expatiated on the virtues of the Tour de France: the Tour, he claimed was a distraction from daily cares and an encouragement for others to improve their health; For the crowds it was a rare thrill among their own more mundane tasks; it was a crusade that brought all French people together in the 'superb religion of sport', speaking for one month the same language, at the same time as it put on display the beauties of the provinces and the virtues of their inhabitants. All these benefits were for the spectators; for the participants it was 'total Liberation', as each took it on himself to pursue the possibility of making a fortune and gaining 'enormous pride in victories without equal ...'; for France as a nation it was a month in which the country was in the centre of the international spotlight. Thus Desgrange, through Homais, drifted along in his dream, allowing only a brief moment of realism to cloud the picture when he let the reader know what he would not allow Homais to tell his grandson: that for the organiser of the event it was a 'fearful task' ('un effroyable boulot').<sup>58</sup>

Sport did not share Desgrange's vision, and like Pierre Marie in *Le Populaire* would have preferred to ignore the Tour,<sup>59</sup> but its grip on the popular imagination was too strong. Instead it tried to depict the Tour in what it saw as its true Light: the text of reports dwelt on the poor organization and the suffering of the competitors, while cartoons showed Desgrange and his associates dangling carrots and wielding whips on cyclists who were dwarfed by an entourage of reporters and sponsors spruiking the benefits of their various products: the winner was never so much a Lapebie or a Pelissier, but rather Dubonnet, The Laughing Cow or some other sporting irrelevance. The Losers were obvious: Sport's Leading article for 24 July 1935 counted the cost of a race in which the pursuit of profit was overshadowed by the death of one of the riders:



One dead, several riders seriously injured, others less grievously hurt but forced to abandon the race, while others, completely exhausted, stay in the Hell (gehenne) only by supreme efforts of will and because they hope in this way to ensure for themselves some work in the future.

The Tour de France, in short, was a spectacular example of commercial vulgarity and brutal exploitation. It also encouraged a patriotism that *Sport* detested, but for the worst examples of chauvinistic excesses one had to look to direct encounters in international competitions, such as athletics and football.

In the agitation against holding the Olympic Games at Berlin in 1936, *Sport* played a leading role, consistent with what it saw as the militarization of youth through sport as preparation for war, an implacable hatred of fascism and a revulsion against the racism and anti-semitism of the Nazi regime, in sport as in politics.<sup>60</sup> The intrusion of politics into sport was obvious in this case, but *Sport* was equally assiduous in drawing its readers' attention to how often the republican government of France and its press strayed from the path of strict 'neutrality in sport'.

In October 1934 the French Foreign Minister, Barthou, was assassinated in Marseille along with King Alexander of Yugoslavia during a state visit. When the organizers of a Red Star v P.C. Mulhouse football match decreed that a minute's silence be held to respect the dead, *Sport* was pleased to report that the 'populaires' let their opinions on the killing by 'a fascist Croat' be known with a storm of abusive whistles, and suggested that the organizers might now think twice in future before they tried to enforce their 'national pantomimes' on the 'proles' of Saint-Ouen.<sup>61</sup> When a football match between France and Yugoslavia was subsequently arranged to help maintain good relations between the two countries, *Sport* sarcastically scorned the 'political neutrality' of the Federation that promoted it and the press that covered it.<sup>62</sup> The bourgeois press was never prepared to see such games in their true light, and played down their true significance. When France went to Spain to play a football match which Gaston Benac of *Paris-Soir* reported as 'magnificent' and 'heroic', *Sport's* reported conclusion his

account: 'The public was biased, the referee did not know what he was doing and the organization of the game was worst of all'.<sup>63</sup> Two months later France was host to Germany, a game which they lost 1-3. *Auto*, however, was rapturous in the way it reported how the French spectators, from the humble 'populaires a 7 francs' to the more wealthy 'rupins a 50 francs', responded to the Germans waving swastikas and singing 'Deutschland uber alles' with a full-throated salvo of the 'Marseillaise'. *Sport* was not in the least impressed by *Auto's* glorification of this, any more than it was by the workers who allowed themselves to get carried away by a 'chauvinistic current that threatens to engulf the sporting masses'. It reminded them that they would be the first victims of the shells and the gas in the next war, as they had been in the previous 'union sacree', but took consolation in that this lapse would seem to be forgotten when the workers returned to their yoke of misery next day and realized that those with whom they had fraternized the previous day were their worst enemies.<sup>64</sup>

*Sport* was particularly disappointed that the workers in the 45,000 crowd had not taken fuller advantage of the chance to spread the anti-fascist tracts written in French and German which had been prepared for distribution; that they had not replied to the German national anthem with the 'International'; and finally, that they had not taken the opportunity to protest the extension of conscription to two years, thus showing themselves to have been 'unconsciously duped by the bourgeois press'. However the France v Germany rugby match was due the following week and perhaps some Lessons would have been learned.<sup>65</sup>

As it turned out, France's 18-3 defeat of Germany in that game was a tame affair, hardly surprising in view of the low acceptance of rugby in Germany. *Auto*, however, put this down to the more restrained behaviour of the players, while *Sport* attributed it to the successful distribution of thousands of anti-fascist tracts in the metro and around the stadium, tracts which were gladly snapped up and read by the workers in the crowd. It congratulated itself, moreover, in that the crowd heeded what were presumably their admonitions not to sing the 'Marseillaise'.<sup>66</sup>

In all this denunciation of capitalist exploitation and bourgeois chauvinism, *Sport* did not present its readership with

a totally bleak picture. On the contrary, there were at least two examples that were there for all to follow: first in the conduct of sport by the local workers' federations, the FST then the FSGT; but above all in the conduct of sport in the Soviet Union.

## SPORT AND THE SOVIET UNION:

If the picture of Soviet sport as depicted by *Sport* was only partially accurate, then it is one that would go a long way towards satisfying the sporting ideal of the most exacting purist: professionalism banned; winning reduced to its true significance; fellowship and joy in competition and the celebrations afterwards; sport and play an adjunct to life and work and not a substitute for it. In this the government played the role of benign benefactor, creating the conditions under which all Soviet men and women could participate equally in running, swimming, throwing, contesting ball games and many athletic exercises which in the capitalist democracies were the preserve of the rich. In this last regard *Sport* would insist on the popularity of tennis in the Soviet Union and publish photos of Soviet citizens yachting or basking in the sunshine. In direct challenge to the bourgeois attitude to women they would often show happy mixed groups enjoying themselves at camps or seaside resorts, or quite simply women athletes or ball players showing their skills.

The early years of the Soviet Union had been devoted to establishing the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party, winning the Civil War and defeating the interventionist forces of the capitalist countries. Thus sport, in a country which was in any case an overwhelmingly peasant society, could hardly be seen as a major priority.<sup>67</sup> But it had its uses, not least of which was as a means of integrating the variety of peoples who made up the new socialist republics. Divergent views on the purpose of sport in a socialist society soon emerged before the Party issued its first diktat: 'On the Tasks of the Party in Physical Culture'. Essentially sport was to be a means of achieving better health and physical fitness, as well as forming character, two goals that would have been accepted in most societies. In

addition, however, it was stated explicitly what the democracies might have preferred to leave unsaid, that sport was to help in military training and that individuals were to identify with their particular group, be it Party branch, Soviet or trade union: at all times they were urged to be active both socially and politically.<sup>68</sup> Sport, good health and defence of the Soviet Union were as one. By the end of the 1920s the Soviet Union was fairly securely established, on the threshold of massive industrialization, and could look forward to solving the problems of the economy as a basis on which to found the new society. In this sport became an important arm of the state, and sports rallies often accompanied such festivals as May Day, Constitution Day, and the Anniversary of the Soviet Union. From 1931 the GTO (Gotov k trudu i oborone - Ready for Labour and Defence) programme was expressly intended to train people, through sport, for work and military preparedness.<sup>69</sup>

Sport had its observers in Russia, and reports of progress there came back thick and fast. Reviewing the 1934 Moscow march-past, *Sport's* correspondent remarked on the progress of this annual event: in 1927, when it began, 12,000 athletes participated, increasing to 18,000 the following year, while in 1931 40,000 young men and women took part, with a Berlin sporting delegation at their head 'despite the chicanery and repression by the German Social Democrats', as the writer was anxious to point out. The numbers continued to grow: 70,000 in 1932; 105,000 in 1933; then 120,000 at the 1934 rally where,

representatives of a great variety of sports marched past to the sound of well drilled footsteps and the strains of the International. It was all one could do to restrain oneself from going down to the Square to join them, to fall into step and so demonstrate one's desire to take part in the massive movement of Soviet physical culture, which develops the body and purifies the spirit at the same time as it assists socialist production and the defence of the homeland of the Soviets.<sup>70</sup>

The achievements of Soviet athletes were frequently reported, only slightly embarrassed by the thought that this could be interpreted as a bourgeois fetish for records and competition, and moral tales would every now and then be included for the edification of the French comrades. J.B. Nau recorded several

examples of Soviet athletes who had excelled in running, football, cycling, tennis and so on before turning in praise to more 'obscure sportsmen and women' who were, what was just as important, 'champions of production'. These were the sporting workers of a confectionery factory at Moscow, formerly owned by the French company Sion & Co., but now run by the workers, exploited in the old regime, but now - 4,000 men and women - participating equally in production and decision making. The director of this particular factory, now named 'Bolshevik', had arrived at his present position thanks to his sporting past. Before the Revolution he had been a worker in the millionaire Frenchman's factory, where he had formed one of the famous 'Pitchiviki' groups who organized the sportsmen of the Moscow region. He had helped organize the 1913 strike of 800 workers who successfully won a rise in pay. Five years later they occupied the factory and had maintained control of it ever since. Another comrade, 'Chapelev', described the sporting facilities in the factory, explained how no one was allowed to specialize, but prepared instead for the GTO. He proudly recounted how the factory had consistently attained its production schedules, while its workers faithfully performed their military service with the same zeal as they did their sports routines. Sport was open to all, but he admitted that there was still some way to go. Nevertheless they were well on their way, with free entry to most sports and a new stadium about to be built. In the meantime the radio played its part by announcing each day their 'sporting work': the results, successes and hours of training (presumably of sport and not factory production). Each workshop in the factory had an individual whose job it was to supervise the 'pauses' that were devoted to 'physical culture'.<sup>71</sup>

In order to convince its readers that it was reality and not hopes that were being reported in the paper, special trips to the new Utopia were encouraged. Many famous individuals visited the Soviet-Union in the 1930s, hoping to see an example of healthy social progress that would offer an alternative to capitalist chaos and fascist indoctrination. Some, like the Webbs, came back to write favourably on what they had seen; others, like Andre Gide, were to have their hopes betrayed. One of these propaganda tours was organized by the FSGT. Advertised

regularly in *Sport*, a party of 25 was formed and duly left on 16 June 1935 for a fortnight's holiday in the Soviet Union. The trip took in Leningrad, Moscow and Minsk, and on their return the '25 ordinary workers' of the Sporting Delegation took their places alongside the officials of the Party to recount their experiences at a special public meeting called for the occasion and reported in full by *Sport*. Two thousand turned up at the Palais de La Mutualite on 31 July, paying a franc each. The evening began with a film of 120,000 male and female athletes parading in Moscow, translating what words could not describe and moving the audience to repeated applause. Then came the speakers, giving glowing accounts of what the government was doing for sport, especially for women, a stark contrast to the situation in France.<sup>72</sup> ALL of the speakers emphasized, without protesting too much, that during the trip they had been free to go wherever they wanted.

