

There he had become friendly with my grandfather, who directed the Tsar's military school. My grandfather received our coat of arms from the Tsar in 1913 and a year later the title of nobility.

Franz I used to come to our house. He had promised that he would help us if we could escape from Russia. His grand-nephew also did so. In 1936 the community of Ruggell voted on the receipt of Liechtenstein nationality by 111-3 votes. But I only made a permanent move to Liechtenstein after the Second World War. During the war I lived with my mother in Nice, where my father had bought a house. Later I made my fortune in Liechtenstein."

As a journalist?

"No, though a small souvenir shop in Vaduz, which I called 'Quick'. That was the nickname my journalist colleagues had given me because I always did everything so quickly. I had the souvenirs produced in Thailand and made millions of francs. It was incredible."

What does it mean to you to be the oldest male³ witness of the Olympics?

"I think it's great. Nobody can tell more from his own experience of reporting. Even when I am only lying in bed, I think again and again of my Olympic past. Just last evening I remembered Munich 1972, where I was flagbearer for our team at the Opening Ceremony. Our committee had nominated me because it was my birthday a few days later and because I had taken the initiative to found our Olympic Committee."

How did you come up with the idea of forming your NOC?

"In 1934 I visited an aunt in Lausanne. Next to her house was a jeweller's shop. It belonged to the President of the Swiss Olympic Committee. I asked the owner if Liechtenstein also had an Olympic Committee. He told me they did not so I set to work. In 1935 our committee was founded."

What did you think of the Olympic boycotts of 1980 and 1984?

"The boycotts were a huge mistake. That politics won over sport still hurts me today. That must never happen again."

Liechtenstein change of flag

On 12th February 1936 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, IOC President Henry de Baillet-Latour informed the Executive Committee of the existence of a new National Olympic Committee. Liechtenstein's NOC had been founded in the summer of the previous year by Baron Eduard A. von Falz-Fein, his uncle Woldemar and Alexander Frick, director of the tax office.

Frick was President of the NOC and in 1945, he also became head of the government, an office he held until 1962. His 22 year old son Xaver took over the office of NOC General Secretary. At the 1936 Games in Berlin he ran the 100 and 200 m and at the 1948 Winter Games in St Moritz he skied in the 4x10 km cross-country relay.

Five days before their NOC was formally recognised in Garmisch (a procedure repeated in the summer at the Session in Berlin), the first

Liechtensteiners went to the start. They were selected in somewhat random fashion. Falz-Fein asked the mayor of Triesenberg to suggest some suitable athletes. The latter nominated two young men for the Alpine combination: Hubert Nägele (17 years) and Franz Schädler (18

came from the highest part of the country. They bravely got through the downhill, but failed in the second round of the slalom.

The two-man bob was steered by Falz-Fein's cousin Eduard Theodor. They fared better and placed 18th out of 23.

In the summer Baron Eduard Theodor had another mission: he represented Liechtenstein as Olympic attaché and as a judge in small bore shooting. He led a small delegation of six athletes (among them three marksmen) into the Olympic Village, but was amazed to see what appeared to be the flag of the Grand Duchy with red and blue horizontal stripes already flying. An error? Not at all. In fact two days before the team from Haiti had arrived. In those days their flag was identical to that of Liechtenstein.

Cousin Eduard Alexandrowitsch was accredited as a journalist. He telephoned his government and received permission simply to turn the flag round. To avoid confusion the Liechtenstein "Prince's Hat" a small crown was sewn on the upper red field.

The sole Haitian was middleweight weightlifter René A. Ambroise (he had taken up weightlifting during his studies in Paris). He had also decided on a change of flag. For the opening ceremony, this was decorated with the country's crest. The next day he injured himself in training, and left the Games. This incident reduced the number of participating countries from 50 to 49.

The Baron's innovation proved long lasting and was popular in the Liechtenstein capital Vaduz. Although the design reverted to the original after the Games the "Prince's Hat" remained and is on the flag to this day. (VK)

