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The Rise of Internationalism in Sport

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The Rise of Internationalism in Sport

CHRISTIANE EISENBERG

'Sport' is one of those words which needs no translation as it is common to most languages of the world. This is hardly surprising since competitions, based on written rules and regulations and overseen by a governing body (generally a national association), are known all over the world. Admittedly, the cultural significance of the competition differs from country to country and from age to age. This explains why a global event such as the Olympic Games is presented to TV viewers in different countries in very different ways. The social form of sporting contests is none the less generally understood because the rules, the organizational framework, and the order of events have become standardized. Everywhere in the world a football game lasts ninety minutes, tennis is scored love, 15, 30, 40, game, and a boxing match is finished when one of the boxers is knocked out. Thus Brazilians, for example, can take part in a Norwegian sporting contest, or French people in a Nigerian one, without having to speak the language or be familiar with local customs.

The guarantors of such rational forms of sport are the world sporting authorities which, in the case of athletics, basketball, volleyball, and soccer, comprise more than 150 member countries. A further 14 sports have more than 100 member countries each; a further 20 have more than 75 member countries; and a further 35 sports are represented in more than 40 countries. The umbrella organization of


world sporting authorities is the General Association of International Sports Associations, which also represents other groups such as sports doctors and the sporting press. There is close co-operation with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and other organizations within the Olympic movement in its function as a producer of ideology and symbols in world sport. Apart from the Red Cross, the Olympic rings are the (trade)mark with the highest degree of familiarity and recognition levels in the whole world. Like the Olympic torch, they have been adopted as part of the logo of many organizations, associations, and products that have nothing to do with sport.

The universality of sports today is taken for granted to such an extent that it is easy to overlook how recent a phenomenon it is. Admittedly, games and sporting competitions are as old as mankind itself, and in some parts of the world these traditions survived into the age of industrialization. But the principle of rationally organized competition overseen by a governing body—without which international communication would be inconceivable—did not develop until the second half of the eighteenth century, and then only in Great Britain, or, to be more precise, England. From there, it spread over the whole world during the last third of the nineteenth century. By 1914, international sporting associations had been set up in sixteen sports, and the IOC was founded in 1894. Thus in many countries, sports were organized internationally before they had national organizations. There is much to suggest that this early development of an international network is the reason why sport is the only area of modern mass culture which has a global system of institutions of this sort. In music, fashion, or showbusiness, for example, the international actors communicate only via informal contacts.

This essay analyses the rise of this institutional network in the period before the First World War. It starts by briefly surveying the process by which modern sport was internationalized, that is, how it spread from Britain throughout the

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3 Calculated from the list in F. Mevert, Internationale und europäische Sportorganisationen (Wiesbaden, 1981).
world. This essay asks how and when sport became known outside its country of origin. Who were the agents, and where did the demand come from? Was there a uniform pattern of dissemination? The essay then analyses internationalism in sport as a phenomenon of the superstructure—in plain English, what kinds of hopes and expectations, personal, social, and political, motivated the 'weavers' of this international network? In the process, the revival of the ancient Olympic Games by Baron Pierre de Coubertin will be highlighted. The essay finishes by briefly looking forward to the period between the world wars.

In line with common usage, 'internationalism' in this essay is distinguished from 'cosmopolitanism' and 'imperialism'. While cosmopolitanism aims for the brotherhood of man, and imperialism is based on establishing power over other peoples, internationalism is founded on the recognition of the existence of nations with equal rights.\(^4\) The question about the mechanics of internationalism therefore requires the tensions between these three dimensions to be analysed. It is quite feasible to do this with respect to the specific manifestations of cosmopolitanism in this essay. As far as imperialism is concerned, an analysis of this sort is unnecessary for the period before the First World War. Most of the British colonies in Africa and Asia, where despite racial prejudices sporting contests did take place with the indigenous people,\(^5\) did not develop into independent states until later. Initially, therefore, they were structurally incapable of

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\(^5\) On racism in sport, a topic which has only begun to be investigated and is generally discussed in a highly undifferentiated way, cf. J. M. Hoberman, 'Olympic Universalism and the Apartheid Issue', in F. Landry et al. (eds.), Sport: The Third Millennium. Proceedings of the International Symposium Quebec City, Canada, May 21–25, 1990 (Sainte Foy, 1991), 523–34. I have deliberately left this aspect out of the present essay.
participating in international sporting relations. Thus the International Olympic Committee had no representatives from Africa or Asia before 1914, and the first African participants in the Olympics, some Zulus who ran the marathon in 1904, wore the uniform of the British team. Thus with regard to the relationship between imperialism and internationalism, this essay restricts itself to the white Dominions (North America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa), which early emancipated themselves from the British mother country.

1. The Diffusion of Sports

The English gentlemen who introduced the regulations governing sporting pastimes such as cricket, horse racing, and boxing in the eighteenth century did so in order to prevent cheating and other irregularities which would inevitably have arisen from their passion for gambling and betting. Betting partners made contracts with each other and found an independent third party to guarantee that the event had taken place in a correct manner. At first these arrangements were informal. But later, wealthy gentlemen who staked large sums, often at the risk of financial ruin, insisted on putting down the rules in writing and on licensing specialist authorities to be responsible for the official results. In this context, the sports mentioned above (along with cock-fighting, which died out before the twentieth century) were constantly reformed from the 1750s onwards.