More convincing than the reports of a delegation which was, after all, seeking confirmation of faith than conversion, were the comments on Soviet sport by more independent sportsmen: most notable among these were two world champions; the boxer Marcel Thil and the athlete Jules Ladoumeque.

Marcel Thil, second only to Georges Carpentier in France's Hall of Fame at this time, was the world middle-weight champion from 11 June 1932 when he defeated the American, 'Gorilla' Jones. By 1938 he was ready to retire on the money he had made in the ring and enjoy the comforts of bourgeois life that professional boxing had earned for him. In 1935 when he went to the Soviet Union, the good life was still ahead of him, but well within his reach. Nevertheless, his opinions as reported in *Sport* condemned the thoughts of filthy lucre that dominated the ambitions of boxers in capitalist countries. In Russia 'the healthy joy of being best' was the only thought in the minds of its amateur champions, free as they were from the soliciations of greedy managers, the outrageous flattery of the press and the false and illusory gains of material reward. He had to admit that boxing in the Soviet Union was not of a high standard, but put this stagnation down to the absence of competitions with such top nations as Great Britain and France, and the absence of quali-

fied teachers. However, there were two first-class stadiums in Moscow, and unlike the brawls that typified so much boxing elsewhere, sport in Russia retained the status of the 'noble art'.<sup>73</sup>

Ladoumegue's story was one closer to the heart of working-class Frenchmen, rising as he did from obscurity to take out the world records for the 1500 metres and the 1000 metres in 1930 and the mile in 1931. Born into a working-class family near Bordeaux in 190?, Ladoumegue lost his parents in separate accidents while he was only a few months old, and had to be brought up by relatives. He struggled against adversity to come second in the 1500 metres at the Amsterdam Olympics in 1928, a disappointment that the French sporting public hoped would be rectified at the 1932 Games. He was not to make it to Los Angeles, however, as he was barred as a professional for appearing in a publicity run down the Champs Elysees before 200,000 spectators and followed by a motorcade that included Georges Carpentier, Maurice Chevalier and Mistinguette.<sup>74</sup> Ladoumegue was known to have had ambitions to elevate himself beyond his humble origins, but this did not disguise the fact that he had been a victim of bourgeois hypocrisy, and he enjoyed an excellent press in *Sport*. French interest in athletics slumped immediately on his disqualification, and with the dismal prospects for French success in the 1936 Olympics, several newspapers took up the cause of Ladoumegue for reinstatement.

Ladoumegue visited Russia towards the end of the 1934 season, and as reported in *Sport*, found there only 'friends' instead of 'rivals'. He commented on the enthusiastic and sporting crowds, and thought the Soviet Union was a country of potential champions, with a thirst to keep on learning.<sup>75</sup> When 'Julot', as *Sport* affectionately called him, returned to the Soviet Union a year later his comments were moderate. In addition to sport his time was taken up with a round of receptions, visits to the opera and the cinema, and a long ride in a 'canot automobile' which he particularly enjoyed; he was welcomed everywhere, but came too late in the season to try the tracks out at their best. He said that the stadiums and tracks were coming on, but were not yet as good as the best in Europe, while the winter weather posed problems. Like Thil he commented on

the need for international competition and top class teachers, and noted that football was much more popular than athletics: while this was understandable in a socialist country he pointed out that there was no need for this, as the two were not mutually exclusive.<sup>76</sup>

Probably the best chance ordinary French people had to judge the standard of sport and sportsmanship in Russia came with the visits to France of the Soviet Union's top athletes. Here was the chance for the working-class federations to put themselves on show alongside their esteemed visitors. That all that came out of the Soviet Union was not modesty and good grace one would have to discover from sources other than *Sport*;<sup>77</sup> nevertheless, when the rival working-class federations came together after the middle of 1934, the standard of their meetings does seem to have improved. Such meetings were used as a conscious effort to bring about and then consolidate working-class unity: as described earlier, about the same time as Moscow decided that the fascists were a greater threat than the social democrats, it decided to transfer its annual Spartakiade to Paris, where its monster Rassemblement International Sportif would take place instead.

The international gathering took place, from the 11 to the 14 August with the Largest contingent of workers coming from Switzerland and the Sarre (recognized by the communists as neither French nor German), Palestine supplying one competitor and Iceland three: Germany was represented by at least 28 competitors, all emigres. No-one represented Italy. But the main centres of attraction were the Soviet sportsmen, particularly their footballers, and it was with the final of the football, watched by more than 50,000 spectators, that the sports events came to a successful climax. Here was the chance to show that sport need not be dominated by greed and egotism, and here again a picture emerges from the pages of *Sport* that would have had the heart of Tom Hughes swelling with pride if he had been able to reconcile his Love of British imperialism with international socialism. Here was an example for *Sport* to set against the disgraceful proceedings that had marked that showpiece of bourgeois competition played just two months previously in Italy:



the World Cup in football. On the one hand a spirit of international fraternity generated by individuals whose sole aim was to do their best, demonstrating the keenest of rivalries but the finest of sportsmanship; on the other hand a revival of the Roman circuses, with players driven by a chauvinistic press to a display of brute force and vile temper, played before fanatical crowds and supervised by referees who either lost control over the games or were simply corrupt.<sup>78</sup> The semi-final between Australia and Italy was somewhat restrained, as the Austrian players were under the strictest instructions, in view of their country's anxiety to maintain good relations with Italy, not to retaliate, but the final between Italy and Czechoslovakia was under no such restraints. Mussolini, the 'Caesar of the Carnival', was partly responsible but so too was the press, which tried to gloss over the belligerence in its reports. When all was said and done, however, there was really not much more to expect in a competition based on bourgeois materialism and imperialist interests: 'Only international meetings between working-class sportsmen, played under the auspices of the class doctrine, are fraternal and beautiful, as much in their moral as in their physical qualities'.<sup>79</sup> This was proven at the great workers' international held in Paris in August and it was in vain that the French press passed over it in silence.

The international workers gathering of the following year was another success, with the Soviet athletes leaving everyone else in their shade. It was not the British, Dutch or French who starred, nor was it even the spirit of the working-class: this was a triumph for the Soviet Union.<sup>80</sup> *Sport* explained how the Soviet government, unlike the French, was prepared to spend money on its youth, so that before Long Soviet athletes would be the best in Europe and eventually the world. This was nothing to do with national superiority 'but the superiority of a regime which has understood the full value of sport as an integral part of the workers' and peasants' life'.<sup>81</sup>

Aware that the triumph of the Soviet athletes at a workers' gathering might be seen as a triumph of the limp over the lame, as some of the bourgeois newspapers seem to have hinted, *Sport* was delighted when the champion soccer team from the Ukraine

agreed to play the professionals of Red Star Olympique, the first time a Soviet team had played against professionals.<sup>82</sup> *Sport* was jubilant when the Soviet amateurs won 6-1, greeting this as a confirmation rather than a surprise and added it to the hard facts of world records broken by the Soviets in various spheres to invite anyone who wanted to do well in sport to join 'the only sporting organization in France which follows the glorious path of Soviet sport'.<sup>83</sup>

When not competing the Soviet athletes were sought out for their opinions by journalists who wanted to compare the situation in their country with that in France. Two 'amis soviétiques' commented on the lack of good sporting literature in France - they had been to Auto's bookshop looking for manuals or other information on the techniques of the various sports. One of them, Liakhov, a shot-putter, claimed that in his native Ashkhabade in Central Asia there was a much larger supply of books available, while his female companion, Bekova, a sprinter, pointed out that there was nothing to be had on female sport outside what was available from the FST.<sup>84</sup> One of *Sport's* reporters was driven to near paroxysms of despair when the Soviet athletes left for Russia from the Gare du Nord after the 1935 RIS. He explained why that station, of all the Parisian railway stations, was the one that he loved the most - it was the one that linked Paris with Moscow 'the red capital where all of us would so much like to go'. He asked Vera Tekerina, one of the departing athletes, whether she was sad to be leaving Paris. Her reply was unambiguous: she most certainly was *not!* Paris might be more 'chic'; it was certainly filthier and more disorganized. In Moscow people did not spit on the ground and throw their rubbish wherever they liked. Nor did they smoke in the theatres or cinemas... Sorrowfully the reporter watched the train pass out of sight, and being in Paris and not Moscow, threw his fag end to the ground and spat.<sup>85</sup>

It is hard to believe that any neutral reader could have been convinced by *Sport's* reporting of the vast superiority of Soviet sport of the 1930s over that of the democracies, and particularly France, at that time. There can be no doubt that French sport was in almost as serious a state of disorganization

and possibly corruption as its parliamentary democracy, still reeling from the scandals of the Stavisky affair and the riots of 6 February 1934. The world of the 1930s needs Little reminding of the betrayal of the sporting ideal that can accompany the commercialization of sport, or of the nationalistic excesses to which competitors and public alike can be driven by the media. And the Soviet Union of this time, before 1936 and the beginnings of the stories about State Trials that would eventually lead to the greatest judicial Terror in history (but after the suppression of the kulaks), did represent a ray of hope for those who were losing faith in the democracies, wracked by Depression and unemployment, and the equally distasteful 'solutions' of the dictatorships. Nevertheless, none but the committed could have swallowed all that *Sport* had to serve up about the relative merits of not only sport in the two countries, but the regimes that underpinned these systems. The success of *Sport* in this time, for it did continue to improve its sales, came from other reasons: first was in putting an end to the ruinous 'social fascist' policy; second was in its campaigns against the manifest neglect in the provision of sport and physical education facilities by the French government, national and local. Working-class unity and grass roots politicking against real grievances were the strength of working-class sport agitation, just as they would be the strength of the Popular Front government that came to power in May 1936.

