

# "WE MUST DEVOTE OUR MAIN ATTENTION TO GERMAN YOUTH" THE WESTERN ALLIES' RECONSTRUCTION OF GERMANY THROUGH SPORT 1945-1952\*

by Heather L. Dichter

As athletic pursuits have evolved into modern sports over the last two centuries, they have also become mirrors reflecting society at large. As Christopher HILL has recently written of sport's role in society

*"It is the ability to cross over between the local, national and international on the one hand, and to connect the mass and the elite on the other, that makes sport such an important phenomenon, in itself and as an object of study."*<sup>1</sup>

German sport has a long tradition of politicization; prior to 1945 athletics were practiced almost entirely through ideologically motivated organizations, beginning with German gymnastics (Turnen), through Weimar Republic physical education, and then with National Socialism's policies of "*Gleichschaltung*".<sup>2</sup>

In the aftermath of World War II, the occupying powers wanted to reconstruct German society by removing the authoritarianism and militarism that were so firmly entrenched in German life - and sport. The Allies for the most part held the same objectives and together created common directives, but each power enacted separate policies and programs in its own zone to achieve these goals. Officials attempted to rebuild Germany's economy, politics, and society through four D's: democratization, demilitarization, denazification, and decartelization. In addition to assisting with the three punitive aspects (denazification, decartelization, demilitarization), sport provided a wide-reaching venue through which the Allies could implement the one positive attribute (democratization) within Germany, and for youth in particular. Germany's re-entry into international sport - especially the Olympic movement - became of special interest to the High Commissioners, particularly as a place where demilitarization, denazification, and democratization intersected.

Though general occupation policies regarding associational life affected German sport, the Allies also enacted legislation specific to athletics. In December 1945 they implemented Control Directive No. 23, which permitted non-militaris-

tic sports within a decentralized structure.<sup>3</sup> But just as denazification policies were flawed within government and education,<sup>4</sup> Allied efforts aimed at German sport faced similar problems.<sup>5</sup> With the assistance of Chancellor Konrad ADENAUER, the Allies contested the leadership of the reconstituted German National Olympic Committee, which formed just days after the creation of the Federal Republic itself. The British and Americans in particular also objected to the German members of the *International Olympic Committee* because of their roles in organizing the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and other sport positions during the Third Reich.<sup>6</sup>

The occupying powers attempted to socialize Germans to democracy through education, and German sport leaders developed physical activity and education in post-war Germany differently than the politically-based sport of Germany's past.<sup>7</sup> The general idea, expressed in an Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.) (OMGUS) report on leadership training, was that "*If sports organizations are democratically organized and conducted, sports will provide an effective medium for developing attitudes of good sportsmanship and promoting democratic ideals and practices.*"<sup>8</sup> Whereas Germans considered films teaching democratic principles as blatant pieces of Allied propaganda,<sup>9</sup> athletics allowed for more subtle indoctrination. Yet the structure and nature of sport in West Germany was not necessarily a radical departure from pre-1945 German sport, begging the question of whether 1945 was, in fact, a "*Stunde Null*", or if instead more continuities span German sport and history.

Until recently the literature on occupied Germany concentrated mainly on the political aspects of Allied activities. Early post-war scholarship provided histories of the occupation governments, assessing the success (or difficulty in achieving success) of democratization and denazification.<sup>10</sup> Lately research has examined specific segments of occupation zone policy, such as democratization via education or cinema,<sup>11</sup> or has focused on localized regions.<sup>12</sup> Scholarly research on the occupation

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of Germany has been heavily weighted toward the American zone because of the availability of sources. British sources, on the other hand, remained inaccessible for thirty years, though recently scholars have begun addressing the British zone.<sup>13</sup> The French zone has been termed the "forgotten zone" for the dearth of research on French policies in Germany.<sup>14</sup> Existing studies lack a thorough demonstration of how Allied policies directly affected the daily lives of German citizens. Comparative studies across the occupation zones on the German populace, which would provide insight into the reconstruction of Germany, are also missing from the literature.

My dissertation will explore three key issues regarding sport in western Germany from 1945 to 1955:

(1) why the Allies promoted the reorganization of sport organizations at an early stage in the occupation even though they imposed restrictions on meetings and associations;

(2) how their belief that athletics would contribute to the reconstruction of a new German state and society was translated into policy and practice at the sport organization and local levels; and

(3) what the effects of their sport policies were on German society.

My project will examine the punitive occupation policies as they affected sport, particularly through Allied Control Directive 23 as well as general organizational restrictions enacted by the Occupation Powers. The prohibition on Germans forming associations larger than Kreis level at first, and later at Land level, greatly hindered Germany's ability to form a cohesive sport policy or resume participation in international sport. The second stage of the occupation included Allied policies for re-education and programs designed to teach German youth how to be democratic. As a British policy directive in 1945 stated that as "*one of our main functions in Germany is to re-educat[e] the German nation on democratic lines we must devote our main attention to German youth.*"<sup>15</sup> Throughout this phase sport experts were brought to Germany, German youth and sport leaders went to the United States, England, and France to gain broader experience and see democracy in action, and international sporting contacts resumed, though not at a national level.

The leaders of German sport constantly battled the Allied restrictions on meetings, at both inter-Länder and international levels, in order to help return German sport to elite levels, but they also worked with the three western powers for the transition from the occupation to the Federal Republic, particularly as the changes would affect sport. The Trizone Sport Conferences enabled the Allies to ensure German sport would be democrat-

ically run. In addition, the Military Governments and its successor, the High Commission, deemed sport to be of significant importance that it worked to help Germany resume its membership in the International Olympic Committee and other International Federations. Germany's exclusion from the first post-war Olympics in London in 1948 only made its participation in the 1952 Games more important, particularly as the State Department and Foreign Office worked against the German membership of the *International Olympic Committee* in addition to the Soviet efforts to force a separate recognition of the East German Olympic Committee.