7 The example of the Zulus is from A. Gutmann, Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism (New York, 1994), 127; see also 133 (numbers of IOC members). For an overview of sport in the British colonies, see B. Stoddart, 'Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 30 (1988), 649-73; see also the articles collected in J. A. Mangan (ed.), Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad (London, 1988); id. (ed.), The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society (London, 1993); and in the International Journal of the History of Sport.
The best-known governing bodies were the Jockey Club, which was responsible for horse racing, and the Marylebone Cricket Club. It might be added here that the rationalization of sport also benefited the lower classes, who indulged in side-betting on a smaller scale.

The aristocracy's passion for gambling was one expression of conspicuous consumption and part of a specifically English framework of everyday life, in this case, the merging of the aristocratic code of honour with the commercial spirit. Thus aristocratic culture included taking high financial risks without batting an eyelid. Such a motive for sport was inconceivable in the economically backward countries of continental Europe. There the aristocracy was in an exposed position, and it did not generally involve itself in commerce. Nor were the continentals as rich as their English counterparts. Thus gambling was not popular, especially as money that was available for gambling, among the lower classes as well, was absorbed by the game of lotto, which absolutist rulers had systematically built up in order to put their state finances in order after the Seven Years War.

Thus when visitors from the Continent had the chance to witness English sporting competitions they failed to understand their cultural significance. Boxing and animal fighting seemed 'crude' and 'cruel' to them, and highly trained race-horses were perceived as 'decrepit organisms, bones devoid of marrow, utterly ruined sinews and ligaments'. Not until the 1830s, when the economy had become more commercialized and horse-breeding had been recognized as a lucrative business, were English-style Jockey Clubs founded in Europe. Horse racing, however, did not yet become a mass entertainment. This did not happen until the final third of the nineteenth century, when continental aristocrats also

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engaged in business.10 Boxing did not become popular on the Continent until after the First World War, when a preference developed for physical violence in sport. And to the present day, continental Europeans have nothing to say about cricket, except that it is dreadfully boring.

In contrast to the continent of Europe, the transfer of sport to the countries settled by Britain in the eighteenth century was a success, especially in North America where it was developed by the American gentry along British lines. Only a few years after the founding of the English prototype in 1750, Jockey Clubs were set up not only in Virginia but also along the entire East Coast. As in Britain itself, horse racing was the most popular, best-organized, and most important sport from the colonial era until well into the nineteenth century. Other sports, particularly cricket and boxing, also followed the British pattern.11

Sport in England changed dramatically around the middle of the nineteenth century when the rising middle classes began to participate. Initially, sporting activity boomed, reflecting the numerical superiority of the new strata over the aristocracy and the gentry. It has been estimated that around 1800 the middle classes made up 3 per cent of the population. By the mid-1850s the figure had risen to 16 per cent, and at the end of the century it was 30 per cent.12 Furthermore, the spectrum of middle-class sports was considerably broader, as it not only included the traditional eighteenth-century sports but added many new ones such as rowing, swimming, athletics, lawn tennis, wrestling, and ice-skating.13


13 For an overview see J. Lowerson, Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914 (Manchester, 1993).
The really decisive innovations, however, were more qualitative than quantitative. Middle-class gentlemen regarded sport not only as a form of leisure and a chance to gamble, but also as an opportunity for physical exercise. The ideologies of ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’ and ‘muscular Christianity’ were at the core of public-school and university education, and of church youth work. Thus the middle classes did not simply adopt aristocratic sporting traditions, but adapted and modernized them in their own fashion. In addition, the sporting middle classes organized their governing bodies along different lines, although they were based on the Jockey Club and the Marylebone Cricket Club. The reason was that these aristocratic organizations were still as exclusive as White’s, Brook’s, Boodle’s, and other London gentlemen’s clubs in St James’s Street. Members were admitted by ballot, and often one negative vote was enough for exclusion. For the gentlemen of the middle classes, who also saw sport as offering an opportunity to socialize with their equals, this could not be a model. For one thing, they themselves had been the victims of these exclusion mechanisms; for another, they were far too numerous for such restrictions to have been feasible. Therefore the new governing bodies were based on the principle of universal admittance, and managed by democratically elected committees; this was also a prerequisite for the participation of foreigners. To distinguish themselves from the clubs, the middle-class governing bodies were called ‘associations’ or ‘unions’. The Football Association (which led to the abbreviation ‘soccer’) was founded in 1863; it was followed in 1871 by the Rugby Union. Associations were also set up for archery (1864), swimming (1869), sailing (1875), ice-skating (1879), boxing (1880), gymnastics (1880), rowing (1882), lawn tennis and croquet (1882), hockey (1886), badminton (1893), lacrosse (1892), and fencing (1898). In track and field athletics, the Amateur Athletic Association Club was founded in 1866, but it failed

to exercise authority, and in 1880 was replaced by the reformed Amateur Athletic Association.\(^\text{15}\)

Another characteristic of the newly established associations which distinguished them from the gentlemen’s clubs was the middle classes’ insistence on amateur status. Of course, amateur regulations were one way of excluding the working class from sport; and even as late as the 1920s some sports, such as rowing, still explicitly excluded ‘manual or menial workers’. But others, such as track and field athletics, had deleted such paragraphs by the 1880s and replaced them with a general condemnation of material gain from sport.\(^\text{16}\)