#### A NEW DEAL FOR FRENCH YOUTH:

The provision of sporting facilities in France at the end of 1935 was on a par with the State's expenditure on social welfare: in both, France lagged behind most countries in Europe, perhaps with the exceptions of Spain and Greece. With a population of 42 millions it had only 43 public swimming pools, and of its 38,000 communes, 35,000 were without sporting facilities ('installations'); in the schools the time set aside for physical education was limited, and the supervision of such activities was generally poor. In countries like Great Britain, where conditions of work were only marginally better, and where the living conditions for the majority of its workers were equally

bad, the provision of areas set aside for sport, be they football fields or swimming pools, or other recreations, such as public libraries, showed that the government was not totally callous in regard to its disadvantaged. There, too, the hand of charity and the private provision of sporting and leisure activities, was less ostentatiously under the control of the churches or employers' bodies. They were thus less susceptible to the overt intrusion of politics. In France the communists, then the communists and socialists united in the FSGT, campaigned vigorously in favour of a better deal for France's youth, suffering from cramped and overcrowded conditions, and subject to the twin scourges of alcoholism and tuberculosis. The FSGT and *Sport* were far from being on their own in expressing such concerns, but they did get closer to the heart of the problem, even if their ultimate solution did not create its own contradictions.

In France the paucity of sporting facilities was made even worse by the sectarian way in which existing facilities were often hired out: in Versailles there were no public facilities and in some municipalities access to public playing-fields was denied to working-class bodies: in socialist municipalities they might be banned to bourgeois bodies. It was a case in the latter category that *Led Auto* denounced the Commeny Municipality for refusing to rent its stadium to a club affiliated with the catholic FGSPF, while it granted such rights to a club belonging to the socialist USSGT. This *Led Sport* to an indignant outburst in which it agreed with *Auto*, then went on:

We want sport to be at the service of the Labouring classes, and wherever we are able to, FST and USSGT, we will prevent the federations belonging to the church, the bosses, the military, or the fascists from using the stadiums that we pay for.

In this same number *Sport* pressed home its campaign for further spending on municipal sports facilities, attacked the Paris Municipality for trying to increase the cost of entry to its swimming pools by 40% and in the 'slogan of the day' which appeared alongside its banner on the first page, highlighted the fact that while in France over the last two years the physical education budget had dropped by 12 million francs, in the Soviet Union it had increased by 123 millions in the construction of stadiums alone.<sup>86</sup>

In what turned out to be a successful campaign to block the increase in prices to Paris municipal swimming pools, the Paris Region of the FSGT was supported by the national body of the French Swimming Federation (FFNS) and the laic sports body UFOLEP. Indeed the campaign for more funding for sports facilities was taken up by large sections of the bourgeois press, and *Sport* was happy to use such support as it saw fit. To back up its own claims *Sport* quoted from *Je sais tout* ('Hardly a seditious or even left-wing publication') which claimed that 35,489 out of France's 38,355 communes had neither stadium, sports ground, nor even an area set aside for games. It was more sarcastic when *Sporting* suggested that the solution to the problem might be in a lottery, taking the logic a bit further and suggesting that the parents of poor children organize a lottery to get themselves decent schools and that the victims of TB get together to organize a lottery to buy hospitals for themselves.<sup>87</sup> Another aspect of *Sport's* campaigning that set it apart from the bourgeois press was its continual harping on the fact that while medical and physical education expenditure was being cut, the budget for the military continued to increase.

In the Anglo-Saxon countries prior to the First World War sport was often justified as a patriotic preparation for war; certainly on the part of politicians, would-be society leaders and large sections of the press, so that the literature of the time abounded in military metaphors relating sport to war.<sup>88</sup> In France, whose education system was controlled by the 'University' set up by the military dictator Napoleon in 1906, the situation was no different, but the military purposes of sport and physical education were more raucously proclaimed in a country that had been disastrously defeated by its German neighbour in 1870-71 and had vowed 'Revenge' thereafter. The 'revanche', when it came, was at an appalling cost, and the lessons of the 1914-18 war were not so uniformly accepted as those of the 1870-71 conflict. For the Left in general, and the Socialists in particular, the horrors of that holocaust imbued it with a disgust of anything pertaining to the military and led it, along with the bulk of ordinary French people, to what became the even more deadly policy of appeasement in the

late 1930s. For *Sport* whether under communist or socialist influence, the 1914-18 war was used as a reminder to its readers of the consequences of capitalistic imperialism and in the period before the formation of the Popular Front, *Sport* maintained an aggressively pacifist stance. Preparation for war was tantamount to war itself, and its first victims were always the nation's youth. From such a fate France's young men had to be saved, and so it was with a suspicion bordering on paranoia that the communists and the socialists looked on any youth organization not under their control.

In some cases they had reason to be suspicious. Organizations like Pierre Taittinger's *Jeunesses patriotes* were openly committed to right-wing policies that bordered on fascism, and they also had their sporting 'front' organizations. One of these was the *Jeunesses Patriotes et Sportives* (patriotic and Sporting Youth), run by Archille Joinard. On the twentieth anniversary of the death of Paul Deroulede, the rabid French nationalist who died just a few months before the outbreak of the First World War, Joinard took his young charges to honour Deroulede's memory. In his oration Joinard claimed that but for Deroulede France would at that moment have been under the heel of Hitler, for without Deroulede's untiring efforts socialism and its elder brother, anti-militarism, would have rotted the national heart and the war would have found France without the moral resilience to defend herself. For Joinard, fanaticism took the place of logic and historical understanding, and *Sport* had an easy target for its sarcasms.<sup>89</sup> In regard to the Boy Scouts Movement, *Sport's* attitude might have seemed somewhat jaundiced, condemning it as a fascist organization because of its religious base, its injunctions to be humble and obey, and because it was under the patronage of militarists like Marshal Lyautey and General Weygand. Recognizing that the scouts were composed of the sons of ordinary workers who shared their love of the fresh air, *Sport* urged its 'comrade scouts' to escape from the baleful influence of such Leaders and join their democratic bodies where all Leaders were elected and where they could join the fight against war and fascism.<sup>90</sup>

The greatest danger, however, came from those who were in

a position to influence France's youth because of the pressure they could bring to bear on the education system. On 3 December 1934 Marshal Petain, then ex-minister for war in the Doumergue government, made a speech which was reported in full in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the essence of which was that the youth of France should be given an education that prepared them for the military. In particular he inveighed against laic schoolteachers who, he said, were out to destroy State and society. He denounced in passing the Soviet system, where teachers were the servile instruments of the State, but for the regimes of Italy and Germany he had the highest praise. *Sport* noted that among those applauding the speech were Schneider and other big industrialists, army generals like Weygand, as well as Chiappe and a few other 'friends of the 6 February', and went on to denounce the speech, declaring that French schools and clubs must not be turned into barracks. And since they were in process of stretching out the hand of friendship beyond the socialists to the radicals, asked the radical schoolteachers and their sporting body UFOLEP, to join them against their common enemy.<sup>91</sup>

The communist campaign against war and fascism was not without its own contradictions, since it might reasonably have been suggested that the only effective measure against the militarist and expansionist threat of fascism was cold steel. Instead the French Communists saw the solution in an intensification of the struggle against their own bourgeoisie, a faith as blind as that which other French Leaders were encouraging in the Maginot Line then in process of being constructed. A speech by Thorez, the General Secretary of the PCF, in May 1935, could have been ranked alongside that of Joinard at the Deroulede commemoration demonstration, as an illustration of the bankruptcy of French understanding of foreign affairs. Thorez declared that while he would do everything in his power to prevent the working-class from being dragged into a war in defence of democracy against fascism, he would have no qualms about enjoining the working-class to defend by any means whatsoever any aggressors of the Soviet Union.<sup>92</sup> *Sport* shared this shortsightedness with its communist leader. In the same issue and on the same page as it denounced, with justice, Petain's plans for French youth,

another article denounced the Czechoslovak Social-Democrat Muller for supporting war credits in the Czech parliament, and as leader of the ATOS (a Czech workers' sport organization) for agreeing to put all the sporting bodies under his control under a regime that would in effect be a form of pre-military training. He did this with regret, but he recognized that since the accession to power of Hitler in Germany, war was a permanent reality. Sarcastically *Sport* 'unmasked' this 'militarist and brave defender of his country'.<sup>93</sup>

Within a few months of the foundation of the FSST, the newly unified body issued a proclamation of rights on behalf of France's sporting youth. After some introductory comments it set out its various demands:<sup>94</sup>

#### PLAYING AREAS

In localities with less than 20,000 inhabitants, each municipality - with the *departement* and the state contributing 50% - shall set up and maintain one of several grounds where football and other sports such as running etc. may be practised, and a gym hall.

Where there is a river or water catchment that makes it practicable, a swimming area ('*ponton de natation*') shall be constructed.

Where communes have limited resources, these tasks ('realisations') should be carried out by groups of communes.

In those localities where there are more than 20,000 inhabitants, at least one swimming pool should be constructed.

Free public admission for training will be available two days a week; on the other days and on Sundays the facilities will be shared between all the local societies.

However, in no circumstances will these concessions be granted to societies under the control of professional employers.

#### SUBSIDIES

To assist societies in the construction and upkeep of grounds and buildings, and in the provision of sporting equipment, there will be annual subsidies to the clubs for such expenditure, of:

20% by the state, 20% by the department, 10% by the commune: this to be granted on presentation by the clubs of the appropriate financial statement.

These subsidies are not to be made available to clubs under the control of professionals or employers.



We demand the creation of committees with real representation by those using the sporting facilities; these committees will maintain the grounds, halls, etc., and control the subsidies.

The same will apply on the departmental level.

#### MEDICAL CONTROL

For clubs or societies exercising medical controls over their members costs involved will be covered as follows:

40% by the state, 40% by the department, 20% by the commune.

#### TRANSPORT

Reduction in costs of group fares of up to 50% of return fare.

Individuals may make the return journey on their own.

Benefits of the group fare to be extended, without additional charge, on express trains and rapides for journeys of more than 100 kilometres.

Issue of tickets, on simple request of club, 24 hours before departure.

Suppression of passport for sporting trips abroad.

#### UNEMPLOYED

Free transport for training and competition.

Free access to all grounds, municipal or not, whether for training or for competition.

#### SOLDIERS

Same claims as for unemployed.

Free choice of training time each week.

Equipment to be supplied at no cost by the military (*armee*).

The right to belong to the civil club of his choice, and to participate in any sports event whatsoever.

#### OTHER (DIVERS)

- Suppression of the cycling tax;
- Free transport of bicycles, on trains, when accompanied by rider;
- Right to camp on communal grounds and in national domains;
- Exoneration from the stamp tax for posters put up by societies or clubs (as exists at present for all societies preparing for the military ('societes de preparation militaire')):

Suppression of all taxes (rights of the *poor*, public assistance, etc.) on functions (*reunions*) organized by any non-professional sporting club, when the highest price of admission is less than 5 francs;

Freedom of societies or federation affiliated with or recognized by the National Sports Committee (Comite national des sports/CNS) to meet (*recontrer*) any society they wish, even if it is not affiliated with the CNS;

Retirement of all military officers and instructors in the clubs.

