III. Europe


Fascism demonstrated national differences, but common to all were glorification of the male body and use of sport for developing physical strength and aggressive spirit. The new superman was essential to European fascism; in Spain, he was a soldier-monk. Fascist Brazil incorporated sport and aesthetic glorification of the body. In Japan and China the people were taught to be strong and ready to sacrifice themselves to obtain the goals of their leaders. Based on secondary sources; 122 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE


Italian Fascism sought to develop the New Man, strong, dynamic, virile, and “Italic.” Mussolini represented the ideal that all were to emulate. His public appearances, media portrayals, and bare-chested photos emphasized physical power, youthful vigor, and sporting activity. Physical education and sport were stressed, resulting in Olympic successes for Italy in 1932 and 1936. However, the cult of the ruthless male body and unity of fascist purpose failed to develop in Italy as they did in Germany. Based on primary and secondary sources; 110 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE


Gymnastics societies in Austria during the 1920s and 1930s were associated with German nationalism, and even with National Socialism. Aryan racism was practiced, and Deutscher Turnerbund members did not participate in sport festivals with Jews and foreigners. When National Socialism was banned in Austria, many gymnasts secretly continued supporting it and became SS members. Both the gymnastics clubs and the National Socialists drew heavily from the middle classes. Based on primary and secondary sources; 44 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE


Bulgaria perceived Italian-German Fascism as a “culture-bearer” nation, imitating the system of the source nations but not matching them. Bulgarian physical education and sport were promoted as preparation of the physical body for war that was considered superior to intellectual education. Physical education and sport became completely controlled by the state in the late 1930s but totalitarian and racist ideology was never fully integrated. Based on primary and secondary sources; 40 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE

From 1910 through 1930s, Niels Bukh was famous for his gymnasts’ exhibitions and international tours. He founded Denmark’s first gymnastics high school and built a huge sports complex. The exercises he taught were modified from Swedish gymnastics and designed to produce muscular Nordic male bodies. Bukh was a great admirer of Hitler and championed the Nazi youth movement as a model for Denmark. Based on primary and secondary sources; 42 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE


Fascism developed in Spain during the 1930s through establishment of national youth movements and in 1933, the Falange, based heavily on Fascist Italy. When Franco came to power, he incorporated the Falange into his movement; his personality dominated Spain for forty years. Physical education and sport were used for military preparation and propaganda purposes, but much less than in Germany and Italy. Franco’s Spain was distinguished by its support of the Catholic Church. Based on primary and secondary sources; 40 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE


Late Renaissance Europe bore some striking similarities with twentieth century European Fascism, including admiration for the martial “noble savage.” Early Protestantism was also sympathetic to violence and war. The neocadematics, active today in Russia, are producing paintings strongly resembling Nazi art. Neofascism has existed since World War II, and Fascist ideas, including searches for community, national identity, and new social-economic orders, may become more widespread in coming years. Based on secondary sources; 54 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE


Byzantium’s principal spectacle was chariot racing. The Great Hippodrome, built by Constantine I, was similar to Rome’s Circus Maximus, but smaller and with architectural differences such as a low fence rather than high wall in the center of the track. The emperor presided over all races; those held annually on holidays and others for special occasions. Ritual communications between the emperor and the Blue and Green factions and ordinary spectators during the races were politically important. Based on primary and secondary sources; 217 notes.

—RICHARD V. MCGEHEE

In the early twentieth century private clubs for vacationing families were established on French beaches. Physical fitness activities based on several gymnastics systems were taught as well as swimming. Gymkhas involved games and competitions for adults. During the 1960s the clubs replaced physical education activities with leisure activities and sport, especially volleyball, but also including basketball, tennis and others. Playgrounds were provided for small children. Active participation by adults gave way partly to watching skilled athletes. Based on primary and secondary sources; 63 notes.

—Richard V. McGehee