In this general formulation, amateur paragraphs were also directed against middle-class offenders, particularly in the case of representatives of the equipment industries who regarded sporting events as an opportunity for advertising. Finally, such regulations were an attempt to put a distance between the middle classes and the aristocracy with their excessive gambling and betting. Betting was viewed as inimical to a ‘disinterested’ attitude, something which destroyed the sociable framework of ‘friendly competition’. The advocates of amateurism feared deliberate fouls, bribery, prearranged results, and protests against the winner. Fair play was the be-all and end-all. If professional sports could not be abolished, they should at least be kept separate from amateur sporting activities.\(^\text{17}\)

This second wave of rationalization of sport in England coincided with the transport revolution in the second half of the nineteenth century. European migration now achieved new dimensions, rising from 256 million migrants between 1846 and 1850, to 686 million in the period from 1905 to 1913,


with British migration topping the league.\textsuperscript{18} Contacts with the European mainland were even greater. In the 1830s travellers on the ferries to Ostend, Boulogne, Le Havre, Calais, and Dieppe numbered around 50,000 a year. By the 1880s this figure had risen to 250,000, and by 1900 to half a million.\textsuperscript{19}

Several different groups of highly mobile Britons were responsible for the spread of sport. The first were wealthy tourists. From the mid-1850s those members of the aristocracy and upper middle classes in need of rest and recreation travelled abroad to the Continent in order to escape from the seaside resorts in their own country which were becoming increasingly overrun by the lower classes.\textsuperscript{20} The majority of the attractive continental resorts—Nice, Cannes, Alassio, Portofino, and San Remo, not to forget the fashionable and exclusive German spa towns of Bad Homburg, Wiesbaden, and Baden-Baden—to which the tourists were directed by Thomas Cook, Baedeker, and the railway system, quickly adapted their recreational facilities to meet the interests of the wealthy guests. Cricket pitches and race courses were installed; these were followed by tennis courts, golf links, lacrosse pitches, and cycling tracks.\textsuperscript{21} Many tourists spent several months on the Continent, and lived among their fellow countrymen in ‘English colonies’, along with the business community and embassy staff. In the German states with their numerous princely residences, there were eighteen such colonies in 1845. By 1871 this figure had risen to 27, and these ‘colonies’ were increasingly also found in trading


centres and port towns. Anglican clergy looked after the spiritual needs of the residents in these ‘English colonies’, and their children were sent to boarding schools modelled on the public schools, where they were taught by British teachers and the usual sports were played.

Another group of sportsmen travelled even further afield. It consisted of businessmen, bankers, and industrialists, particularly from the textile industry, who were looking for production outlets abroad where labour costs were much lower. As a rule, such entrepreneurs were accompanied by their families and settled in the ‘English colonies’ alongside the staff of embassies and consulates. Their managers and technicians, on the other hand, often travelled alone, and it was they who were particularly interested in sporting activities. This was also true of English students who attended technical colleges in Germany and Switzerland, and the British engineers and technicians in European cities who were employed to lay gas and water pipes, and undertake other forms of urban infrastructural building work.

Where a need for social contact led to the creation of sporting competitions and clubs, sometimes with the involvement of locals, commercial interests soon appeared on the scene to develop the market for sporting articles and sports newspapers. In the Berlin of the 1890s, for example, these included branch managers of London shops selling ‘fancy goods and haberdashery’. Among other things, they stocked peppermint drops, rubber raincoats, and sporting goods, including footballs, football boots, and football jerseys. Later they were joined by a number of newspaper men, some of whom had grown up in the ‘English colonies’ and were thus bilingual. John Bloch, for example, a Jew of German extraction who had grown up in Birmingham and set up a number

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of football and cricketing organizations in Berlin in the early 1890s, published Spiel und Sport: Organ zur Förderung der Interessen aller athletischer Sports there from 1891. And in 1895 the Scot Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles, formerly a student of photographic chemistry at the Technische Hochschule Charlottenburg, took the risk of publishing an illustrated sports newspaper, Sport im Bild. In addition to photographs, it contained the sports results and detailed match reports. The first German sports journalists served as apprentices on these newspapers.24

2. The Transformation of English Sports

As sporting competitions were public, the locals also began to take an interest in them. Often, they were encouraged to join in because the teams were incomplete, or there was no opposing team. Most locals could make as little sense of the sports as travellers to Britain could in the eighteenth century. Cricket and hockey never took off on the Continent, while the comparatively successful game of soccer faced competition from various other, longer-established sports and pastimes. Examples are the initial dominance of gymnastics in France, Germany, and northern Europe,25 and the general failure of soccer in the USA und Australia. By the time that Association Football arrived in the last third of the nineteenth century baseball had already taken hold in the middle classes. The élite universities, which followed their English models in Oxford and Cambridge in adopting football as a traditional element of student sociability, after some initial hesitation opted for rugby instead of soccer. Another


factor was that Americans and Australians had become more self-confident, and were no longer interested in adopting the preferences of their (former) colonial masters unchanged. That is why variations of rugby became popular only after they had developed into American Football and Australian Rules respectively.26

In many countries, however, soccer became the most popular sport of all. For this reason, the exchange between British exporters and local consumers will be examined in more detail taking this as an example.27 First we must ask who the new players were. Everything that we know about them suggests that they were drawn from the ranks of the immediate contacts of the Britons on the spot, and this included young members of aristocratic families in Western and Central Europe, as well as the sons of traditional élites in South America, who were educated in the British colleges in Buenos Aires and São Paulo.28 Many of the new recruits to soccer were immigrants themselves. There was a particularly high proportion of Jews, students, and members of the new middle-class professions with their growing armies of employees. The common factor uniting all these groups, most of whom were on the periphery of established society, seems to have been their desire for social integration.