There was nothing sectarian about this proclamation, one which anyone with the interests of the health of the nation at heart could have applauded, including the strictures on the military, employers and professionals: it is noteworthy that religious bodies were not included in the banned groups. It was a set of demands which *Sport* continued to campaign for, albeit while maintaining support for the Soviet system as it translated it to its readers, denouncing the German and Italian models of state support, and intruding its slogans against fascism and imperialists wars, condemning conditions in the military barracks where hundreds of young Frenchmen were dying, and bitterly opposing the extension of conscription from one year to two.

*Sport's* campaigns, however, constantly went beyond those of the bourgeois press. This was particularly so in its campaigns on behalf of the right of women to enjoy the benefits of sport (equally with men. The Soviet Union was showing the way, but there were times when the local clubs were slow or Lacking in enthusiasm to take up the Soviet example, for which they were duly criticized. In practical terms, the FSGT arranged competitions for women and gave these good coverage in its press. As a result the FSGT seems to have had a much stronger women's organization than the official French Federation of Women's Sport (Federation Francaise des Sports Feminins); by November 1935 this body was on the point of collapse, and yet *Sport* noted that it was the only newspaper that seemed to think this worthy of comment.<sup>95</sup> More typically, however *Sport* would attack this body, in receipt of State subsidies while the working-class federations got nothing. It claimed that the officials of the FFSF were more concerned about the 'state' honours they might

receive for loyal service than acting in the true interests of women, while newspapers like *Auto* were interested in women's sport only to sell beauty creams. In such ways female sport was flagrantly prostituted by the 'moribund 2FSF, and the sordid money-grubbing of *Auto*'.<sup>96</sup>

*Sport* also attacked the bourgeois attitudes to modesty that frowned on the attire most suitable for sporting women. Nowhere was this hypocrisy better demonstrated than in Italy and Germany: Italy where Mussolini and the Vatican had banned women from competing in sport; Germany where Hitler wanted women to be restricted to the three K's (kinder, kirche, kuche/children, church and cooking). In the Soviet Union, by contrast, communism had freed the body along with the mind.<sup>97</sup> France's government might have been embarrassed at the thought of French women seeking the same rights as men, in dress as in behaviour, but in the socialist state this would all be a thing of the past: in sport as in other spheres, women were to have the same rights as men.

The concern of the bourgeois press for France's youth was often depicted by *Sport* as merely crocodile tears, since the solution to the problem could come only with the elimination of the bourgeois state. On 19 June 1935 *Auto* published one of its regular columns in which 'le docteur Ruffier' expressed his concern that French youths under 21 years of age had a much higher morality rate than in comparable countries. In France 68 young men in this age group died for every 10,000, while in England (it is possible he meant Great Britain) the equivalent figure was 36. For young women the figures were not quite so bad, 54 in France against 32 in England. In France this 'hecatomb of young French people' continued through until they were about forty. *Sport's* doctor Chassigneux took up Ruffier's themes: he was prepared to accept his statistics, even although Ruffier hadn't quoted any sources, and he was prepared to let his comments on 'other civilized countries' pass with a few sarcastic remarks about the civilization that had decimated the local populations with their famine and social diseases; his conclusions he reported with qualified approval: that the real reason for the high death rates was tuberculosis, due to young Folk not playing enough sport and sleeping with their windows

closed; and that alcohol was not a significant killer, as the deaths it caused were in the over 50 age group.

Chassigneux then went on to make his attack. Alcohol could not be dismissed as a killer, and the reason for Ruffier's conclusion in this regard was that he did not want to upset the aperitif manufacturers who advertised in *Auto*. As for the real cause of pulmonary diseases, these began with the famine wages paid to most workers, so that they had to exist on a poor diet, and were exacerbated by the dreadful working conditions they had to put up with, especially young apprentices who were exploited from the moment they left school, often as young as twelve years. The fight against youth mortality was just one episode in the class struggle, and its solution could come only when France had established a society without classes, 'such as that which our Russian comrades are in process of realizing'.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, *Sport* was prepared to rise above party spirit in the interests of French youth. In July 1935 *Sporting* quoted from a Chinese investigation which concluded that of all European 'races' French youth was far and away the most unhealthy. *Sport* took up these conclusions for a further attack on the reductions in the physical education budget, claiming that from 9 million francs in 1934 to 7 million in 1935, the Laval government was going to cut it further in 1936 to 4 million, and raised the question as to whether the Ecole Normale d'Education Physique (Physical Education Teacher's College) was going to disappear. This fear had already been voiced in *Auto*. Certainly *Auto* did go on to compare the situation with the Soviet Union, as *Sport* did, but the spirit of a united - if not popular - front was manifested in *Sport's* appeal to its two great newspaper rivals, *Auto* and *Sporting*, to join with it in a great campaign on the subject.<sup>99</sup>

There were factors other than *Sport's* promptings for the bourgeois press to campaign for an increase in the physical education budget. The Olympic Games were due to be held in Berlin within the year, and national honour threatened to be tarnished, a probability underlined when France was crushed by both Italy and Germany in two of the last sports meetings for the 1935 athletic year. *Sport* dismissed the chauvinistic rantings of its colleagues, and denounced the militarization of

sport, especially in Germany, but continued to campaign for the removal of the Games from Berlin (as did *Sporting*), at the same time as it demanded that the government spend more on its youth.

The government proved to be not impervious to the campaign, and in September 1935 brought about changes in the school curriculum that favoured physical education: in particular it decreed a compulsory hour each day for physical education, and that an afternoon be set aside for sport. *Sport* welcomed the declarations of M. Lafont, Minister for Physical Education, especially if they could be approved by the Minister for Education, M. Mario Roustau, a promising sign of collaboration between the two ministries. *Sport* went on to suggest that France follow the British system of Wednesday and Saturday afternoons being devoted to sport, suggested further that sports stadiums that were used only once or twice a week, like the Parc des Princes, Jean-Bouin, Colombes and Buffalo, be opened to the children of the district when not in use; but insisted above all that the State train more specialist physical education teachers, an area in which France was scandalously deficient. Above all, the children were not to fall under the influence of any military types, and *Sport* concluded its exhortations in the words of Andre Malraux: 'Of a man you want to make a soldier; we want to make a man'.<sup>100</sup> In an editorial in the following number *Sport* came back to the same theme, suggesting that Thursday, then a holiday, be used as a day in which the children would go on walks, play games, practise gymnastics and swimming, while Saturday afternoon be declared a holiday. In this way the other lessons need not be upset. It further insisted on the need for medical inspections, again called for properly trained teachers and the establishment of special teacher's colleges for this, insisted that they not be military men, and in answer to the question about where the money for all this was to come, answered quite simply that the military budget could be cut back, a 'work of war' giving way to a 'work of peace'.<sup>101</sup>

In that same issue *Sport* published a letter from the Committee for the Paris Region of the FSGT to the Municipal Council of Paris, setting out certain proposals to improve the situation of the sportsmen and women of the region. Its broad outlines fol-

lowed the Proclamation of the Rights of French Youth issued some months previously, with demands for easier access to stadiums and playing fields, construction of swimming pools, especially on the Seine, subsidies to help provide facilities, maintenance of low entry costs for swimming pools with special concessions to soldiers and unemployed, provision of medical checks and free courses in physical culture, and, following their most recent campaign, insistence on one hour a day being set aside at school for physical education, the introduction of compulsory swimming, and the training of more specialist teachers in sport and physical education. This was a *minimum* List of claims, and it was not to apply to the military or to professional associations.

These were demands that could reach ordinary French people where it mattered. Here was the common ground where groups of different political persuasions could come to some agreement. This was the groundswell from which would erupt the explosion of popular enthusiasm that would sweep the Popular Front government to power within a few months. At the end of 1935 the FSGT was even debating whether it should seek entry into that most official of bourgeois sports institutions, the Comite national des sports, ironically with the Communist members of the FSGT favouring admission, while Anton Guillevic, who had led his comrades out of the FST to form the USSGT in 1923, successfully argued against joining. By then the FSGT and its official organ had reached a previously unprecedented growth, a position it would maintain until they crumbled along with the Popular Front government half way through 1937. At the end of 1935, however, all this was in the future; for the moment the ground was prepared for the reforms of Leo Lagrange, which, but for the tragedy of the times and the tragedy of reality, might have set France on a path to national health and sound self-esteem that would have placed her once more in the ranks of the great powers.

## NOTES:

1. *France Information*, No. 125, Paris, 1985.
2. *Ibid.*, p.5.
3. Edouard Seidler, *Le Sport et la Presse*, Paris, 1964, pp.47-56. *L'Auto* also created the Le Mans 24 Hour car race in 1923, as big in motor sport as the Tour de France in cycling.
4. *Ibid.*, pp.33-47, 91-99.
5. *Ibid.*, pp.239-43.
6. Richard Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, London, 1981. In French, Jean-Toussaint Fieschi's *Histoire du Sport Francais, de 1870 a nos jours...*, Paris, 1983, has the appearance of a standard 'great moments' narrative, but in fact is an excellent survey (despite some annoying stylistic mannerisms) which does not overlook the relationship between sport and society.
7. Eugen Weber, 'Pierre de Coubertin and the Introduction of Sport into France', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1970), pp.3-26; Eugen Weber, 'Gymnastics and Sport in Fin-de-Siecle France: Opium of the Classes?', *American Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 1 (February 1971), pp.70-98.
8. See especially the special edition of *Recherches (Revue) (Revue 43)*, 'Aimezvous les Stades?', edited by Alain Ehrenberg, Paris, 1980; Bruce Kidd, 'The Popular Front and the 1936 Olympics in Germany', *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport and Physical Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1980, pp.1-18 (I thank Ian Jobling for sending me a copy of this paper which was presented to the Fourth Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education, held at the University of British Columbia on 24 June 1979. It was from this paper that I worked); Robert A. Nye, 'Degeneration, Neurasthenia and the Culture of Sport in Belle Epoque France', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 17 (1982), pp.51-68. See also the bibliography in Holt.
9. His best known work is *Sport: A Prison of Measured Time*, a set of essays translated by Ian Fraser, London, 1978. Of his other works the one I found most useful for this essay was *1936, Jeux Olympiques a Berlin*, Brussels, 1983, a very good study with an excellent bibliography.
10. The most recent is J.J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games*, Chicago and London,

1981, paperback edition, 1984.