My project will contribute to international relations, German, sport, and Olympic histories by comparing these policies and their political, social, and cultural ramifications in the three western occupation zones. Early sport policies were not uniform across the occupation zones, and thus it is important to understand how policies in each zone affected West Germans and what problems arose with the consolidation of the three western zones in response to actions taken by the Soviets in their zone. The examination of sport organizations combined with local programs in each of the three zones will help me investigate the reconstruction of German sport at a local level, as directives from the occupation governments, as well as policies taken by the sport governing bodies, directly affected local sport clubs and German society. Using a wide variety of sources will help me examine fully the extent to which the Allies helped and hindered Germany's efforts at returning to the international sport and Olympic arenas. The Military Government and High Commissioner files from all three western Allies play a central role within my dissertation. In addition, my project also relies on materials from the Germans themselves - from Konrad ADENAUER's early government as well as from Carl DIEM and his colleagues that re-formed the NOC in 1949. The files of the *International Olympic Committee* and various International Federations will present another facet to the use of sport within international relations, as broader sentiments regarding Germany came into play as Germany attempted to rejoin the world of international sport.

Though my project is narrowly focused, its conclusions will speak to broader issues. By looking at the sport policies of the British and American military governments and the ways in which these programs were implemented at the local level in Germany, the ramifications of foreign policy can be examined as they affected the general population. The western Allies realized early in the occupation that their objectives - both within Germany and between Germany and the wider international community - could be accomplished within the context

of public diplomacy through the use of sport. Thus, sport policies were a microcosm of American and British programs in post-war Germany and of their visions for a new democratic state.

### Notes

- 1 HILL, Christopher, "Prologue", in: LEVERMORE, Roger/BUDD, Adrian (eds.), *Sport and International Relations: An Emerging Relationship*, London 2004, pp. 4-5.
- 2 CARR, G.A., "The Synchronization of Sport and Physical Education Under National Socialism," in: *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* 10(1979)2, pp. 19-20; SAX, Benjamin/KUNST, Dieter, *Inside Hitler's Germany*, Lexington, MA 1992, pp. 305.
- 3 This directive, however, forbade sport organizations to operate at an inter-land or inter-zone level. Allied Control Authority Control Directive No. 23, 17 December 1945, Box 645, The Office of Adjutant General: Allied Control Council Directives & Related Recs, 1945-49, Records of the Executive Office, Record Group 260 - Records of United States Occupation Headquarters, World War II - Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.) (OMGUS), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Hereafter cited NARA.
- 4 BARK, Dennis L./GRESS, David R., *A History of West Germany*, vol. 1, *From Shadow to Substance, 1945-1963*, Oxford 1989, p. 79.
- 5 German sport frequently lacked non-Nazi personnel qualified to teach democratic physical education; with OMGUS personnel repeatedly reiterated this point in their reports. See Semi-Monthly Summary Report for Education & Religious Affairs, Land Hessen, December 1-15, 1947, Box 143, Records of the Community Education Branch: Records re the Work of the Youth Activities Section, Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, RG 260 - OMGUS, NARA.
- 6 Konrad Adenauer to John J. McCloy, Letter dated 24 August 1950, Box 47, General Records, 1947-1952, Office of the Executive Secretary, Record Group 466 - High Commission for Germany (HICOG), NARA.
- 7 To address these issues, particularly through the transition from the occupation to the Bundesrepublik, the three western Allies held Trizonal Sport Conferences. For example, these Trizonal Sport Conferences were held 10-11 February 1949 in Mainz (French Zone), 16-17 March 1949 in Bad Rothenfelde (British Zone), and 29-30 June 1949 in Bad Nauheim (American Zone). Records of the Community Education Branch: Records re the Work of the Youth Activities Section, Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, RG 260 - OMGUS, NARA.
- 8 "Leadership Training," n.d. [1949], Box 123, Records of the Community Education Branch: Records of Mr. E.L. Norrie, Branch Chief, Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, RG 260 - OMGUS, NARA.
- 9 FEHRENBACH, Heide *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler*, Chapel Hill, NC 1995.
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- 11 TENT, James, *Mission On the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*, Chicago 1982; FEHRENBACH, *Cinema*
- 12 VOGT, Timothy R., *Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany: Brandenburg, 1945-1948*, Cambridge, MA 2000; REMY, Steven P., *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University*, Cambridge, MA 2002.
- 13 BANCE, Alan, "Introduction," in: BANCE, Alan (ed.), *The Cultural Legacy of the British Occupation in Germany: The London Symposium Stuttgart 1997*, p. 7; HEARNDEN, Arthur (ed.), *The British in Germany: Educational Reconstruction after 1945*, London 1978; TURNER, Ian D. (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55*, Oxford 1989; TSCHARNTKE, Denise, *Re-educating German Women: The Work of the Women's Affairs Section of British Military Government, 1946-1951* Frankfurt am Main 2003.
- 14 WILLIS, F. Roy, *The French in Germany, 1945-1949*, Stanford, CA 1962; WOLFRUM, Edgar, *Französische Besatzungspolitik und Deutsche Sozialdemokratie: Politische Neuansätze in der "Vergessenen Zone" bis zur Bildung des Südweststaates 1945-1952*, Düsseldorf 1991.
- 15 Draft, Directive from Chief of Staff, 21 July 1945, Foreign Office 1005, Piece Detail 157, National Archives, London, England.



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