It was this middle-class nature of football in Europe and South America which differentiated it from football in England both before and, to a certain extent, after the First World War. In Britain football was no longer a leisure activity for gentlemen. By the 1880s it had become an established part of working-class culture. Studies of sport in the importing countries, by contrast, give the impression that it retained a middle-class or élite character much longer, even

27 The following paragraphs draw upon and supplement the contributions to Eisenberg (ed.), Fußball; see also my introduction to this volume, ‘Einführung’, ibid. 7–21.
into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{29} This was partly because industrialization was still in its infancy at the turn of the century and, as studies of Brazil have shown, this meant that there were few if any industrial workers.\textsuperscript{30} But there were more important reasons. In some countries, relations between the classes were so antagonistic that there was no wish for social contact between workers and the middle classes, even in football; this was the case in both Russia and Germany.\textsuperscript{31} In other countries indigenous workers showed little interest in football. They preferred to keep their own traditional sporting interests such as gymnastic clubs, the subculture of the organized working classes, or stayed loyal to ancient sports. One notable exception, Austria, opened football to the workers at an early stage because a number of socialist clubs did not resist this sport. In Australia, the sport was promoted within the framework of employment. In both cases the majority of workers involved in football were themselves immigrants.\textsuperscript{32}

To the middle-class élites in the urban centres of Europe and South America at the turn of the century, football was the embodiment of a modern lifestyle. This was particularly true for the upwardly mobile and self-made men who were open to all forms of innovation and cared little for traditional conventions. Their preference for the English language and the English way of life was also in many cases a demonstrative attempt to distance themselves from fossilized aspects of their traditional indigenous culture, such as the gymnastic activities of the older generations, which emphasized formality and correctness, and left little room for individual expression.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{29} Characteristically, the proletarian seamen in European harbour towns made no lasting contribution to football. Lanfranchi, 'Frankreich und Italien', 44-5, explicitly rejects this notion which is hinted at in the older literature. See also the general impression expressed by M. van Bottenburg, Verborgen competitie: over de uitlopende populariteit van sporten (Amsterdam, 1994), 272: 'Bij de overname van sporten speelden nationale elites een hoofdrol.'

\textsuperscript{30} Cf. Caldas, 'Brasilien', 172.

\textsuperscript{31} Cf. Riordan, 'Russland und Sowjetunion', 136; C. Eisenberg, 'Deutschland', ibid. 97-8.

\textsuperscript{32} Cf. M. John, 'Österreich', ibid. 67-8, 70-3; Vamplew, 'Australien', 214-15.

\textsuperscript{33} Cf. Lanfranchi, 'Frankreich und Italien', 48-9; Eisenberg, 'Deutschland', 95; ead., 'English Sports' und deutsche Bürger, ch. 4, pt. 2.
The social openness of football may have been a necessary precondition for its acceptance and success as an import article. But this in itself was not enough. For the sport took root in its new surroundings only where its adherents were able to infuse the social form of the game with tangible content. One way of generating such 'significance' was to integrate the game into ethnic subcultures, such as those in the multinational Austrian Empire or the overseas immigrant states.34 But the initial effect soon wore off where immigrants were quickly absorbed into the melting pot of national cultures. Soccer's 'significance' was more enduring where it was bound up with exaggerated forms of nationalism and fantasies of Great Power politics at the turn of the century, especially because such phenomena were encouraged by politicians and the military. Both Russia and Germany provide classic examples of such appropriation. In Russia the all-Russian movement and football alike benefited from feelings of mutual sympathy. In Germany the sport was used to promote support for the pan-German movement.35

In the politically heated and aggressive climate of the years before the First World War, the symbiosis between football and nationalism went hand in hand with the striving for emancipation from the British who had been the teachers of the sport. The free-spirited cosmopolitanism of the turn of the century gradually disappeared. This was most obvious in a rejection of the English language. Originally the various national associations, with the sole exception of the Deutscher Fußballbund, had all been called Football Association. Now each country gave the sport its own name. Football became 'futbol' or 'futebol', and the Italians even called it 'calcio' after a Florentine Renaissance game.