11. Football, Rugby and Cycling, for instance, have all been covered in the series *La Fabuleuse Histoire de...*; the Tour de France has been studied in many works: see especially the bibliographies in Holt and Brohm.
12. Jean-Louis Chappat, *Les Chemins de l'Espoir, ou Combats de Leo Lagrange*, Lille (?), 1983. This work like those by Holt and Brohm, has an excellent bibliography and includes some unpublished works.
13. Richard Cobb is a historian of the French Revolution, but he lived through the Popular Front era and has an unrivalled capacity for making sharp insights into French history in general: in a review of D. Caute's *Communism and the French Intellectuals* he commented in regard to the popular enthusiasts of the mid 1930s: 'Perhaps the most typical memorial of this period was Leo Lagrange's *Ministere des Sports et des Loisirs*', *A Second Identity*, London, 1969, p.260. See also f.n.34 below.
14. *Leon Blum Before His Judges at the Supreme Court of Riom, March 11th and 12th*, 1942, London, 1942, pp.98-99.
15. Aline Coutrot, 'Youth Movements in France in the 1930s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 5, no.1 (1970), pp.23-35.
16. Robert F. Wheeler, 'Organized Sport and Organized Labour: the Workers' Sports Movement', in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 13 (1978), p.193, and James Riordan, 'Marx, Lenin and Physical Culture', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 3, no. 2, Summer 1976, pp. 152-61. In one of his few visions of the future society Marx set aside a special place for leisure: he tells in *The German Ideology* how in communist society people will be able to do one thing today and another tomorrow, 'to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner...' Quoted from Fritz Stern (ed.), *The Varieties of History*, Cleveland, Ohio, 1956, p.155. In Renoir's classic film 'A Nous la Liberte' the ultimate achievement of the workers is to see the end to factory drudgery and enjoy a life of leisure. The Wheeler article appeared in a Special Issue of the *Journal of Contemporary History* devoted to 'Workers' Culture'. On particular interest for the purpose of this essay, in addition to Wheeler, is the article by David A. Steinberg, 'The



- Workers' Sport Internationals, 1920-28', pp.233-51.
17. 'The Sports Movement and the United Front', *The Communist International*, 14, 8 April 1937, pp.579-87, 579.
  18. *Ibid.*, p.582; *Sport*, 10-4-34; Wheeler, 'Organized Sport and Organized Labour' gives the figure of 100,000 for the period after fusion, compared with 17,000 members during the 1920s (p.199).
  19. *Ibid.*, pp.196,203, 206; 'The Sports Movement and the United Front', p.579. It should be noted that throughout this essay I use the word *bourgeois* in the sense in which it is used in the workers' press, that is to say, any social class or influence that is neither 'aristocratic' nor peasant or working-class.
  20. Holt, pp.1-14.
  21. *Ibid.*, p.9.
  22. Seidler, pp.68-9.
  23. Manevy in *ibid.*, p.69.
  24. The 'revolution' in *Paris-Soir* is fully covered in Seidler, pp.69-86.
  25. For the organization of sport by the Catholic Church, in addition to Holt, see Bernard Dubreuil, 'La naissance du sport catholique; in 'Aimez-vous les stades?', pp.221-51.
  26. Holt, p.199; see also Ted W. Margadant, 'Primary Schools and Youth Groups in Pre-War Paris: les Petites A's', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 13, (1978), pp.323-36.
  27. Holt, pp.200-02. See Dubreuil, also, however, for notable examples of cooperation.
  28. In addition to Holt, see Alain Ehrenberg, 'Note sur le sport rouge' in 'Aimez-vous les Stades?'
  29. Ehrenberg, p.77.
  30. Holt, pp.203-4.
  31. Ehrenberg, p.78, f.n.6bis.
  32. *Ibid.*, p.79.
  33. The works on the three parties that made up the Popular Front government are too numerous to mention here: none of the books on the Communists, Socialists and Radicals, however, gives much more than a

cursory reference to the sport and leisure ideals of the parties.

34. Again, the works on the Popular Front government are too numerous to mention here, but there are some works which discuss the leisure reforms in some detail. Best of these is Chappat's biography of Leo Legrange, and this work should also be consulted for further works, published and unpublished, on the leisure reforms of the Popular Front. Of these, note in particular: Benigno Caceres, *Allons au-devant de la vie. La naissance due temp des loisirs en 1936*, Paris, 1981; Henri Nogueres, *La Vie quotidienne en France au temps du Front Populaire*, Paris, 1977. L. Bodin and J. Touchard have a good chapter on popular culture and the spirit of 1936 in their survey of the press of 1936: *Front populaire. 1936*, Paris, 1961. For a more jaundiced view of the effect of the change in leisure and work patterns at this time, see Michael Seidman, 'The Birth of the Weekend and the Revolts against Work: The Workers of the Paris Region during the Popular Front (1936-38)', in *French Historical Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2 (Fall 1981), pp.249-76.
35. See in particular *Sport*, 20-11-35.
36. See in particular *Sport*, 3-10-34.
37. *Sport*, 17-4-34.
38. *Sport*, 1-5-34.
39. *Sport*, 23-5-34.
40. *Sport*, 25-7-34, where the two letters are reproduced in full. Among the 'increasing dangers' was imperialist Japan which threatened Russia on its eastern borders.
41. *Sport*, 15-8-34.
42. *Sport*, 12-9-34.
43. *Sport*, 26-9-34.
44. *Sport*, 22-8-34.
45. *Sport*, 13-2-35.
46. *Sport* 25-7-34.
47. *Sport*, 8-5-34.
48. *Sport*, 29-5-34.

49. *Sport*, 22-8-34.
50. *Sport*, 3-10-34.
51. *Sport*, 27-12-34.
52. *Sport*, 2-10-35.
53. *Sport*, 13-1-35.
54. *Sport*, 16-1-35.
55. *Sport*, 23-1-35.
56. For the reference to the spectators at the Six Day cycling events see Richard Cobb's review of Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, in *TLS*, 21-8-81. It should be noted that while *Sport* frequently castigated Rimet, and Bernard Levy, who owned the Racing-Club de Paris, both of whom were Jews, it never insulted them as Jews.
57. *Sport*, 29-5-34. El Ouafi, who had been a simple worker in the Renault factory before his fame, had in fact written to Desgrange and had a letter of sympathy, but did not expect anything more concrete from him.
58. Most of this supplement is reproduced in Seidler, pp.71-74.
59. Kidd, 'The Popular Front and the 1936 Olympics' is based in large part on the sports columns in *Humanite* and the *Populaire*, the latter written by Pierre Marie.
60. Because there have been so many studies of the political implications of the Berlin Olympics I have deliberately passed over this major topic for the purpose of this essay: however, for attitudes in France, and especially from the 'workers' viewpoint, see Kidd, 'The Popular Front and the 1936 Olympics'. Jean-Marie Brohm's 1936: *Jeux Olympiques a Berlin* has very good sections on France and is well documented.
61. *Sport*, 17-10-34.
62. *Sport*, 14-11-34.
63. *Sport*, 30-1-35,
64. *Sport*, 20-3-35.
65. *Sport*, 20-3-35.
66. *Sport*, 27-3-35.
67. Most of my comments on Soviet sport are taken from James Riordan's

article on the USSR in James Riordan (ed.), *Sport Under Communism*, Canberra, 1978, pp.15-53.

68. *Ibid.*, p.21.

69. *Ibid.*, p.27.

70. *Sport*, 1-8-34.

71. *Sport*, 16-1-35.

72. *Sport*, 7-8-35.

73. *Sport*, 2-10-35.

74. Holt, p.79.

75. *Sport*, 17-10-34.

76. *Sport*, 2-10-35.

77. In July 1927 a Soviet soccer team touring Germany demanded different food, asked for better accommodation, left official functions early and in one case insisted at the last moment that a sleeping-car be added to their train; Steinberg, 'The Workers' Internationals', p.246. This was in addition to the political problems they raised as a matter of principle.

78. *Sport*, 6-6-34.

79. *Sport*, 13-6-34.

80. *Sport*, 21-8-35.

81. *Sport*, 24-7-35.

82. *Sport*, 28-8-35.

83. *Sport*, 4-9-35.

84. *Sport*, 12-9-34.

85. *Sport*, 4-9-35.

86. *Sport*, 2-10-34.

87. *Sport*, 6-3-35.

HR. 'The playing fields of Eton' and 'Play up! Play up! and Play the game!' are the two most obvious examples. For some examples of the Australian experience of sport and the 1914-18 war see Michael McKernan, 'Sport, War and Society: Australia 1914-18', in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds.), *Sport in History*, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1979, pp.

- 1-20. McKernan argues that opinion divided between a middle-class 'amateur' attitude, which saw sport as fulfilling a higher purpose, and a working class attitude which saw professionalism as entertainment and pleasure. In France at this time sport, apart from cycling and boxing, was almost entirely amateur.
89. *Sport*, 21-11-34.
90. *Sport*, 18-7-34.
91. *Sport*, 12-12-34.
92. Jean Grandmougin, *Histoire Vivante du Front Populaire: 1934-1939*, Paris, 1966, p.94.
93. *Sport*, 12-12-34.
94. *Sport*, 3-4-35.
95. *Sport*, 20 and 27-11-35.
96. *Sport*, 13-2-35.
97. *Sport*, 28-2-34, with superb photograph of two bikini clad females and a male in trunks Leaping for a ball which is out of the picture. *Sport* encouraged 'naturism' - also banned by Mussolini and the Vatican - and occasionally reported physical attacks by bourgeois groups on the workers' 'nature camps'.
98. *Sport*, 26-6-35.
99. *Sport*, 10-7-35.
100. *Sport*, 2-10-35.
101. *Sport.*, 9-10-35.

# AUSTRALIAN SPORTING HEROES\*

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For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History for the Great Men who have worked here . . . Could we see them [these Six classes of Heroes], we should get some glimpses into the very marrow of the world's history.

(Thomas Carlyle, 1841)

## SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

Many people view sport as a particularly important institution in Australian society. Some observers have gone so far as to call it a national "religion" or "obsession". Certainly, over the last one hundred years, many visitors and observers from overseas have commented that sport has had a predominant effect on the culture, value systems and forms of expression of Australians. For example, in 1880, Richard Twopcnny wrote in Town Life in Australia

"... the principal amusements of the Australians are outdoor sports of one kind or another."

Herbert Warren Wind in an article in Sports Illustrated in 1960 stated :

(Australia) . . . a land completely surrounded by water and inundated with athletes . . . Australia is a sports playing, sports watching, sports talking, altogether sports-minded country such as the world has never known before.

'The wife of a former United States ambassador to Australia wrote :  
"living in Australia is like living in a gymnasium - there's always somebody practising something." (Dunstan, 1971).

\* Gender : Throughout this paper, the term heroes encompasses both heroes and heroines

A sample of other comments about this image of the "sporty" Australians include the following:

Horne (1965): Sport to many Australians is life and the rest a shadow. Sport has been the one national institution that has had no "knockers". To many it is considered a sign of degeneracy not to be interested in it. To play sport, or watch others and to read and talk about it is to uphold the nation and build its character. Australia's success at competitive international sport is considered an important part of its foreign policy.

Hallows (1970): Australians play a greater variety of sports than any other nations (a reflection of their varied origins and the multifarious influences they feel) . . .

UNESCO (1956): In Australia sport exerts such a power of attraction that it would be useless to try to steer players and spectators towards other activities.

Australian News and Information Bureau (1962) : When you consider what the Australians have managed to do in the intensively competitive field of international sport against nations of huge population, it simply staggers your comprehension.

Many other social commentators and agencies from both within Australia and overseas have proffered similar remarks (Caldwell, 1972a, 1972b; Coles, 1975; Conway, 1971; Daly, 1972; Dunstan, 1973; Dutton, 1958; Elford, 1976; Jobling, 1974, 1975, 1981; King, 1978; Law, 1968; Mandle, 1974; McGregor, 1966; Murray, 1976; Pearson and O'Hara, 1977; Pringle, 1958; Watkins, 1976). Mayer (1961) has discussed the relative content of sports items with other features contained within Australian newspapers over the past one hundred years and has shown that sport is well-covered, quantitatively at least. An American Professor of Journalism, Holden (1961) has stated:

Australian sports specialists are not merely reporters, heralds and chroniclers of muscular events; they are priests of a national cult.

It can be stated that the outcome of this socialisation process is that, for many Australians, sport is important and worthwhile. This belief in the significance of sport is frequently demonstrated by the adulation of individual sportsmen and sportswomen, some of whom have achieved sporting celebrity or hero status. However, how Australian sporting heroes have emerged and how the hero-making process in Australia

operates are questions which have not, to any significant degree, been considered by historians. Mandle (1982) has included a discussion about sporting heroes in his chapter, "Sports History", in New History - Studying Australia Today, and his insight to this phenomenon is most helpful.

#### HERO TYPES: CHARACTERISTICS AND HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

Throughout history it has been difficult to separate the true hero from the celebrity. This is especially true in sport history, especially in recent decades, because we have created a world of men and women who seem great because they are famous rather than famous because they are great. Celebrities are 'persons' known for [their] "well-knownness" (Boorstin, 1968) and may not recognise any "obligations to hold up a high standard before the public . . . they fail to act for the public as hero models should, by raising the general level of aspiration" (Klapp, 1962).

The heroic individual emerges from the rank and file of the population because he is in some way extraordinary and such persons become symbols of their time and embodiments of certain moral and culture values. However, although in some instances heroes are supportive of the dominant values (the literal meaning of the word 'hero' is "to protect"), in other instances they stand in opposition to them.

This is also true with respect to sport and Swetman (1976) has attempted to both outline a range of hero types - and ascertain to what extent "sport heroes" fit the typology. It should be noted that Swetman deals only with contemporary "heroes" - this paper considers this typology for Australian sports heroes since 1880.

Swetman's hero types range from those who reproduce and reinforce the dominant ideology and values to those who transcend and transform them. Although Swetman's typology includes six-characteristics of hero types, the following summary provides elaboration of only those at either end of the continuum:



The Folk-cultural hero has a general mission to somehow vindicate the culture within which he operates; he articulates, in a memorable succinct manner, the belief system of those who revere him.

The agonal hero

The mythological hero

The charismatic hero

The event-making man or historical hero

The cosmic hero or, overman has a total disregard for the given social order; this heroic type is unique because by nature his heroism resists hero worship.

Elaboration of this is provided in Figure 1 which is modified from that provided by Swetman (1976).

FIGURE 1

HERO TYPES: CHARACTERISTICS

	Persistence	Mission	Relationship to followers
Cosmic	creativity; total possession of will	continual transcendence; creation	few to none
Event Maker	capacities of intelligence and will	response to historical crisis	used in pursuit
Charismatic	superhuman gift of grace; devotion;	reshaping material, social conditions	revolutionary; followers are a gauge of success
Mythological	unity of purpose	exorcism or boon-bringing	numbers increase with time as myth is created and understanding changes
Agonal	pursuit of self-assertion	honour, glory	peer group sanction
Folk cultural	devotion to local, national concerns	vindication of cultural mores	sub-cultural or cultural group
Celebrity	not necessary	defined by media	pseudo-charismatic

Swetman also considers the conditions of social milieu in which the heroes exist and operate. Again, in summary they are :

historical perturbation: a crisis within the existing order; a type of rebellion which envisages a better way

the vision of the hero in relation to this perturbation, the projection into the unknown

the new order established as a result of the hero's intervention in history

A schematic depiction of these historical conditions is provided in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

HERO TYPES: HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

	Perturbation	Vision	New Order
Cosmic	breaking of values, "statues"	playfulness: defeat of "spirit I of gravity"	continual renewal creation I
Event Maker	major historical crisis	alternative path created by event maker	new historical pathway
Charismatic	dissatisfaction of leader; devotion of followers	ordered totality	routinization of charisma
Mythological	separation; schism	initiation; adventure	return transfiguration rebirth
Agonal	meaning through contest, struggle	demonstration of prowess, ambition, courage	conception of honour, glory
Folk-cultural	need for meaning, transference	limited by belief systems	better articulated belief system
Celebrity	spurious needs of media hounds	ordinariness	reaffirmation of conformity

Swetman acknowledges that in the earlier writings of Orrin Klapp three "routes" or "journeys" through the social order were propounded:

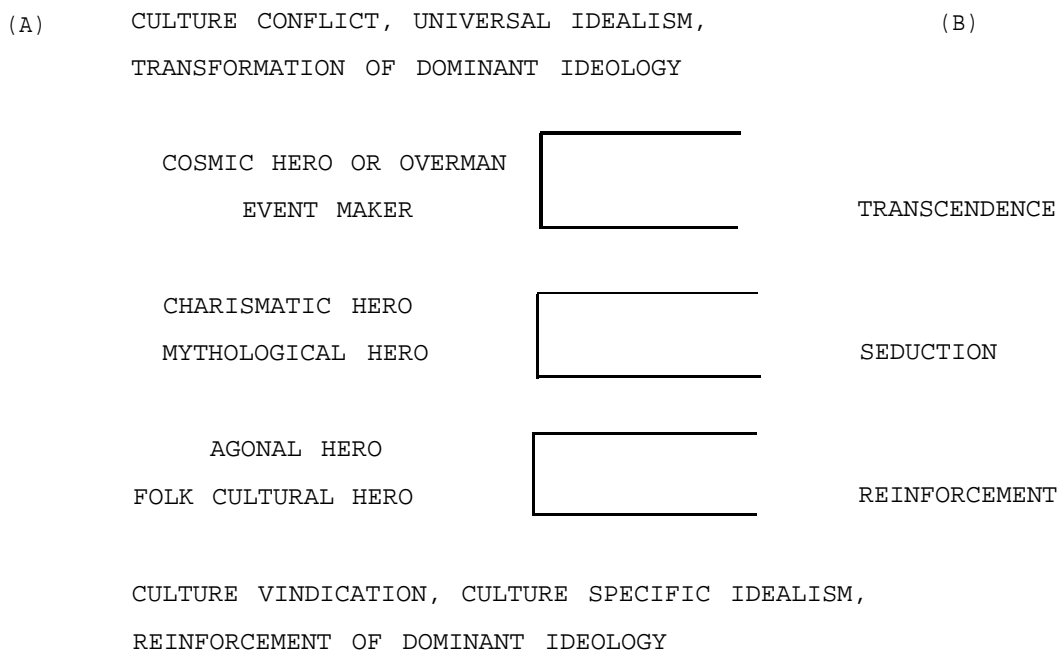
Reinforcement . . . a journey which keeps a person within the social structure and takes him towards goals it approves

Seduction . . . a journey which keeps a person within the perspective of the structure, but shows him how, or tempts him, to break its rules, leading him to feel bad about it afterwards because he still judges himself by the old rules.

Transcendence . . . a journey which takes him outside his social structure to a point where he relinquishes its perspective and his former self-image, feels new experiences, glimpses new identities, and begins to judge himself with new rules.

FIGURE 3

SUMMARY OF TYPOLOGY OF HEROES



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SELECTED AUSTRALIAN SPORTSMEN AND SPORTSWOMEN

Before there can be any consideration and discussion about the sport hero status of selected Australian sportsmen and sportswomen, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of some significant events and achievements in their lives. These appear in the appendix to this paper.

It is interesting to note that prior to the presentation of this paper at the Sporting Traditions V Conference in Adelaide in 1985, delegates were asked to complete a survey about these athletes whose names were circulated. The responses to the survey were used to promote discussion and there was much interaction and debate as to why particular athletes fitted certain categories. It is also interesting to note that in a post -presentation survey, delegates were given the opportunity to list their 10 Australian "sporting heroes". Nineteen delegates responded so there was potential for 190 (19 x 10) "heroes" to be named. There were 66 sports persons named, 7 horses and one 12-metre yacht! Only those persons and horses who were included more than once are listed in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4

Reginald 'Snowy' Baker	( 2)	Lewis Hoad	( 2)
Jack Brabham	( 2)	John Landy	( 4)
Don Bradman	(17)	"Phar Lap"	(10)
Norman Brookes	( 2)	Rod Laver	( 4)
"Carbine"	( 2)	Denis Lillee	( 6)
Andrew (Boy) Charlton	( 4)	Walter Lindrum	( 4)
Ron Clarke	( 3)	Ray Lindwall	( 2)
Margaret Court	( 2)	Heather McKay	( 5)
Betty Cuthbert	( 2)	Dally Messenger	( 2)
Les Darcy	( 7)	Tony Roche	( 2)
Herb Elliott	( 5)	Ken Rosewall	( 7)
Dawn Fraser	(14)	Fred Spofforth	( 3)
Evonne Goolagong-Cawley	( 3)	Peter Thompson	( 2)
Shane Gould	( 2)	Victor Trumper	( 5)
Harold Hardwick	( 2)		

Comment: Of the 19 persons selected by the author for the purposes of discussion as to whether they were celebrities, cultural reinforcing or cultural transcending heroes, 14 were nominated once and 10 were nominated more than once by delegates.

#### FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SPORT HERO-MAKING PROCESS IN AUSTRALIA

It is clear that there are many factors which influence the hero-making process in Australia but such factors as the type of sport, the era, the gender of athletes, the athlete's age and circumstances of death and

their socio-economic and "establishment" status can provide a basis for consideration.

The type of sport, the extent of its development and following by the Australian public (both male and female) seems to be a significant factor. The "national" development of cricket and its subsequent, and consequent, "nationalistic" effect has meant that many cricketers have been revered since the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Of course, the extent of the "following" a sport has greatly affects the potential. for heroes to emerge. Following the introduction of the Malibu surfboard to Australia in the late 1950's, small but influential "surfie" groups have promoted and promulgated their heroes, such as the early world-champions "Midget" Farelly and Nat Young. Of course, the fact that there are various codes of football throughout Australia which are "regionalised" has prevented the emergence of any 'national' heroes, and most have attained 'celebrity' status from followers of particular codes (Rugby Union, Rugby League and Australian Rules, but not soccer - yet).