This development was not restricted to football. It was also found in other sports which were used by individual nations (and by national movements within nations, for example, in Bohemia, Finland, Poland, and Iceland) as vehicles for self-

35 Cf. Riordan, 'Rußland und Sowjetunion', 135–8; Eisenberg, 'Deutschland', 98.
presentation.\textsuperscript{36} In the advanced industrial states the commercial interests of manufacturers of sports equipment also played a part. They wanted to sell footballs and other sports equipment which they produced. Thus the international Gordon Bennett Automobile Race (1900–5) was seen in Germany, for example, as ‘a contest between the industries of the individual countries, a contest between the efficiency of their technicians’.\textsuperscript{37} In this way the process of internationalism led to what Robert Robertson has called ‘the particularization of universalism’.\textsuperscript{38}

From the British point of view, the export of sport was a dubious success. While it had proved possible to transplant an element of national culture into other surroundings, which could be seen as confirmation of British cultural superiority, the culture transfer soon came up against limits. The more eagerly the pupils learned from their master, the further they left his ideas behind. This was visible not only in competitions in Europe and abroad, but also at international events in England itself, such as the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Tournament, or the Henley Regatta. Apart from the fact that the specific English connotations of ‘amateur’, ‘fair play’, and ‘sportsmanship’ were practically inconceivable to foreigners, and that sportsmen and the public expected cash prizes and medals as rewards for success,\textsuperscript{39} there was a further problem. A number of British sports missionaries, especially representatives of the equipment industry who wanted to sell their products abroad and thus founded clubs with English rules, simply suppressed the regulations


governing amateurs because their own amateur status was a matter of dispute. Thus continental Europeans in general lacked any awareness of the problem.\textsuperscript{40}

From the 1890s, the importing countries made attempts to establish international organizations in order to standardize rules governing international competitions and to bring newly created clubs and associations in their own countries into line from the start. This was of little use to the British, especially as the international associations which had been set up by 1914 in rowing, ice-skating, automobile and motorcycle sport, aviation, fencing, track and field, Association and Rugby football, cycling, tobogganing, wrestling, shooting, sailing, tennis, and gymnastics\textsuperscript{41} were looking for a basis of communication that could not be reconciled with British practice. Thus, for example, they simply assumed the principle of ‘one state, one vote’. This was not appropriate for Britain, where nation and state did not coincide. In sport England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland were autonomous.\textsuperscript{42}

It seems that only the founders of FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 1904) took the special needs of the pioneer of sport into consideration. They looked to the longer-established Football Association for guidance, and thus granted Britain special conditions. Before 1914, neither Britain nor England were represented in most of the other international sports associations. Various international governing bodies, modelled on the MCC whose rules were recognized by cricketers all over the world, were set up within the British Empire, but they were attuned to local structures. Yet even this solution meant isolation. The International Rugby Football Board, for example, which, set up in 1905, attempted to standardize rules for rugby throughout the world, was an international body in its own right. It was the only international rugby body to survive the First World War, and it continued to function until 1975.

\textsuperscript{40} For Germany cf. R. Rabenstein, Radsport und Gesellschaft: Ihre sozialgeschichtlichen Zusammenh\"{a}nge in der Zeit von 1867 bis 1914 (Hildesheim, 1991), 228.

\textsuperscript{41} Cf. Mevert, Sportorganisationen.

1890, was the first international sport association in the world, organized the associations of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland into 'home unions' with South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia. But to the present day, it has not merged with the Fédération Internationale de Rugby Amateur to form a common international organization.

3. The Olympic Movement

The fact that the British pioneers none the less remained within the community of sporting nations was the result of the initiative of a scion of an ancient French aristocratic family, Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937), in reviving the Olympic Games. Coubertin had rejected a military career to become a pedagogue. His concern was to regenerate French athletics along British lines. Like many other sportsmen on the European mainland he was a nationalist. As a 7-year-old he had experienced the heavy defeat of the French by the Germans at Sedan, an event which had shattered the morale of the whole nation. For Coubertin it was a personal trauma which was to influence his whole life. He began to ponder on the causes of this defeat and made it his mission to contribute to the restrengthening of his nation—'rebronzer la France'. He concluded that there was only one effective remedy: 'radically to reform the education system.' He modelled his ideas on the writings of Thomas Arnold of Rugby School, which he also visited. At Rugby School physical education was promoted through

Cf. A. Tomlinson, 'FIFA and the World Cup: The Expanding Football Family', in J. Sugden and A. Tomlinson (eds.), Hosts and Champions: Soccer Cultures, National Identities and the USA World Cup (Aldershot, 1994), 14ff.; cf. also Mevert, Sportorganisationen, 69. In cricket the old MCC in time assumed the functions of an international sports association. But this was of very limited significance, even to most cricketers across the empire; cf. J. Bradley, 'The MCC, Society and Empire: A Portrait of Cricket's Ruling Body', International Journal of the History of Sport, 7 (1990), 3–22.

athletics and the playing of field games, and Coubertin believed that he had discovered the ‘key to national greatness’. As this ‘component of masculinity’ was missing from the curricula of French schools, his efforts from then on were directed towards achieving a reform along these lines.45

Coubertin’s interest in sport had another motive as well. He noticed the formation, in English sport, of a more open élite comprising the sons of both the nobility and the bourgeoisie. Since games like Rugby football taught the virtues of group cohesion, barriers between the two classes were broken down at public schools, particularly on the playing fields. From Coubertin’s perspective this was one way of preserving his own social group, the aristocracy, in a newly democratic world. His social peers were in need of sport because, as he lamented, they had degenerated into a pleasure-seeking leisure class which had lost all sense of national identity in the fashionable, cosmopolitan bathing resorts of Europe.46

Pierre de Coubertin’s motives were not unusual. Social reformers from other European countries and from the mother country, England (mostly middle class), were also interested in the education offered by public schools.47 However, Coubertin’s thinking was original when, noticing that his attempts to introduce sport into the French school system looked like being unsuccessful, he considered an indirect solution:

It had to become an international matter because in France only

45 He was not alone in these expectations, as Robert A. Nye has shown in Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France (New York, 1993), 218-21. The quotations are from P. de Coubertin, Einundzwanzig Jahre Sportkampagne (1887-1908) (Ratingen, 1974), 11 ff. Coubertin’s pedagogical writings are assembled in Textes clifsis, i. ed. G. Rioux (Zurich, 1986).


initiatives that come from outside have a lasting and effective influence. ... Foreign competition. That is where the future lay. It was a matter of creating contacts between our young French track and field athletes and those in other countries, who had preceded us on the path of physical fitness. These contacts ... had to take place at regular intervals and be associated with a certain prestige. Did not all these preconditions lead to a revival of the Olympic Games?