It. has become clear that in attempting to form any opinion about the role and place of sport in Australian society over the past one hundred years there has been little attempt to differentiate between the attitudes towards, and involvement in, sport by gender (Jobling, 1980). As Anne Summers (1975) has stated, "Australian society has been written about by men as if it consisted only of men", so one should not be surprised that very few sportswomen have attained heroine status. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's Australian women Olympic athletes performed more successfully than their male counterparts (Coles, 1975) but the image of the "sporty" Australians has generally remained a masculine one. Female swimmers, Annette Kellerman and Fanny Durack, may be considered as having been "culturally transforming" heroines in that each influenced the changing of opinions of many about the role of women In society, and certainly sport, in the early decades of this century (Jobling, 1980). Australia's greatest female swimmer, Dawn Fraser, may be regarded as a heroine on various criteria. Although she is one of many women athletes of the post-World War 2 decades of "golden girls" (others include Betty Cuthbert, Margaret Smith/Court, Heather McKay). Fraser has retained a distinctive aura. Her heroine status is complex and goes beyond the gender component. Her athletic achievements are still regarded as fantastic but the "anti-establishment" demeanour and

defiance of authority at great personal cost is no doubt a major contributing factor.

The sporting achievements of Kellerman, Durack, Fraser, Goolagong-Cawley and many other women must also be considered within the context of "era".

The concepts of sportsmanship, manliness, fair play, nationalism, competitiveness are some of many ideologies of sport which have been promulgated in different eras with varying degrees of emphasis or importance. In most cases these and other concepts are values and attributes which are to be admired and aspired. There have been eras in Australian sport where some of the above attributes and concepts of sport have been so significant that "sports heroes" have emerged more readily than others. The female swimmers of the turn of the century are one example and the inter-war years, especially the 1930's depression, is another. Mandle (1982) has briefly discussed this era stating that "it would not be unfair to characterise the interwar years as an age of ruthlessness". This was the era of Donald Bradman, Walter Lindrum and Phar Lap who were, as Mandle (1982) so aptly and succinctly states, were "not so much winners as dominators".

Australian sport history can readily be considered and analysed in eras, one of the earliest being the struggle between the colonies of the 19th century, especially Victoria and N.S.W. This great intercolonial rivalry became temporarily transformed into a patriotism which sought an identity which could be clearly recognised as Australian as we progressed towards and into the twentieth century. Edward Trickett, the first of many Australian scullers who dominated international sculling from the mid-1870's, and Australian cricketers such as Charles Bannerman and the "Demon" Spofforth, brought to many colonials the realisation that, as Australians, they could have great pride in their country and its many achievements, especially in sport. This surge of national identity was a significant force in Federation and has remained (perhaps "been retained" is more appropriate) ever since. Certainly, the post-Second World War "golden days of Australian sport" era was when many Australian sportsmen and women approached "hero" status within their homeland and were also widely acclaimed internationally. The television age had enabled the skills and exploits of Australian athletes who were now competing and performing more frequently and

successfully in and on international stadia, arenas, pools, rings, course, courses, tracks and pitches, to be even more greatly appreciated. Although the 1950's and 1960's brought many great athletes into the limelight, only a few could be regarded as having reached "heroic" proportions. Marjorie Jackson, John Landy, Hoad and Rosewall, Rod Laver, Dave Sands, Betty Cuthbert, Margaret Smith-Court, Murray Rose, are great Australian sportsmen and women but perhaps the status of hero(heroine) of the era can only be bestowed on Dawn Fraser. It is possible that this woman epitomised the spirit of Australian society within that era - she was anti-establishment, outspoken, a free spirit and, above all, a winner!

ANZAC Day, April 25th, is an annual holiday to commemorate and honour those Australians who have fought for their country in war. Although to many foreigners, and even the native-born, it seems strange that the first day of a disastrous landing at Gallipoli in 1915 was selected, the "holiday" evokes memories for so many. I am always moved by the expression uttered at the cenotaph, "Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn . . . at the going down of the sun, we shall remember them".

Understandably, for many people war dead epitomise heroism. Similarly, some athletes who have been "plucked in their prime", regardless of the cause of death, have assumed sports hero status. Table 1 provides the age of death of some sporting heroes:

	<u>Age at Death</u>
Harry Searle	23
Les Darcy	22
Victor Trumper	37
Dave Sands	26
Russell Mockridge	30
Phar Lap	5

Although Trumper was clearly past his cricketing 'prime' at the time of his death, his hero status was probably elevated because the "years did not condemn" him, perhaps they mythologised him (Howell and Howell). Sculler Henry Searle died of typhoid fever during his sea voyage to Australia following his triumphs over O'Connor in London in 1889 to become world-champion sculler. Memorial and funeral services were held in Melbourne and Sydney, respectively, during which hundreds of

thousands of mourners gathered to pay tribute to their poor hero. Searle, at 23, was surely in the prime of life but had his prowess reached its peak? He died as world-champion - there was no loss or defeat to tarnish that brilliant image of the young champion.

In contrast, the image of Les Darcy was blackened immediately prior to his death in the United States in 1917. Whittington (1974) has stated that his name was "mud" and that he had descended from being a national hero to a national villain by travelling to America and not enlisting in the army. However, following the tragic circumstances of his death and the return of his embalmed body to Australia, he was resurrected to "hero" status. The great young boxer was forgiven his discretions post-humously - perhaps because his public realised that if he had lived he would have atoned for them in some way.

#### CONCLUSION

The significance of sport to Australians is frequently demonstrated by the adulation of individual sportsmen and sportswomen, some of whom have achieved sporting celebrity or hero status. It is clear that there is much more research and analysis to be undertaken about how Australian sporting heroes have emerged and how the hero-making process in Australia operated. The analysis is complex and difficult and few assumptions and generalisations can be made.

In this paper I have endeavoured to distinguish various levels and types of "heroes" and to ascertain to what extent "sports heroes" fit typologies. Brief biographical notes of 19 sportsmen and women of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been presented to provide an opportunity for the reader to consider some of the reasons as to why and how an athlete may be deemed, by some sections of Australian society at some time, a sports hero or heroine.

Some of the factors which I consider influence the sports-hero-making process in Australia, including the type of sport, the era, the gender of the athletes, the athletes age and circumstances of death, and their socio-historical and 'establishment/anti-establishment" status have been briefly discussed and it is hoped that this will help to clarify opinions of others about the subject. Of course, not only do opinions vary greatly within one generation but many heroes, sporting or



otherwise, rarely survive more than one or two generations. As Manning Clark (1985) has stated, "every generation writes its own history in its own image: every generation admits into the portals of the heroes men fashioned in their own image".

It can be seen from the small survey undertaken at the sport history conference in Adelaide in 1985 that there is much diversity about who are, and what factors contribute to, Australian sports heroes. All would agree that the heroic individual emerges from the rank and file of the population because he or she is in some way extraordinary. There might be some agreement that Australian sports heroes have elements of ruthlessness and domination and exhibit such prowess and skill within their sport that the rules and traditions have to be changed or the image or dimension of the activity is transformed and elevated to the level of "super-fantastic". Clearly, Lindrum, Bradman and Fraser must be included in most of these categories, and one should probably include "Phar Lap". As the mini-survey has depicted (Figure 4), these were four who were regarded as significant "sports heroes" in the opinion of sport history conference delegates. Although opinions are helpful, the analysis is complex and difficult and few assumptions and generalisations can be made. For example, Geoffrey Dutton (1981) in his book, The Australian Heroes, has stated:

Australians are not given to applauding tragedy unless it is at a distance like Gallipoli or Cooper's Creek, and they prefer pure heroism to be spiced with disaster, except of course in sport. It was all very well for Adam Lindsay Gordon to have shot himself, but it would never have done for Don Bradman.

However, in my opinion, Dutton's statement only poses more questions about the nature of sporting heroes and highlights the need for further analysis.

APPENDIX

**REGINALD ("SNOWY") BAKER (1884-1953) 69 years**

- 1897 N.S.W. Open Swimming Championships, 100 and 220yds  
(Age 13)  
1901 N.S.W. Amateur Boxing Champion (Age 17)  
1902 Played Rugby Union for Australia (half-back in Tests  
against Great Britain)  
1908 London Olympics - Middle Weight Boxer  
(Perhaps could have represented Australia in diving)
- Gained international distinction in 29 sports  
Promoter and businessman  
"Snowy" Baker Magazine (Circulation of 3,000)
- 1916 Sold Stadiums Ltd. to John Wren - turned to films  
(Hollywood) - later stunt-director

Remained in U.S.

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**CHARLES BANNERMAN (1851 - 1930 : 79 years)**

**March 17, 1877 - First "official" test :**

**First Australian to score a century against an  
England XI**

**First Australian to score a century on English soil**

**First "national" cricketing hero - arising from  
national pride in breaking England**

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**DONALD BRAUMAN (1908)**

First century at 12 years of age  
Scored 117 centuries  
Youngest player to score a Test century  
Scored 452 in 1930 to surpass Ponsford's world record  
Test average of 99.94  
Captain of Australia in 24 Tests (Australia won all rubbers)  
Knighted in 1949

Michael Parkinson:

It is a demonstrable fact that no single athlete has either so dominated or changed a sport as Bradman did.

Don Bradman's singular achievement is that he became sport's first superstar in an age when word-of-mouth was the alternative to today's action replay.

The National Times August 5-11, 1983. p. 31

Some factors : 1930's Bodyline/Depression (e.g. Pharlap)  
"Confrontations" with A.C.B. (e.g. writing for the press)

post 1948 Tour : Establishment

- shunned publicity
- direct association with A.C.B.
- conservative influence on cricket

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**NORMAN BROOKES (1877 - 1968) 91 years**

1905 Wimbledon : won "All Comers Singles" -  
lost Wimbledon final  
1907 Won Wimbledon Singles/doubles, U.S.  
doubles  
1907 Captain of first successful Australian Davis  
Cup team. Also member of winning team in  
1908, 1909. 1911 and 1914 and losing team in  
1912, 1919 and 1920  
1926-1955 President of the L.T.A.A.  
1928 Chevalier of the Legion of Honour (France)  
1935 Knighted for services to country

Bill Edwards, L.T.A.A. President, 1968 :

Sir Norman was a champion player and a champion man . . .  
the father of Australian tennis and an inspiration to  
all who play and love the game

The Herald, Melbourne 28 Sep., 1965 p. 6

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LES DARCY (1895 - 1917) 22 years

- 1914 First fight in Sydney (Age 18) - 20 rounds against Fritz Holland. 16,000 people travelled from Maitland. Lost, but won in March and May, 1915.
- 1915 Beat McGoorts (Middle-weight champion of the world) - win not recognised by the Americans
- 1916 KO defeat of World Middleweight Champion, George Quip

Fighting Record

50 bouts : wins - 29 KO's; 16 on points  
losses - 3 - including being knocked out on a foul blow

- 1915-1916 Mr. Niland says he can prove that twice Darcy tried to enlist in the first A.I.F. but was under age and couldn't get his parents consent.

(Sunday Telegraph Oct. 22, 1961)

- 1916 Darcy "stowed away" to America  
His name was now "mud" in Australia; he had descended from being a national hero to a national villain during his crossing of the Pacific

R. S. Whittington (1974) Great Moments in Australian Sport

- 1927 Died in hospital in U.S. : - medical diagnosis - "streptococcus speticemia, septic endocarditis and lobar pneumonia". (really "a broken heart")
- 1917 Embalmed body buried before a crowd of 100,000 people in Maitland

W. MANDLE: A real person became submerged under a welter of sentimental myth. This real person was not above co-operating in a fixed fight, not above fouling his opponent, not above forfeiting his citizenship, to gain a chance to fight, and yet that person is no longer to be found.

(People April 6, 1918 p.9)

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FANNY DURACK (1889 - 1956) 67 years

1906 N.S.W. State title

1912 First woman to win Olympic swimming medal

First Australian woman to win an Olympic event

BROKE WORLD RECORD IN HEATS (100 metres)

1 Rules changed to allow Durack (and Wylie) to swim in company of men.

Mrs. Fanny Durack is beyond question the most remarkable woman swimmer as far as speed goes there is record of, and her achievements at Stockholme have no doubt convinced the world of that fact

Referee July 17, 1912 p. 8

Return of Durack, October, 1912

Miss Fanny Durack ... was, of course, the centre attraction. She had done the most, and had been the star of the company. Fanny (I am sure she will excuse the familiarity) told of all things accomplished . . . .

DAWN FRASER (1937)

1955 First Australian Championship win

1956-1960-1964 Olympics : 3 Gold (individual)  
1 silver (individual)  
1 gold (relay) 2 silver (relay)

Commonwealth Games

3 Gold (individual) 1 silver (individual)  
3 Gold (relay) 1 silver (relay)  
Held a total of 27 world records; 29 Australian  
championships  
First woman under 1 minute for 100 m.

1956 Australian of the Year

1967 M.B.E.

1984 Noted Australia's greatest female Olympian (by  
Australian Olympic athletes).

Controversies

1960 Rome Olympics - "refused"  
- to swim butterfly leg in relay  
- to wear track-suit  
- etc.

1961 "Blackballed" by A.S.U.

1964 Tokyo Olympics - non-marching in Opening  
Ceremony  
- refusal to wear official  
costume  
- stole flag of Emperor of Japan

1965 Barred from competitive swimming for 10 years by  
A.S.U.

\* Movie ("Dawn") ; books; flowers named;  
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ALBERT GRIFFITHS (1873-1927) 56 years

- 1888 "first fight" - in a lane of Market Street for  
Sydney Newsboy Championship  
1889 Australian featherweight title

Up to 1893 - 80+ fights in Australia (no losses)

- 1893 Left for U.S.A.  
1894 drew 3 times in title fights against the  
Featherweight Champion, George Dixon  
1898 (aged 26) admitted to an inebriates home

The passing of Griffith sounds the exit of the seventh of the  
world's wonders in sport developed by Australia

Referee December 14, 1927 p. 1

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MARJORIE JACKSON (1931)

- 1949 defeated Fanny Blankers-Koen in exhibition race  
1950 Commonwealth Games (Auckland) 4 gold;  
2 World Records  
1952 2 Gold medals at Helsinki (first gold in Track since  
Flack in 1896)  
Lithgow Mayor ordered one minute of NOISE  
1953 M.B.E.  
1954 Commonwealth Games, Vancouver - 3 gold medals  
1977 Husband Peter Nelson (cyclist) died Leukemia  
- fund raising activities  
1982 Manageress - Australian Commonwealth Games  
team

MARJORIE JACKSON : SONG  
OUR MARJORIE

Jack O'Hagan, who wrote "Our" Don in 1930, wrote :

In the sunny town of Lithgow,  
In the State of New South Wales,  
A shy and modest un-assuming girl,  
Has put the town of Lithgow on the map--  
And never fails to set the hearts of  
Aussies in a whirl  
She's Marjorie -- the Lithgow flier,  
Our Marjorie -- she's a trier,  
The fastest thing in running at the  
Olympic Games,  
Her brilliant wins have won her all the  
world's acclaim,  
Our Marjorie,  
As modest as they make 'em?  
The Lithgow flash has proved a smash,  
A champion thru and thru/  
And Marjorie we're telling you --  
Ev'ry dinkum Aussie's proud of you.

K. Dunstan, Sports (1981)



JOHN LANDY (1930)

- 1954 first Australian (second man in world)  
to break 4 minute mile
- 1954 Commonwealth Games - Vancouver - "Miracle  
Mile" (second to Bannister)
- 1955 Retired - taught at Geelong Grammar
- 1956 Australian male Championship (helped Ron  
Clarke)
- 1956 Melbourne Olympics - 3rd to Delaney

-----

WALTER LINDRUM (1898 - 1960) 62 years

- 1922 Defeated H.W. Stevenson, former world champion, in  
Australia
- 1930 International Tournament in England  
World Record break of 3,905
- 1932 W.R. (4,137)
- 1933 Won World Professional Championship from Joe Davis  
(first time in 60 years the Cup had left England)

57 World Records 800 breaks in excess of 1,000  
World Champion for 26 years

\* Fund-raising activities - e.g. War Office and Charities

- 1951 M.B.E.
- 1958 O.B.E.

Report in The Age, Melbourne Nov. 12, 1929 p. 15

London: The Daily Telegraph states it seems to be  
definitely established that Walter Lindrum is the  
world's greatest billiardist, indeed the greatest that  
ever lived.

ALTERED RULES (e.g. Nursery Cannon)

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DALLY MESSENGER (1883-1959) 76 years

- 1906 "A" Grade For Easts
- 1907 Rugby Union Tests against N.Z.
- 1907 Played Rugby League (breakaway movement - because of Messengers move to R.L. other super great Union players followed?)

"Crowd-puller" - signs erected to advise of games  
"Dally Messenger will be playing".

- 1907 Toured England with N.Z. "All Golds"
- 1908 R.L. (Kangaroos) to England - captained Australia in all Tests he played

Rule Changes :

Suggested that in interstate matches Messenger should play full-back and not be allowed to run outside his own half.  
J. Shephered, The Coal Miner,  
July, 1966 p. 31)

1911 - 1913 Captained Eastern Suburbs to 3  
Sydney Premierships

In 14 of the 20 fixture games he scored more than  
double-figures

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RUSSELL MOCKRIDGE (1928-1958) 30 years

- 1948 London Olympics Road race (26th place) - repaired 2 punctures
- 1950 C'wealth Games - Auckland - 2 gold on Track
- 1952 Helsinki - 1,000 m Time trial - gold  
2,000 m Tandem (Cox) - gold
- 1952 Won Grand Prix of Paris (amateur and professionals) - first amateur to win . .  
- After Mockridge's win, event restricted to professionals
- 1956 New record for Melbourne to Warrnambool Road race (average 44 km/hour - world record)
- 1958 Killed by bus while competing in Tour of Gippsland event

-----

- 1952 Controversy re A.O.F. bond money : remain amateur 2 years after the event. Public support brought about modifications.

HUBERT OPPERMAN (1904)

- 1924 Melbourne to Warrnambool
- 1927 Defeated world champion (Corry) and set W.R.
- 1928 Competed in Europe
- 1931 Victory in Paris-Brest-Paris (726 miles)
- 1934 Victory :- Land's End to John O'Groats
- 1937 Perth - Sydney record

War R.A.A.F.

Post-war : Federal Parliament (Cabinet Minister)

Knighthood

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Marketing : Bruce Small/"Malvern Star"

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BOBBY PEARCE (1905-1976) 81 years

1911 Won Parramatta U/16 Championship at 6 years 3 months  
1928 Sculling Gold medal at Amsterdam Olympics  
1930 Sculling Gold medal at Hamilton (first "C'wealth Games)  
permitted to enter in 1929 because he was a carpenter;  
rule abolished in 1930)  
1932 Sculling Gold medal at Los Angeles Olympics  
1933 Turned Professional - 200,000 spectators watched Pearce  
defeat reigning English Professional world champion, Ted  
Phelps

-----

DAVE SANDS (1926-1952) 26 years

1943 first fight (age 17) K.O. win  
1943-1945 44 bouts : 33 wins by K.O.; 6 wins on points;  
5 losses  
1946 Australian Lightweight Title  
1947 American Ring Magazine (Top 10 world middleweights)  
1949 Defeated Randolph Turpin Denied world-title bout  
against Sugar Ray Robinson  
1952 Killed in motor accident

Summary :

Bouts	Won(KO)	Won(Pts)	Drew	Lost(Pts)	Lost(KO)	No Contest
107	61	34	1	8	1	2

British Empire Middleweight boxing title

"Latter-day Darcy"

-----

HENRY SEARLE (1866-1889) 23 years

- 1884 Waterman's Skiff Contest, Chatsworth  
(3.2 km - won by 804 metres)
- 1888 Defeated Peter Kemp (nominated World  
Champion sculler after Bill Beach's  
retirement)
- 1889 Searle defeated O'Connor in London  
(crowd of 100,000)
- 1889 Died, typhoid fever, during return to  
Australia

Funeral services - Melbourne & Sydney, (inter-colonial,  
city rivalry abated).

Estimated crowd of 170,000 in streets of Sydney

S. Bennett. "The Clarence Comet"

VICTOR TRUMPER (1877-1915) 37 years

1894-95 South Sydney Cricket Club

1897-98 Paddington Cricket Club : In 8 innings, scored 1,021 runs - average 204.2

1902 Australian team in England : "wet season": In 53 innings, scored 2,570 runs and, with no "not-outs", - averaged 48.49

"Unsuccessful" Businessman

First Honorary Treasurer of N.S.W. Rugby League (Howell and Howell)

1915 Tribute by Dr. L.D.S. Poidevin, "His best was the best" (S.M.H., June 30, 1915 p. 6)

"... where Bradman, in the early stages of his career, operated upon bowlers, like a butcher at the abattoirs, wading deep in their agony and frustration, Trumper was like a surgeon deftly and classically dissecting everything that was offered against him ..."

Cited in Shepherd (1960) p. 434

\* This may say something about the writer! (and other writers!)

#### TRUMPER

See Neville Cardus :

In my memory's anthology of all the delights I have known, in many years devoted to the difficult but entrancing art of changing raw experiences into the connoisseur's enjoyment of life, I gratefully place the cricket of Victor Trumper.

R.S. Whittington, The Champions (1976) p. 27

Neville (Cardus) confessed that when he was a boy, a very patriotic English boy, he used to go down on his knees by his bed on the eve of Test matches and pray. His words were, "Please God, let Victor Trumper score a century for Australia against England - out of a total of 137."

R. S. Whittington, The Champions (1976) p. 27

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