The rhetorical question at the end of this quotation is misleading to the extent that the original Olympic Games had not been international at all. The ancient Greeks had defined participation as a national privilege, and had always excluded foreigners, whom they regarded as 'barbarians'. Nor would it have occurred to them to overload a sporting competition with a pedagogical mission. Therefore comparable Olympic initiatives in the late nineteenth century, such as those in Greece, England, or Germany, had always worked towards creating purely national or imperial events. Coubertin's international project thus encountered resistance not only in France. The reference to Olympia was purely an advertising slogan which was intended to create wider acceptance for Coubertin's international project. What was the basis of his internationalism?

One answer can be found in the international competitions of the time. Although they were, as Jean Giraudoux put it, an 'esperanto of the races', they also enhanced national ambitions and produced performances which led to the integration which Coubertin desired. He had experienced this in person at the Henley rowing regattas, in which the French had participated on his initiative.

48 Coubertin, Sportkampagne, 74.
49 A. Höfer refers to this in Der olympische Friede: Anspruch und Wirklichkeit einer Idee (St Augustin, 1994), 59.
51 'The name alone instilled respect.' P. de Coubertin, Der olympische Gedanke: Reden und Aufsätze (Schorndorf, 1967), 65.
52 Quoted from MacAloon, Symbol, 267.
A second answer lies in the world exhibitions of the late nineteenth century, which had impressed him with their flag-raising, the playing of national anthems, and the opening ceremonies conducted by heads of state. This factor became all the more important as in Paris Coubertin lived only a few yards away from the building which housed the Exposition Universelle. Amongst his friends and acquaintances who visited the Exposition were members of the peace movement. He had made contact with these circles at the end of the 1880s when he had helped to prepare an international congress on physical education. The head of this congress was Jules Simon, one of the co-founders of the Interparliamentary Union. The congress took place in 1889 and in the same year the European peace movement began to take shape. Coubertin's friends, who included the later Nobel prize-winners Frédéric Passy (1901), Fredrik Bajer (1908), and Henri de La Fontaine (1913), made up about a third of the names on the list of patrons of the 1894 international congress which met to discuss the question of amateurism, a congress which led to the founding of the IOC. What combined the two movements, however, was less the striving for peace than the fact that both Coubertin and the peace movement were unwavering adherents of eighteenth-century classical political economy. They argued that the strengthening of trade relationships and the free exchange of goods between nations would have a civilizing influence on mankind and make war superfluous. This idea of 'doux commerce', upon which the view of sport held by many advocates of the amateur idea in England was also based, was summed up by Coubertin as follows:

We want to send rowers, athletes, and fencers abroad; that is the true free trade system of the future. Once these practices have

53 Cf. ibid. 128-38.
become common property in Old Europe, then the cause of peace will have received a new, strong support.\textsuperscript{55}

In the long term the peace movement did not play a central part in the Olympic Movement, possibly because the peace campaigners noticed that Coubertin was more interested in social than international peace.\textsuperscript{56} This made those delegates to the Paris congress of 1894 who were members of the European nobility all the more important. Despite Coubertin’s reservations, which have been hinted at, about this social group, the majority of those he recruited for the IOC came from among their ranks. (In 1908 they would make up 68 per cent of the IOC’s membership.\textsuperscript{57}) He did this for a number of pragmatic reasons. In the first place aristocrats, in contrast to the middle classes, were not sworn to the principles of nationalism but had a more international view of the world. Second, they had no objection to the undemocratic principle of co-option which put the IOC on a stable footing and safely protected Coubertin’s own leading role. Third, they were rich enough to be able to pay their own expenses when travelling to the Olympic Games and congresses all over the world. And finally, the majority had good connections with European parliaments and royalty. They could thus function as ambassadors from the committee to their own countries.\textsuperscript{58}


\textsuperscript{56} Cf. e.g. Coubertin, Der olympische Gedanke, 10, 52 (‘soziale Befriedung’, ‘sozialer Friede’), and Textes choisis, ii. 158 (1896: ‘cet internationalisme-là ne tuera pas les patries, mais les fortifiera!’), 444 (1901: ‘internationalisme basé sur la culte des patries’).


\textsuperscript{58} ‘Thus, e.g., in P. de Coubertin, ‘La Renaissance olympique’ (1906), in id., Textes
In retrospect, this aspect was also important because after the success of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 in Athens, the subsequent Games had not turned out entirely to Coubertin’s satisfaction. The impressive opening ceremony in which the different national teams enter the stadium had provided a conspicuous demonstration of the longed-for connection between internationalism and patriotism. But the 1900 Games in Paris and the 1904 Games in St Louis were mere side-shows to the world exhibitions and attracted little attention. Within the commercial framework of the world exhibitions it was impossible to communicate the amateur ethos to the spectators. Indeed, in Paris it was not even clear to the participating athletes that they were taking part in Olympic Games.\(^{59}\)

The decisive turn-around in the fortunes of the Games came in 1908 when Lord Desborough of Taplow, the organizer of the London Games and a member of the IOC, had a stadium built specially for the event, and the competitions were held explicitly under the aegis of the IOC.\(^{60}\) The London Games also took place within the framework of an exhibition—this time an Anglo-French trade show. But Lord Desborough was clever enough to realize that the best way to get the British, with their distinct lack of interest in things international, to accept such an event was to emphasize the idea of amateurism. Before the Games, he therefore convened a subcommittee, consisting of representatives of each sport, that was to work out a code of rules for every sport; this code was then translated into three languages, and had to be accepted by each participating country.\(^{61}\) In


\(^{60}\) Originally the Games had been given to Rome, but after an eruption of Mt Vesuvius, the Italians gave them back at short notice.

\(^{61}\) Cf. T. A. Cook, *The Cruise of the Branwen: Being a Short History of the Modern Revival of the Modern Olympic Games, Together with an Account of the Adventures of the English Fencing Team in Athens in MCMVI* (London, 1908), 18; this book was reprinted as: *International Sport: A Short History of the Olympic Movement from 1896 to the Present*
this way, Britain's claim to leadership in sport was strengthened. Moreover, respect was paid to the old idea of 'doux commerce'. A famous and oft-quoted address to the participants in the London Olympic Games of 1908 (by the Bishop of Pennsylvania, not Coubertin) reminded them that 'the important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part'.

Aristocrats were also mainly responsible for organizing the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, the final Games before the First World War. They managed to gain the support of both the Swedish monarchy and the parliament for the Games. For the first time the city made it its own business to host the Games. The indispensability of the aristocrats' mediating role had been demonstrated when Berlin, which had originally been given the 1912 Games, cancelled at short notice because Graf Egbert von der Asseburg, chairman of the committee responsible for organizing the Games, died unexpectedly. Asseburg, a general à la suite of the cavalry, had been a member of William II's entourage. Without this connection to the court and thus access to William's reserve fund, the finances for building the stadium were in question, and the organizers felt it was necessary to return the Games. Not until Viktor von Podbielski, former Prussian Agriculture Minister and a regular skat partner of the Emperor, was found as an adequate substitute were the preconditions for the Olympic Games restored, and Berlin reapplied.

Sweden and Germany were not the only countries in which governments intervened in sport. Something similar happened in Denmark, Norway, tsarist Russia, and some

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Latin American states, for example. Furthermore, spectators in these and other countries began to view the Games in terms of national prestige. American and British fans would buy tickets *en bloc* in order to be able to take over parts of the stadium, adorn them with national flags, and chant nationalist slogans. If the fans of other countries did not behave in this way, it was generally because of the backwardness of their tourist industries, which did not yet offer group travel to sporting events. In many European countries, sporting nationalism, even chauvinism, had long been the order of the day. Newspapers began to publish tables of medals and world records. And in their publications, European intellectuals prized war as 'the most superior of all sports'. The organizers of the 1916 Berlin Games even went so far as to describe the Olympic Games as 'a symbol of world war'. According to the public relations official assigned to the Games this was not necessarily 'an open and palpable admission of their military character. None the less for anyone able and willing to read between the lines of sporting results there were enough important connotations.' The official also took into account the possibility 'that the chain of Olympics held at four-yearly intervals will be broken one day, when the arena is deserted because the masses are on the battle fields'. The Berlin Games of 1916 were cancelled as symbol became reality.

Coubertin followed these developments with mixed feelings. In one way they were an accepted consequence of his Olympic initiative. Thus when world war broke out in 1914 neither he nor any of the members of the IOC spoke out

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67 The quotation is from M. Maeterlinck, *Gedanken über Sport und Krieg* (Leipzig, [1907]), 67; see also Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, 195 f.
68 Quoted from the documents collected by K. Lennartz, *Die VI. Olympische Spiele in Berlin 1916*, published by the Carl-Diem-Institut (Cologne, 1978), 73.
against it. In 1919 he called the world war a successful ‘baptism of fire’ for the Olympic idea and celebrated the French victory over the Germans as a ‘victory for sport’. From Coubertin’s point of view it was sport which had been responsible for ‘the great improvisations which had enabled England and the United States to throw unexpected armies on to the stage of war’.70

Yet Coubertin could see that world war posed a great danger to his life’s work. Admittedly, the Games were held again in 1920 (in Antwerp, in neutral Belgium), but the victorious powers were adamant that those who provoked the war and lost it should not be allowed to participate. It might be added that this was a general tendency in international sport.71 As the collapse of the European monarchies meant that the ‘aristocratic international’ was no longer as influential as it had been before 1914, Coubertin and his comrades-in-arms in the IOC now took deliberate measures to strengthen internationalism against nationalism. This was also intended to underline the fact that Olympic sport operated within a world of its own, separated by rules and symbols from the social and political environment.72

69 This is often overlooked in the literature on the Olympic Games, even by those scholars who are critical. Cf., e.g., an article by G. Gebauer, ‘Krieg und Spiele: Was bewirkte der olympische Friede?’, in id. (ed.), Olympische Spiele, 279-88, in which, with an inaccurate reference to Quanz’s article ‘Gründung’, he claims that ‘one of Courbertin’s great claims ... was that the Olympic Games worked towards peace’ (281). Cf. by contrast, e.g., Höfer, Der olympische Friede, 145.
70 Coubertin, Der olympische Gedanke, 73, 82.
In 1920 the Antwerp stadium was decorated with the Olympic flag showing the five intertwined Olympic rings. This flag had been designed by Coubertin himself in 1913. It contained the colours of all the nations which had hosted the Games up to that time; now the flag was understood as symbolizing the five continents of the Earth.\textsuperscript{73} The participants also had to take an Olympic oath. The Olympic flame as the symbol of purity and life was first introduced in Amsterdam in 1928 when Germany was once again allowed to participate. Four years later in Los Angeles the three-staged victory podium was introduced, thereby raising the athletes above the statesmen and officials who honoured them. These were the first Games to house the competitors in a special Olympic village. For the 1936 Games in Berlin the composer (and president of the National Socialist Reichsmusikkammer) Richard Strauss was commissioned to write an Olympic hymn, and the most significant symbol of the modern Games was introduced: the torch relay from Olympia in Greece to the Olympic Stadium. Coubertin, who was now at the end of his life, gave the runners a written message to take with them on their way to Berlin. The message spoke of a ‘powerful and spirited peace’, of ‘progress and ... honouring humanity’.\textsuperscript{74}

One year earlier, on 4 August 1935, in an international radio broadcast widely regarded as his legacy, Coubertin had evoked a ‘pax Olympica’ and a ‘human springtime’. In using these words, he chose expressions which, especially in Germany in the third year of the Third Reich, could certainly be interpreted as imparting a political message. He had pointed out that ‘the truly strong person’ was the one who was powerful enough ‘to master himself and to prevent the


\textsuperscript{74} Trans. from \textit{XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936: Amtlicher Bericht}, published by the Organisationskomitee für die XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 e.V. (Berlin, 1937), i. 339.
mass of others from pursuing their interests, their desire to rule, or passion to possess, however justified these may be'. And he called for the Olympic Games to be held regularly in honour of 'young adults' (that is, not of governments), so that they could achieve a 'harmonious interlinking of the past and the future'.

4. Conclusion

Starting in the eighteenth century modern sport spread out from England into the world. In the period under investigation here, from the turn of the century to the First World War, the dissemination was not yet complete. Most African and Asian regions were not brought into the process until the late twentieth century. In this context, a number of factors were identified as 'mechanics'—not, initially, of sporting internationalism, but of cosmopolitanism: the expansion of the British Empire from the eighteenth century, and the world-wide process by which communications and transport were intensified, and markets became increasingly interlinked. These two 'mechanics' stimulated further ones which now proved to be, for the first time, true 'mechanics of internationalism': the development of ethnic subcultures in the growing metropolises on the one hand, and nationalism in new states, particularly in continental Europe and South America, on the other.

In the long term, however, the significance of these 'mechanics' varied. While the ethnic subcultures tended to become integrated into the melting pot of national cultures, thus in time becoming less important as a stimulus for sport, the second factor, nationalism, proved to have a lasting impact on sport. One reason for this is that its social basis, the rising middle classes, was also the most important social basis for sport, as was demonstrated using the example of soccer. Another reason is that there was a structural affinity between nationalism and sport which expressed itself in the

75 Ibid.
The Olympic movement initiated by Pierre de Coubertin came to life on the wave of the interaction thus created between internationalism and nationalism. It, in turn, intensified this interaction because the Olympic movement, unlike sport itself, was supported not primarily by the middle classes, but by members of the European aristocracy and nobility. It was therefore able to create an institutional basis for sporting internationalism by mediating between sport and monarchies or governments.

When the European dynasties and nobility had to leave the political stage after the First World War, this mediating function was severely curtailed, and the IOC degenerated into a circle of private individuals. However, the interaction between sporting internationalism and nationalism continued even if, in contrast to the time before the war, these private individuals stressed internationalism more strongly than nationalism. This new emphasis was a deliberate attempt to strengthen the character of modern sport as operating in a world of its own. It also reflected the class interests of the ‘aristocratic international’ which, having lost power at national level, now played the international card more strongly.

Paradoxically, therefore, sporting internationalism was placed on a new footing in the inter-war period, when governments (and not only fascist ones) made great efforts to use sport as a political instrument. The Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912 had 28 participating states, and the Antwerp Games in 1920 had 29. By the Berlin Games of 1936 this figure had risen to 49, and after the interruption for the Second World War, numbers continued to rise. In the age of modern media, this trend was further strengthened. First radio, and after 1945 television, transmitted the rhetoric of politics as alien to, or even poisonous for sport. Indeed, they

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76 C. Bromberger develops this argument for sport in *Le Match de football* (Paris, 1995), 46.
77 *El movimiento olímpico/The Olympic Movement*, published by the IOC (Lausanne, 1993), 62.
portrayed sport not only as an alternative to politics, but as a worldwide, anti-political movement. Sporting internationalism thus took on its own character in an independent sphere of its own.